

CHAPTER 2

“VIOLENCE:

THE ESSENTIAL LIVING FLUID”

TENDULKAR ON HIS OWN TERMS.

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Tendulkar on His Own Terms.

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the most important playwrights of Indian theatre in the last four decades whose plays often depict the scenes of violence and cruelty. He is considered to be the most controversial Indian playwright of the last four decades, definitely the most radical and stands out as an excellent prototypical figure of Modern Marathi theatre. In the long span time between 1960 and 2000 he wrote 28 full-length plays, 24 one act plays several middles, articles, editorials and 11 plays for children. In his plays, he shocks the audience with excessive scenes of social and physical violence. He depicts verbalized violence with the images of violent relationship, torture, abuse, obsessive love, sexual desire, betrayal, humiliation, atrocity, pain and death.

Presenting a vast number of matters fundamental to many aspects of postmodern life and holding up a mirror to the question of violence which characterizes the postmodern condition, Tendulkar's plays confront people with its experimental theatrics that focus on violence beneath the civilized people of the society. He started his career as dramatist with his play

'Shrimant' (The Rich Man) in 1955. He not only pioneered the experimental theatre movement in Marathi but also guided it. While talking about contemporary Marathi theatre Dhyaneshwar Nadkarni points out:

"Vijay Tendulkar leads the vanguard of the *avant-garde* theatre that developed as a movement separate from the mainstream. Tendulkar and his colleagues were dissatisfied with the decadent professional theatre that characterized the Thirties and Forties. They wanted to give theatre a new form and therefore experimented with all aspects of it including content, acting, and décor and audience communication." ¹

Tendulkar's plays often explore the acts of physical, sexual and verbal dimensions of violence. But violence is not only a tool for Tendulkar through which he criticizes the injustices of the world but he uses violence as a strong theatrical device. He is not interested in violence for the sake of violence. Vijay Tendulkar, as a sensitive, sensible and responsible citizen, could not quiet his agitated conscience with his journalistic career. So, he left journalism when he received Nehru Fellowship for the year 1973-75. During this period, he travelled extensively throughout India and saw directly all kinds of violence. From this experience, he infers:

“Unlike communists, I don’t think that violence can be eliminated in a classless society, or, for that manner, in any society. The spirit of aggression is something that the human being is born with. Not that it’s bad. Without violence, man would have turned into a vegetable.”²

In scrutinizing the corrupted history of human being, Vijay Tendulkar’s plays focus on violence as the single most significant aspect of history. Most of his characters are the victims of cruelty and aggression which characterize the postmodern civilized life. Thus Vijay Tendulkar always has a specific purpose for using violence in his plays. He uses violence as a shock tactic to inspire his audience not to sit idly by and to take action against the atrocities of life. According to Tendulkar there is no reason for human violence against human in the world. He believes that violence is a natural phenomenon for human as species in the same way as animals. But, in the light of this idea he uses theatre as a think tank arena where he criticizes and discusses the cycle of meaningless violence and the crimes of humanity.

As we analyze Tendulkar’s writing and his thoughts we can understand that he does not support ‘violence’ though he thinks that violence is the basic instinct of mankind and till today we are not able to eliminate it from our society. Tendulkar accepts and portrays his characters violent

behaviour as a nature of human being. He deals with gender inequality, social inequality, power games, false consciousness, with the devices of sex and violence in his plays. Etienne G. Krug defines violence as follows:

“Violence” is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, or deprivation.”³

This definition is associated intentionality with the committing of the act itself, irrespective of the outcome it produces.

Violence can be divided into three broad categories according to the characteristics of those committing the violent act (a) self-directed violence, (b) interpersonal violence, and (c) collective violence. The nature of violent acts, on the vertical axis, can be: physical, sexual, psychological, involving deprivation or neglect. This initial categorization differentiates between violence a person inflicts upon himself or herself, violence inflicted by another individual or by a small group of individuals, and violence inflicted by larger groups such as states, organized political groups, militia groups and terrorist organizations.

Violent behaviour is an uncontrolled response to some form of stimulation. Violence is a basic human instinct that must be expressed in one form or another. Biological and psychological research has shown violent behaviour more likely to be a physical response to the perception that the 'self', i.e. one's sense of identity, is threatened. Being violated either emotionally or physically appears to result in a violent response. Violent behaviour can be seen as a mask which protects the 'self' from pain and memories of traumatic experiences. *Psychology Today* (U.S. 1983) asked some people in a survey "If you could secretly push a button and thereby eliminate any person with no repercussions to yourself, would you press that button?" 69% of responding males and 56% of women said yes..

Violence comes in many forms and in many situations. On the extreme end of the scale, there are mass murderers, serial killers; terrorism, wars, rape and sexual violence, domestic violence, parent-child or sibling violence, violence by psychotics and people with antisocial personality disorders, physical and sexual child abuse, and ethnic or religious groups or nations that go to war. Great atrocities are attributed to crazed men--Hitler, Stalin, terrorists, etc. But, several psychological studies suggest that ordinary people can rather easily become evil enough to discriminate against, hurt, and brutalize others. How anger

develops. Is it innate? Certainly most three-year-olds can throw a temper tantrum without any formal training and often even without observing a model. Is it learned? Why are the abused sometimes abusers? Does having a temper and being aggressive yield payoffs? You bet. How do we learn to suppress aggression? How can we learn to forgive others? These are the questions which might disturb Tendulkar so he addresses all the questions into his plays.

Once he was titled as angry young man of Marathi theatre. He has exposed the different forms of anger in his major plays. 'Violence which turns into anger' or 'Anger which turns into violent act' is the major focus of Tendulkar to justify the portrayal of his characters. 'Anger' which can be the result of hurt pride, of unreasonable expectations, or of repeated hostile fantasies seen in his plays. Besides getting our way, we may unconsciously use anger to blame others for our own shortcomings, to justify oppressing others, to boost our own sagging egos, to conceal other feelings, and to handle other emotions (as when we become aggressive when we are afraid). Any situation that frustrates us, especially when we think someone else is to be blamed for our loss, is a potential trigger for anger and aggression. Anger is a feeling generated in response to frustration or injury. You don't like what has happened and usually you'd

like to take revenge. Anger is an emotional-physiological-cognitive internal state; it is separate from the behaviour it might prompt. Tendulkar shows how violence can be expressed through Aggression, A violent action, i.e. attacking someone or a group. It is intended to harm someone. It can be a verbal attack--insults, threats, sarcasm, or attributing nasty motives to them or a physical punishment or restriction. All above mentioned scenes are found in Tendulkar's Plays.

When we analyze Tendulkar as a creative writer or as a human being who has the quest to find humanity in terms of expressing violence and sex as a device for his drama, we must have to understand Tendulkar's own terminology and views of different critiques regarding Tendulkar. Tendulkar expresses some idea of his belief of Indian society and form of violence in an interview taken by Makarand Sathe. As he says:

“Most men wish to beat their wives, in some critical condition” ⁴

He further mentions that:

“It is most probably a trait of the species, from the time of primitive man.” ⁵

The culturalisation of Indian society also plays a part, because he sees a filthier form of it amongst the middle class as compared to lower class.

Violence among middle class might not be physical, but it is very often psychological in nature, and that is

“More despicable, more perverse form.”⁶

For Tendulkar violent relationship does not mean simply physical violence or torture. It also means interpersonal relationship of dominance and violence--not only male dominance over female but also vice-versa. For Tendulkar human relations are power relationships and therefore are based on in-built violence. He believes that there is politics in man-woman as well as in other relationships, as every individual consciously or unconsciously tries to gain power over the other and it results into violent conflicts either physical or psychological. As he says:

“When we consider civilization or impact of culture I must say that the process of civilization is occurring on surface level only. In a condition when we are in confrontation with a panic situation, when circumstances arrive in a form of a tough exam, the mask of culture will be removed with a big blast and human will become an animal. Sorry to say but in that situation we react exactly as an animal reacts to the situation.”⁷

Tendulkar in his plays depicts such theory of violence with psychological implications. We can see situations develop violently in



Tendulkar's plays when a person in an intimate relationship or marriage tries to dominate and control the other person. Tendulkar exhibits such psychological and emotional violence in a very subtle form in his plays. In his play 'Kamala', we find a subtle exposure of the manner in which women are treated as insensitive beings in the patriarchal system. Sarita, the wife of the journalist, is very apprehensive and extremely responsive to her husband's needs and tastes. She is always eager to pamper him to his whims and fancies and carrying out all his instructions, like taking note of all phone calls and looking after his physical and domestic needs. But Jaisingh considers none of his wife's good qualities as they are duties implied by the institution of marriage. He never understands that his wife is a live human being who works without complaints and feelings. He takes her patience, her desires, and her propriety for granted and he is also ignorant of her dreams, her fancies, and her desires.

Through Jaisingh's dialogue, "It's I who takes decisions in this house, and no one else. Do you understand?" (Pg. 42) Tendulkar depicts the natural tendency of every husband, to dominate his partner. It reveals a male thinking that they own their partners and are entitled to demand absolute obedience from them. It may be physical, emotional or sexual in nature. As per age old tradition woman is treated as property of man at marriage and

her husband has sexual access to her, even if it violates her own desires. But when this right is denied to him, it leads to uncontrollable rages, resulting in abusing his partner. Sarita has been shown in 'Kamala' as a sexual and domestic servant.

Another form of psychological abusive behaviour with which Tendulkar deals is fear resulting terror, which is a key element for violence and is often the most powerful way whereby an executor controls one's victim. Fear can be created by speech, looks, gestures or any other behaviour which can be used to intimidate and render the other person powerless. There are so many examples which we can find in Tendulkar's plays. Either Ghashiram stands in front of Nana Phadnavis or Benare locates herself in front of snatching verbal wolves. As Sarita feels powerless in front of Jaisingh and as Baby is frightened in front of Shivappa. Fear converted into violence is everywhere in Tendulkar's writing. In 'Kamala', Tendulkar exposes the tendency of male dominant society to consider woman as a commodity trade material.

In the play "Kamala" Tendulkar deals with normalized violence (in Kamala's case) and invisible violence (in Sarita's case). Tendulkar illustrates this psychological form of violence in almost every play.

Characters like Benare from “Shantata Court Chalu Ahe” (Silence the Court is in Session), Jyoti from “Kanyadaan”, Rama from “Gidhade” (Vultures), and Champa from ‘Sakharam Binder’ or Lalita Gauri from “Ghashiram Kotwal” are examples of patriarchal oppressive suffering. Through the character of Rama in ‘Gidhade’ (Vultures), Tendulkar exposes a voiceless victim trapped in a sadistic cycle of violence, carried out by the family members and the cursed fate. Though Tendulkar’s female characters are usually shown to be the silent victims of the psychological pain and fear. He also sensitively renders certain male characters, which too face the agonies and pains and suffer psychologically.

Tendulkar quotes in response to a question asked by Makarand Sathe about cruel behaviour, and ridiculous incidents in today’s world. He says:

“There is no doubt that the instincts of animals still exist in a human being. They not only exist, but are deeply rooted in human being and are preserved in their pure form.”⁸

Here Tendulkar is somewhat clear about human being’s violent nature. We can interpret it as a necessity of mankind but it does not mean that these types of violent characters are absolute in our society. Tendulkar wanted to say that violence is an essential living fluid in terms of triggering force. If we look into account of Marxist theory of revolutionary violence,

that violence is criticized by all peace makers. During the freedom fight the Gandhian philosophy was successful in achieving the goal of independence but the impact of “Jahal” movement (violent revolution theory applied by Shahid Bhagatsingh, Tilak, etc) which became headache for British Government was also a profound reason behind India’s Independence.

The Nobel-Prize winner Konrad Lorenz developed his ideas about human violence mainly from the study of animal behaviour. He assumes that:

“The organism continuously builds up aggressive energy.”⁹

But, differing from Freud’s concept, Lorenz states that violent behaviour will not occur unless it is triggered by external cues. Unlike Freud, who saw violence as destructive and disruptive, Lorenz views aggression as adaptive and essential for the survival of a species. Like Freud, Lorenz regards aggression as:

“Inevitable, and, at times, spontaneous.”¹⁰

However, he assigns greater significance to the possibility of releasing violent energy in a socially acceptable way and its displaced expression into

channels which are not antisocial. The usual example suggested is through sports competition which is termed as creative violence.

Lorenz believes that while violent instincts first evolved in lower animals, the tendency towards senseless violence has reached its peak in human beings. Human males, for instance, often attack other individuals (including women and children) whether or not the attackers have high levels of male hormones. Human kills each other out of hatred, prejudice, politics, and just for fun- and not like animals, who kill only when the victim intrudes into the killer's home territory.

Central to all psychoanalytic theories is the orientation that things that happen early in the life of an individual influences his later life and the idea of a fixed amount of biologically derived energy which must be discharged in one way or the other. Although not widely accepted by social psychologists, the idea that violence is part of human nature has received serious attention particularly in light of the continued occurrence of violence throughout history and as reflected in literature.

When we analyze Tendulkar's Terminology on violence we must have to examine the violence as a force of energy. We all know about the power of nuclear weapon and its destructive effects but we cannot deny that

its creation is aiming towards fortification of human race. In 1954, a year before his death, Einstein said to his old friend, Linus Pauling,

"I made one great mistake in my life — when I signed the letter to President Roosevelt recommending that atom bombs be made" ¹¹

Here Einstein regrets of being maker of the atom bomb but we cannot neglect the energy or force he created through his theory of relativity. That energy can be used in development of human race. Electricity generated by atomic energy is the best example of positive force of a destructive device. It is upon us, that how we turn the destructive element into constructive force for mankind. Violence is that kind of tool a human have from primitive age.

The problem of culturalisation is the process of culturalisation itself. This process is aiming towards elimination of the basic energy tools like violence and sex. As we interpret Tendulkar's terminology about this fact we can say that violence and sex can be a tool as constructive force for mankind. The process of industrialization has also its impact on social structure. Tendulkar himself says in an interview with Makarand Sathe:

"When we face the industrialization we get development and as a side effect, we also get depressed. Not only in Europe or Western countries, the third world countries like India are also

affected by the adverse effect of industrialization. The process of development suppresses the human under the machine and then we act like socialized animals. When we have the chance to get benefit we try to grab everything with an animalistic performance.”¹²

As a creative writer Vijay Tendulkar never gives us a verdict or conclusion directly. He mentions in the interview:

“We are in a country which has strong rigid conventions of Dharma and hence violence is deeply rooted within the society. We have to face challenges politically, socially, artistically and culturally. Hence I never tried to tell a solution, but always tried to convey the bitter reality which we don’t want to see.”¹³

He only shows us the real face of the society we are living in through the bioscope of his writings. He targets dramatization of various forms of violence and shocks his audience into an awareness of the reality of human nature and the world they live in. He thus also seeks to enhance the understanding of his audience about the factors and forces responsible for various ways and forms of violence ranging from the subtlest and covert to the cruellest and crude ones, this way he provides critical insights into the complex dynamics of violence. He only presents various cases of violence in different forms in front of society for dissection and research. That is the

reason Tendulkar is the most popular writer amongst theatre artiste, readers, researchers and critics.

He placed the reality of violence in a highly fascinating and thought-provoking manner. It is the fact that his plays, as works of art, are mind blowing and they get a large applause from spectators and drama critics, not only from India, but also from all around the world. His plays have a universal appeal. He chooses violence as his major theme, and also aesthetically articulates the most brutal and dreadful human actions, experiences and situations. His recognition as a playwright of all times and cultures is mainly due to his agile and penetrating interpretation of not only the visible but also the profound and even primitive levels of violence in the human world. And he represents it in a highly skillful and hypnotizing manner. An investigation of all those features which make his plays so gripping, and eye-catching we have to agree about a fair appreciation of his mind and art.

Tendulkar himself asserted in one of his lectures:

“I was never able to begin writing my play only with an idea or a theme in mind. I had to have my characters first with me.”¹⁴

He further adds:

“These characters as “living persons,” led me into the thick of their lives”¹⁵

It suggests that it is the characters that carry the plots and meanings of his play, serving as a kind of backbone to their structures. His plays are written for the stage. The purpose of this confrontation is to focus on this serious contemporary writer who deals with religious violence, sexuality, cast and class discrimination and gender issues. The issues he chooses are topical and controversial. He deals with these issues in a different way. So many critics have put an allegation on him that he is basically a journalist and he knows the exact method to propagate things. But if we survey his works we find in him a very sensitive human being. His plays elicit right kind of emotional and intellectual responses from the audience.

As Tendulkar confesses, we are always denying the presence of animal inside us but the reality is that animal instinct has never ever been gone away. Tendulkar himself mentions in his own words:

“I am certain that my plays are a true reflection of socio-economic background. I am curious to know what the mental status of Hitler or Stalin is. And so I wanted to meet them personally.”¹⁶

It will be proved with the above mentioned statement that Tendulkar was curious about the cruel behaviour. He doesn't want to hate the person who carries cruelty but his concern is more psychoanalytical towards that behaviour. Tendulkar finds violence and the exploiter-exploited relationship as natural and eternal. It is the primeval need to subjugate, an expression of raw power exercised over the one without. His plays also exhibit the impact of social and political institutions and ethical norms through which this violence actually takes place. This shows Tendulkar's special interest in explorations of such factors effecting human behaviour.

Tendulkar firmly believes that the phenomenon of violence:

"Needs good expression in literature, the films, the arts; it simply reflects the larger patterns of violence in society."¹⁷

So, he renders the characters as they are living in the society. As far as the perception and understanding of violent behaviour is concerned Tendulkar seems to believe that violence is an inherent and inevitable part of human nature. Thus, as reflected through his works, he appears to think that the beast or the animal is always there hidden inside man along with the animal instincts, which are permanent. And when man acts to meet the challenges that come his way, he occasionally appears to behave like an

animal. The hidden hatreds, insecurities, sexual frustrations and long suppressed violence burst out when the situations become oppressive. He saw violence as a metaphor for life and thus

“Wanted to study and understand what it is, where it comes from.”¹⁸

When we trace the incidents happened in the life of Vijay Tendulkar we may easily understand his characteristics. While living in Bombay as a child, Vijay witnessed the communal riots. Twice from his balcony he saw the incidents of stabbing. Too young to understand death and suffering, the spectacles thrilled him. Vijay Tendulkar's elder brother Raghunath who once upon a time involved in the Gandhian movement became an alcoholic and drunken Raghunath unable to walk by himself, Vijay Tendulkar had to pick him up from the liquor bar and take him home. Those illegal liquor bars and their atmosphere had a strong impact on Tendulkar's mind. He came into the contact of the unsophisticated characters. He was suddenly exposed to the people of slum area. He became aware of the violence inherent in man. He began to look more intimately at the people around him and found the themes of his plays.

When Vijay was thirteen years old, Tendulkar family shifted to Poona. He was put into a new school. During Quit India Movement, Mahatma Gandhi called upon the students to boycott the schools run by the British Government as a part of the campaign to end the British rule in India. Vijay was one of those who answered Gandhi's call and began to attend secret meetings and distribute seditious pamphlets. He was also associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh and communist party for a while. These incidents bring out the fearlessness and adventurous nature of Tendulkar and his love for his country. These qualities can be found in his writings. A sudden raid at a secret meeting landed Vijay at the Police Station. As he was a minor, he was let off after giving a severe warning to his father. Dhondopant prohibited him from taking any more part in the nationalist movement and Vijay returned to school. By now he had fallen far behind in his studies.

He would often be made to stand on the bench or leave the class. When all this became unbearable, Vijay began to bunk the classes and spent his time watching movies with the money given to him as the school fees. Some of this time was also spent at the city library profitably in reading books. After some time his parents came to know about this. They did not beat or scold him. But this resulted in his alienation from his family and

friends. Lonely and sad, writing became his outlet. Tendulkar tells Mukta Rajyadhyaksha in an interview:

“I participated in a small way in the 1942 movement. Owing to that, I stayed away from school a lot and was often humiliated whenever I turned up in class. I was confused, a loner without many friends, not much of a talker. Writing was an outlet for emotions.”¹⁹

Most of these early writings were of a personal nature and not intended for publication.

When Tendulkar was only thirteen year old his parents shifted to Poona. In Poona, young Vijay came into contact with Dinkar Balkrishna Mokashi and Vishnu Vinayak Bokil, both well-known names in Marathi literature. In an interview given to Gauri Ramnarayan, Tendulkar admits to having been influenced by the personalities and the style of writing of these two authors.²⁰ Bokil was Vijay’s Marathi teacher in school. Many of his stories written in conversational Marathi had been turned into successful movies. He never shied away from writing on controversial subjects. He advised Vijay to develop himself in a particular direction in addition to his formal studies in order to become successful in life. One of Vijay’s maternal uncles had committed suicide and another one spent his life in a mental

asylum. He admits that he developed a liking for cranks and madmen because of his uncles.

When he received Nehru Fellowship in 1973-74 for a project titled “An Enquiry into the Pattern of Growing Violence in Society and Its Relevance to Contemporary Theatre”. He travels across the different corners of India in order to understand the reasons of the emerging violence in the country. Amar Nath Prasad and Satish Barbuddhe appropriately write:

“He was not satisfied with the ‘second hand’ information which he got, while sitting in the newspaper office. In his study tours he got ‘first hand’ information of the outside world.”²¹

Thus Tendulkar tried to overcome the limitations of his scholarly knowledge. He observed the social problems and the oppression of the poor and the down-trodden from close quarters. Through his plays he tried to sensitize the reader-audience to these matters.

He said to Gauri Ramnarayan in an interview:

“As a schoolboy I had watched the Hollywood films playing in my hometown, not once, but each one over and over again. I still remember the visuals, not the dialogues which I didn’t understand.”²²

So we can understand that the fast action visuals from English films left a strong impact on him. And that is the reason behind the compactness of his plays. As he was inspired by visuals we can find some extraordinary dramatic visuals in his plays. He uses few words to express a dialogue, in fact the dialogue which comes out of his writing are combination of very essential and necessary words. And that's why his plays are so eye-catching and thrusting.

The Indian society was based on the caste or Varna system and it was divided into four categories, the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras. The Shudras were not permitted to hear or study the 'Vedas' as their study was reserved for the people of higher classes. The original concept of Vedic Varna system was developed to fulfill requirements of the society. The system divided society into four classes according to the deeds and qualities of each individual person. In original system classification was based on work attitude and not by birth rights, even women had equal rights with men in that society. All these groups had been assigned specific duties and responsibilities. The Brahmins were concerned with learning and scholarly pursuits. The Kshatriyas were the warriors whereas the Vaishyas were the businessmen. The Shudras were the labourers. The rigidity of the caste system caused social inequality. As this system was beneficial for the

higher caste people, they made every effort to justify the social hierarchy and always strongly opposed its violation. The complete relapse of the Vedic system led the society toward the practice of assorting the caste on the basis of birth.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar comments:

“Caste system is not merely a division of labourers which is quite different from division of labour—it is a hierarchy in which the divisions of labourers are graded one about the other.”²³

Such gradation resulted in persons of some castes being easily exploited, as there could be no unity amongst them. Thus exploitation and oppression has existed in our society since time immemorial. M. Sarat Babu aptly remarks:

“The divisions of men and women into various castes and classes and their hierarchy results in the people of higher rungs exploiting and oppressing those of lower rungs in our society suffering from social inequality and the boundaries of caste are strongly guarded to sustain it.”²⁴

The Marathi drama, thus, acted as an ally to the movements for social reform and political freedom going on in the society during the latter half of 19th and the first half of 20th century. The Marathi playwrights used the

drama not merely as a source of entertainment but as a vehicle of instruction and illumination. The theatre became a powerful weapon against social evils in the hands of the playwrights. Vijay Tendulkar continued this tradition in the latter half of the twentieth century and wrote as a reformist and hence became controversial. When we study his plays we have to agree with the remarks of M. Sharat Babu, who comments:

“Tendulkar perceives the realities of the human society without any preconceived notions, reacts to them as a sensitive and sensible human being and writes about them in his plays as a responsible writer.”²⁵

As per Tendulkar's point of view, a 'Society' demands that an individual should lead the life according to the rules led down by society's system. A conflict crops up when an individual refuses to obey these rules. Tendulkar draws our attention towards the gender discrimination, which punishes a woman but allows the man to get clean cheat for committing the same crime. For example in the play "Shantata Court Chalu Ahe" (Silence the court is in session), protagonist, 'Benare' is punished for the sin of unwed pregnancy but no one says a word about Damle who is her partner in the crime. Tendulkar was so far ahead from his contemporary writers. Famous writers like Mahesh Elkunchvar, Satish Alekar accept that their

writing was influenced by Vijay Tendulkar and Tendulkar was an inspirational force for so many other writers.

Writing about Tendulkar's early plays, we may totally agree with what Arundhati Banerjee says:

“Tendulkar's first major work that set him apart from previous generation Marathi playwrights was *Manus Navache Bet* (An Island Called Man, 1956), which gave expression to the tormenting solitude and alienation of a modern individual in an urban industrialized society. His dramatic genius was cut out for the newly emerging experimental Marathi theatre of the time.”²⁶

Every critique and scholar acclaims Tendulkar's creativity as a playwright. Commenting on Tendulkar's unique place in the history of Marathi drama, Chandrasekhar Barve writes:

“Tendulkar pioneered and guided the experimental theatre movement in Marathi.”²⁷

Tendulkar is an exceptional personality who began writing as a means of earning his livelihood and ended up as a playwright of international stature. He never ran after name, fame and money. Criticism and attack on his works could not prevent him from writing what he felt to be right.

Some critics put allegations on Tendulkar that he is a feminist writer, and he only portrays female in a state of an oppressed victim. Some even say that Tendulkar's own philosophy and his culture as a member of upper cast lead him towards a pre-notion that lower class of society is more violent and hence he depicts the characters of upper cast into their lower-class mentality. The argument is about his portrayal of women characters. But if we trace the roots through between the lines of the dialogues written by Tendulkar and observe keenly the idea and research of violence as an essential living fluid, we find that the above mentioned allegations made by some scholars are not factual. If we thoroughly investigate Tendulkar's writing, we find the impressive treatment given to the characters and his characters show us the mechanism human being adopts when disruptive and harsh conditions arrives in life. Tendulkar looks into human nature and capacities, both good and evil, in their struggle to survive. That is why he appears to have portrayed characters driven by instincts and desire. He has presented characters as more evolved and complex human being who respond hurtfully and violently.

The responses of his characters to the inhospitable situations appear to be as wide-ranging, varied and complex as life itself. This is evident from the fact that even when some of his characters tend to

epitomize certain general human traits and values, they exhibit them in subtly varying forms along with the working of the contrary human impulses making their responses look more humanly, real and complex. It is for this reason that the different ways people in his plays adopt to cope with unsettling and traumatic experiences defy all attempts at rigid categorization. However one can trace certain broad trends in the behaviours and attitudes they adopt in the face of thwarting conditions. One of the ways a large number of his characters appear to adopt is to survive their plight by submitting rather passively to their circumstances.

This is noticeable mainly in his women characters who, conditioned by tradition and handicapped by economic dependence appear to have no other alternative but to suffer their fate resignedly. But here too, one finds a considerable variety of attitudes and behaviour towards the violent and oppressive situations in their lives. If there are those who surrender to their predicament rather ungrudgingly because of their complete lack of hope and vision for a different kind of life, there are also women who submit themselves reluctantly because of the overwhelming pressures of social and material life. Because of their lack of inner resources and inability to show any sign of stamina to struggle against oppression, none of them emerges as an admirable figure even if the reader

may pity or even sympathize with them. In the absence of any significant desire or determination for a better deal in life, they register no perceptible growth in their perceptions, attitudes and responses.

The inner core of almost all works of Tendulkar is rooted in his deep compassion and respect for human life – for life in the social reality of post-colonial India. Seeing its exploitation and waste, his response was an unrelenting literary output and non-stop social activism. Until his death, through his literary output his ultimate purpose was in fiercely seeking justice for the victimized – mainly the poor and those disfranchised by communal riots and structural violence. Unlike the makers of the confrontational theater of the late 1980's, he did not believe that an evening at the theatre would change society, but he was always hopeful that a good play could raise public awareness. It is because of this reason that there has been hardly a play by him that has not ended up in controversy.

If we trace the controversies playing around Tendulkar, we find the public image of a fighter, of a writer at cross-purposes with the mainstream. Tendulkar in his whole life become controversial. If we look in past, around his play's performances and controversies running around those plays, we find three major names. Those are 'Ghashiram Kotwal', 'Sakharam Binder'

and 'Gidhade'. "Ghashiram Kotwal" and "Sakharam Binder," both staged during the 1970's. In "Ghashiram Kotwal" there was the controversial depiction of the historical character of Nana Phadnavis, a respected statesman during the Peshwa rule in Maharashtra that angered Brahmins and led to a series of protests. The troupe of "Ghashiram Kotwal," directed by renowned director Dr Jabbar Patel faced violent protests from the audience. The protestors targeted the artists using eggs and tomatoes in theatre halls to stop the performances. It was former Lok-Sabha Speaker and Shivsena leader Manohar Joshi who was in the forefront of the anti-"Ghashiram" agitation in Mumbai as the party stopped the staging of the play in the metropolis in 1971-72. In Poona also, protests marked the staging of the play with allegations that it insulted the Brahmin community and maligned its culture. The attacker of Tendulkar even approached Bombay High Court to prevent the play "Ghashiram Kotwal" from going abroad to stage performances on invitation but did not succeed in getting a favourable verdict.

However, Tendulkar was never remorseful over the characterization of Nana who was portrayed as a lecher hunting for women notwithstanding his stature as a Maratha Hero. Tendulkar never surrender and in fact he mentioned that he was entitled to freedom of expression and that though the

character of Nana had a historical base, the treatment was fictional. Thus the play unfailingly challenged the accepted concepts and norms pertaining to morality in society and brought to the fore the hidden cruelty and lust in the human psyche, exposing hypocrisy that covered it.

A similar controversy erupted when Tendulkar came out with 'Sakharam Binder' inviting the charge of obscene presentation. Eminent stage and film actor Nilu Phule played the role of the protagonist from the lower strata of society. The play had so many scenes which depict violent reaction of a natural man-woman relationship. The play showed the female character drinking wine and speaking abusive words, language of the play is criticized by critiques. The major allegation on the play is portrayal of a Binder, who is a Brahmin by cast and who had total disregard for moral, social and cultural customs. However Tendulkar won the battle with the censors clearing the play for performance on stage.

Again in 1970 came "Gidhade" ("Vultures") which shocked the conservative Maharashtrian society by its explicit depiction of violence. The play is a brutal portrayal of the dark side of human nature and depicts its inborn evil tendencies like greed, selfishness, wickedness and violence. It is the most violent of all the plays written by Vijay Tendulkar. He lays bare the

intricate nature of human relationships in it. In the words of Prof. Avinash Kolhe:

“Gidhade, which has a ruthless dissection of human nature, revealing violence, avarice lying beneath the put up personality, was a fascinating expose of social reality.”²⁸

Conservative sections of society did not approve of the blunt depiction of illicit sexual relations and scenes of violence in it. As a result, it attracted a lot of opposition. Tendulkar expresses the degeneration of the modern society through the portrayal of the basic aspects of human nature in the Pitale family. The play was considered obscene because it showed a woman with a huge red spot on the front of her sari. The Censor board objected to the play, but cleared it after some cuts.

Controversies like this and many more were common for a Tendulkar's play. It is obvious to get involved in controversies for the person like Vijay Tendulkar who has the vibrant philosophy of violence. Some people make allegation that he was interested in controversy but it is the society (the public) who has created these controversies. It is interesting to note that most of the calls for banning his plays did not come from the government but from particular segments of the public who saw in his

dramatizations attacks on their power positions—challenges to caste, gender or class structures.

Tendulkar had been attacked for his work many times, sometimes physically. After “Gidhade,” someone actually beat him with a stick. After “‘Kanyadaan’,” he was literally thrown a slipper by members of the Dalit caste. But Tendulkar never shrank from public controversy as it gave him a unique opportunity to engage his opponents in public discourse. He portrayed Man in his primal avatar, removal of his socially acceptable trappings and prey to the rawest of animal passions thereby exposing us to a disturbing truth. It is perhaps his daring attitude of exposing the truth that in spite of all the controversies, most of the plays at the same time gained him not just popularity but also fame and honour. “‘Ghashiram Kotwal’” stood up to all the controversies to create a record of being the longest-running play in the history of Indian theatre with a tally of 6000 performances in India and abroad. The popularity and the theme of “‘Kanyadaan’” awarded him with the Saraswati Samman. In his speech at the award ceremony, he added:

“You are honouring me with the Saraswati Samman today for a play for which I once had a slipper hurled at me. Perhaps it is the fate of the play...”²⁹

Tendulkar never afraid to express his ideological statements and views publically. In 2006 when decided to felicitate literary figure S.P.Bhagavat by Lok-Sabha speaker Manohar Joshi, Vijay Tendulkar, had given a new dimension to the age old conflict between litterateurs and politicians by questioning the moral authority of Lok-Sabha speaker Manohar Joshi in felicitating literary figure S.P.Bhagavat. Tendulkar urged senior critic S.P.Bhagavat not to accept the prestigious Chaturang award later from Lok Sabha speaker Manohar Joshi on account of his "dubious character". Tendulkar's remarks had drawn a lot of flak from media and literary figures; Tendulkar seemed unapologetic as he hinted at similar confrontations at the "Punyabhushan" award presentation in Poona. Tendulkar created quite a stir in the literary circle by his comments; noted actor and social activist Nilu Phule supported Tendulkar's stand in a public function.

Many social activist who know Tendulkar as a strong offender of death penalty were amused when following the post-Godhara communal carnage in Gujarat in 2002, he reacted by saying that "If I had a pistol, I would shoot Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi." This reaction of Tendulkar had evoked mixed reactions, local Modi supporters burning his effigies while others lauding his remark. Later, when he was asked if it was

not strange that he, who was known as a strong voice against death penalty, had a death wish for Modi, Tendulkar had said that "It was spontaneous anger, which I never see as a solution for anything. Anger doesn't solve problems."

As he mentioned in his lecture, he was very analytical towards persons, society and human being. Delivering the prestigious Sri Ram Memorial Lectures for Performing Arts in 1997 in New Delhi, Tendulkar summed up his lifelong involvement in theatre as follows:

“What I like about those years is that they made me grow as a human being. And theatre which was my major concern has contributed to this in a big way. It helped to analyze life--my own and lives of others. It led me to make newer and newer discoveries in the vast realm of the human mind that still defies all available theories and logic. It's like an ever-intriguing puzzle or a jungle that you can always enter but has no way out. Not that I was any wiser than the fool when I entered the theatre. I still act like a fool and think like one; but there is a difference. Now I am aware of what I am doing while I do it. I am my own audience and the critic, if one may use the language of the theatre. Now I enjoy my foolishness and laugh at it; and of course the foolishness of others too, at times.”³⁰

Tendulkar has transparent and honest writing skills; he never imposes self judgment on his characters. Tendulkar never gives verdict, but his motto about play writing is to explore the stage as a play ground to put his ideology and asking spectators to think about the problem of society. He is courageous about his own terminology and never afraid to express what he believes through his statements or through his dramas. When we analyze and research on Tendulkar's own terminology we get fascinated about his creativity. Though, he has imbibed his ideas about 'violence' as an essential living fluid in his plays, his writing never become boring for audience. This is the specialty of Tendulkar, and that is why he got success as a playwright. Tendulkar's plays incorporate the devices of deliberate verbal assaults, de-masking of persona and exposing the true selves of the characters, the brutes behind the masks.

If we trace Tendulkar's terminology in different themes of his plays, we come across similar themes, for example, sex and violence are predominant features of the plays such as Gidhade (The Vultures) 'Sakharam Binder', 'Ghashiram Kotwal'. Violence along with the battle of wits is observed in the encounter in Umbugland. Kamala and Kanyadan deal with another social theme of violence which can we say the internalized violence and also with the issue of changed social order which is the

outcome of modern period and the political reforms wiping out the boundaries of caste, class etc.

When we examine the statements or expert opinions given by different scholars, we find that almost all of them accept Tendulkar's social concern for violence and its different aspects. Shailaja B. Wadikar views Tendulkar as a "silent social activist" with clear social commitment giving "the crude and banal aspects of life a dramatic garb."³¹ Wadikar describes him as a dramatist who demonstrates faith in human values, expressed without any attempt at moralizing and philosophizing about them.

Other critics and scholars express the same view about Tendulkar. We find in him a social scientist, political scientist, and psychologist who deal with the primitive instincts of violence and sex. He expresses his views through his theatre, his plays, and through his living characters and the violence, the inequalities, gender discrimination, hollow institutions, and hypocrisies of middle class life. His insightful objectification made him realize that the root cause behind the social crises of the society that disturbed him was the basic human instinct of violence and sex. He genuinely attempted to study, explore and validate 'violence' as the natural phenomenon and thereby the root cause of all problems of life through his

plays. But through this attempt, he took up socially controversial themes for his experimentation that jolted the orthodox Marathi theatre completely, causing it to protest vehemently against all of them. The fact that most of these plays had censor trouble compelling the producers to go to court, gave Tendulkar the public image of a fighter, of a writer at cross-purposes with the mainstream. Dr. Shreeram Lagoo appropriately addresses him as “Bravo Tendulkar” in his article on ‘Gidhade’.

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CHAPTER 3

“VIOLENT INTERPLAY OF
CONTRADICTION”

CHARACTER—DIALOGUES &
THEATRICAL DEVICES OF TENDULKAR.