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## **Vijay Tendulkar : A New Horizon in Indian English Drama**

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## Abstract

Vijay Tendulkar is avant-garde Marathi playwright. He portrays the theme of isolation and alienation of an individual and his perpetual struggle with the hostile surrounding. In spite of having his roots in Marathi regional theatre, Tendulkar has emerged as a new voice in Indian theatre to explore the volcanic dimensions of resentment and discontent hidden within the invisible terrains of human consciousness. Tendulkar, a sensitive artist and a versatile genius, with his passion for freedom and the boldness of a journalist gave a new direction to his dramatic creed. His plays deal with the controversial issues like gender prejudice, corruption in politics, Lesbian relationship, Caste discrimination and the commercialization of Press and Personal Relationship. Besides of these thematic concerns, each play has been investigated to explore Tendulkar's dexterity in mingling Western dramatic theories and strategies.

My paper is focused on how Vijay Tendulkar becomes the most controversial personality into the field of Indian Writing in English and opens a new horizon in Indian English Drama by his ceaseless experimentation with theatre and unconventional portrayal of characters in his plays. His works created storms not only in literary circles but also saw strong social reactions stemming from the charge of obscenity and hurting the sensitivities of certain classes. Tendulkar's plays 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.

Hope the research paper would be helpful to those who are pursuing their research on Vijay Tendulkar.

## Key Words:

Violence, complexity, Exploitation, discrimination, unconventional



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## Vijay Tendulkar : A New Horizon in Indian English Drama

“Theatre... is for the thick-skinned and the stubborn.”<sup>1</sup>

- Vijay Tendulkar.

Above quoted words show Tendulkar’s much understanding as a writer and enough experience of life. He knew very well that theatre was not considered to be a respectable profession and those who did theatre were looked down as wayward characters. But as any performing art is addictive, one cannot easily come out of it. Tendulkar firmly believed that it is an endless learning where one can learn by experimenting, by committing mistakes. In his own words he defined the Theatre –

“Only those who can take failures in their stride and will ungrudgingly pay a price for them can sustain in the Theatre.”<sup>2</sup>

Armed with a rare insight into the human nature and courage of conviction, Vijay Tendulkar, mercilessly dissected social aberrations with particular emphasis on the baser instincts in man that shocked the orthodox Marathi theatre. His ceaseless experimentation with theatre and unconventional portrayal of characters in the plays he wrote, created storms not only in literary circles but also saw strong social reactions stemming from the charge of obscenity and hurting the sensitivities of certain classes. Tendulkar’s plays 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. Gowri Ramnarayan rightly remarks about this courageous crusader at the very front page of FRONTLINE, in the article, *Writing for life*,

“Vijay Tendulkar, acknowledged as modern India’s finest playwright, never shied away from unpalatable, even unutterable, truths.”<sup>3</sup>

The man was acknowledged by three generations of admirers – even by some adversaries – as India’s finest playwright. At least, that is what fellow playwright, Girish Karnad declared and added,

“No one understood the sense of humiliation as Vijay Tendulkar did.”<sup>4</sup>



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Vijay Tendulkar was a leading Indian playwright, movie and television writer, literary essayist, political journalist and social commentator primarily in Marathi. He is best known for his plays. Many of his plays derived inspiration from real-life incidents or social upheavals, which provides clear light on harsh realities. He provided his guidance to students studying “Playwright Writing” in US universities. For over five decades, Tendulkar had been a highly influential dramatist and theatre personality in Maharashtra.

Tendulkar began his career writing for newspapers. He had already written a play, *Amchyavar Kon Prem Karnar (who will love us?)* and he wrote the play, *Grihastha (The Householder)* in his early 20s. The latter did not receive much recognition from the audience, and he vowed never to write again. Breaking the vow, in 1956 he wrote *Shrimant*, which established him as a good writer. *Shrimant* jolted the conservative audience of the time with its radical storyline; where in an unmarried young woman decides to keep her unborn child while her rich father tries to “buy” her a husband in an attempt to save his social prestige.

Tendulkar’s early struggle for survival and living for some time in tenements in Mumbai provided him first-hand experience about the life of urban lower middle class. He thus brought new authenticity to their depiction in Marathi theatre. Tendulkar’s writings rapidly changed the storyline of modern Marathi theatre in the 1950s and the 60s, with experimental presentations by theatre groups like “Rangayan.” Actors in these theatre groups like Shreeram Lagoo, Mohan Agashe and Sulbha Deshpande brought new authenticity and power to Tendulkar’s stories while introducing new sensibilities in Marathi theatre.

Tendulkar wrote the play *Gidhade (The Vultures)* in 1961, but it was not produced until 1970. The play was set in a morally collapsed family structure and explored the theme of violence. In his following creations, Tendulkar explored violence in its various forms: domestic, sexual, communal and political. Thus, *Gidhade* proved to be a turning point in Tendulkar’s writings with regard to establishment of his own unique writing style.

Based on a 1956 short story, *Die Panne (Traps)* by Friedrich Durrenment, Tendulkar wrote the play *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe (Silence! The Court is In Session)*. It was presented on the stage for the first time in 1967, and proved as one of his finest works. Satyadev Dubey presented it in movie form in 1971 with Tendulkar’s collaboration as the screenplay writer.

In his 1972 the play *Sakharam Binder (Sakharam, The Binder)*, Tendulkar dealt with the topic of domination of the male gender over the female gender. The main character, Sakharam, is a man devoid of



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ethics and morality, and professes not to believe in “Outdated” social codes and conventional marriage. He accordingly uses the society for his own pleasure. He regularly gives “Shelter” to abandoned wives, and uses them for his sexual gratification while remaining oblivious to the emotional and moral implications of his exploits. He justifies all his acts through claims of modern, unconventional thinking and comes up with hollow arguments, meant in fact to enslave women. Paradoxically, some of the women which Sakharam had enslaved buy into his arguments and simultaneously also badly want freedom from their enslavement.

In 1972, Tendulkar wrote another, even much more acclaimed play, *Ghashiram Kotwal* (*Ghashiram, the Constable*), which dealt with political violence. The play is a political satire created as a musical drama set in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Pune. It combined traditional Marathi folk music and drama with contemporary theatre techniques, creating a new paradigm for Marathi theatre. The play demonstrates Tendulkar’s deep study of group psychology, and it brought him a “Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship” (1974-75) for a project titled, “An Enquiry into the Pattern of Growing Violence in society and Its Relevance to Contemporary Theatre.” With over six thousand performances thus far in its original and translated versions, *Ghashiram Kotwal* remains one of the longest-running plays in the history of Indian theatre.

Tendulkar wrote screenplays for the movies *Nishant* (1974), *Akrosh* (The Cry) (1980), and *Ardh Satya* (*The Half-Truth*) (1984). All these achievements established him as an important “Chronicler of Violence” of the present times. He has written eleven movies in Hindi and eight movies in Marathi. The latter include *Samna* (*Confrontation*) (1975), *Simhaasan* (*Throne*) (1979), and *Umbartha* (*The Threshold*) (1981). The last one is a ground breaking feature film on women’s activism in India. It was directed by Jabbar Patel, and stars Smita Patil and Girish Karnad.

Tendulkar is a realist playwright. He himself explained that his plays are not the outcome of any influences. He produced whatever and whoever came to him during the different phases of the time. Neither being a Social reformer nor an idealist, he remains rather a bold voice of the time which disturbed the conventional peace of the society. He is not an escapist who either shelters into the past or the future. But as humanist who, with all its oddities or the weaknesses of the human beings, interested to explore them. In his own words he said that,

“I want to be in the present, however painful and unbearable it is. Want to be a man without a past.”<sup>5</sup>



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In his writing career, spanning more than five decades, Tendulkar has written 27 full-length plays and 25 one-act plays. Several of his plays have proven to be Marathi theatre classics. His plays have been translated and performed in many Indian languages. By providing insight into major social events and political upheavals during his adult life, Tendulkar became one of the strongest radical political voices in Maharashtra in recent times. While contemporary writers were cautiously exploring the limits of social realism, he jumped into the cauldron of political radicalism, and courageously exposed political hegemony of the powerful and the hypocrisies in the Indian social mindset. His powerful expression of human angst has resulted in his simultaneously receiving both wide public acclaim, and high censure from the orthodox and the political bigwigs.

Many of Tendulkar's plays derived inspiration from real-life incidents or social upheavals. Thus, the rise of Shiv Sena in Maharashtra in the 1970s was reflected in Tendulkar's *Ghushiram Kotwal*. The true story of a journalist, who purchased of a woman from the rural sex industry in order to reveal police and political involvement in this trade, only to abandon the woman once he had no further need for her, is detailed in Tendulkar's *Kamala*. The real-life story of an actress whose acting career got ruined after her same sex affair became public knowledge inspired Tendulkar to write *Mitrachi Ghosta (A Friend's Story)*.

In the chronological order, Tendulkar received his first award in 1955. His play *Shreemant* (1955) wins the award of Maharashtra State Government that followed by his collection of one-act plays in 1969, *Ajagar Ani Gandharva* (The Python and the Gandharva). In 1970 he received two eminent awards Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay award. He wins the National Film Award for Best Screenplay for the movie, *Mahthan* in 1977. In 1981 he got two awards, the filmfare Best Screenplay Award and the Filmfare Best Story Award for the movie, *Aakrosh*. In 1983 for the movie *Ardh Satya*, he wins the Filmfare Best Screenplay Award. In 1984 he got Padma Bhushan. Moreover, he was rewarded by the Saraswati Samman in 1993. In 1998 he received Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship. He was honoured by the Kalidas Samman in 1999. In 2001 he wins Katha chudamani Award and in 2006 he received The Little Magazine SALAM Award.

Vijay Tendulkar, the first Marathi playwright who has transformed the regional theatre into the national theatre, is a man of radical and progressive views. Arundhati Banerjee is rightly justified him by saying :

“Vijay Tendulkar has been in the vanguard of not just Marathi but Indian theatre for almost forty years.”<sup>6</sup>





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Tendulkar's worldly fame primarily rests upon his most controversial plays *Silence! The Court is in Session*, *Ghashiram Kotwal*, *The Vultures*, *Sakharam Binder*, *Kanyadaan*, *Kamala* etc. The play *Silence! The Court is in Session* discusses the problem of unmarried motherhood through the conflict between an individual and society where innocence is ruthlessly crushed by cruelty. For this play, Tendulkar got inspiration from a real-life incident. He met an amateur group that was on its way to stage a mock trial in Vile-parle, a suburb of Mumbai. While overhearing their conversation, the outline of the play began to take shape in his mind, and the ultimate result of it was the birth and creation of the play.

The play is a social satire with the tragedy of an individual victimized by society. Tendulkar presents a world apparently dominated by male chauvinists. However, the dramatic action revolves round the character of Leela Benare. Tendulkar, though not a self-acknowledged feminist, treats the character of Benare with great compassion and understanding while pitting her against the men who are selfish, hypocritical and brutally ambitious. All the characters except Leela Benare are the representatives of the fundamentally Orthodox society. The theatre group is a "miniscule cross-section of middle-class society, the members' representative of its different sub-strata. Their characters, dialogues, gestures and even mannerisms reflect their petty; circumscribed existence."<sup>7</sup> Frustrated and angry as they are in their individual lives, they go to the extent of maligning their companion also, for they are malicious and jealous in attitude towards their fellow being. Tendulkar here throws light on the inherent wickedness of human nature that neither allows anybody to be happy with life nor sees and endures others being happy. Benare's companions are themselves dissatisfied with life as they fail to achieve their desired aims in their individual lives.

*The Vultures* exposes the evil tendencies inherent in human psyche that render people blind and transform them from human beings into loathsome animals. The play displays the unmitigated violence arising from selfishness, greed and sinfulness. On its first production on the stage, there was a great storm in the society around. The conservative Maharashtrian people were stunned to observe the vulgar reality of their lives presented through the sexual relations and the scenes of violence in the play. It is for this reason that Girish Karnad says:

"The staging of *Gidhade* could be compared with the blasting of bomb."<sup>8</sup>



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The censor-board, too, felt that it was obscene and suspended its public performance for the time being. The play is a ruthless dissection of human nature as it depicts violence, avarice, selfishness, sensuality and sheer wickedness inherent in man's life. The title of the play *The Vultures* itself indicates the unpleasant subject-matter of the play. The characters belong to the middle-class family. The degenerate nature of the family throws a glare of light on the baser aspects of human nature. In Arundhati Banerjee's view:

“The beating up of the father by his own sons, the two brother's forcible abortion of their sister's child, the mutual hatred among the members of family underline the fundamental evil inherent in human nature.”<sup>9</sup>

However, *Sakharam Binder* depicts excessive physical lust of a straightforward, angry and frustrated man and destructive nature of a secretive woman. It explores complexities of human nature. The play depicts a triangle relationship of Laxmi-Sakharam-Champa. Sakharam, the protagonist, is at the pivot of the situation. Laxmi considers Champa as her rival in Sakharam's love. The play has created dramatic history by challenging the Censor Board because it was initially banned. “Tendulkar's projection of Sakharam who rejects the artificial values imposed by the society and the use of extremely vulgar and outspoken language incensed the censor authorities. Later the restrictions were lifted and the play became extremely popular.”<sup>11</sup> Sakharam is frank and outspoken and he tries to work out an independent philosophy of life, with no sense of false obligations. He has no social taboos. He drinks heavily, has no sense of guilt and admits to all his vices. Sakharam is a bitter critic of the institution of marriage and attacks husbands while pitying wives. He assures every woman he brings home of his 'good' treatment. He frames certain rules for his women companions. But he tends to contradict himself in word and deed in the absence of well-considered moral alternatives when he tells Champa that a woman's job is to make the food herself. He does not want to be a decent husband for any woman, however he wants that the woman who, lives with him shall have to be a wife to him. *Sakharam Binder* is a fascinating study of the relationship between man and woman. Here, Tendulkar's love for the macabre and the obsession with sex and violence as an integral part of human nature and relationships receive a vitriolic expression. The brutal objectivity and crudity with which he depicts the triangular relationship between Sakharam and his two mistresses sometimes borders on a sort of revelry into the Philistinism in literature. What Sakharam the patron of 'Symbiotic' polygamy, demands from his mistresses, is absolute submission along with domestic comfort and physical gratification. The wretched women are turned into his slaves in his kitchen as well as in his bed.





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The play ends with Sakharam's pride shattered. The bitter critic of marriage as an institution is proved, at the end, to be a puny male chauvinist.

The play *Ghashiram Kotwal* makes room for Tendulkar in the galaxy of international playwrights. It proves to be a landmark in the history of the Indian theatre. Using the historical incident in the Peshwa regime, the playwright exposes violence, treachery, sensuality and immorality latent in contemporary politics and reveals the fact that hypocrisy, greed and brutality characterize power politics.

The success of the play lies in the issues raised by the playwright. *Ghashiram\_Kotwal* also explores the varied aspects of the sexual exploitation of women in power politics. The questions raised are not concerned with the eighteenth century city-life of the people in Poona. It means that the play is not topical; it relates to all societies and all ages; in a sense, it is universal. In the writer's note to Vasant Deo's Hindi translation, Tendulkar opines:

In my view, *Ghashiram Kotwal* indicates a particular social situation which is neither old nor new. It is beyond time and space. Therefore, 'Ghashiram' and 'Nana' are also beyond space and time.<sup>11</sup>

Tendulkar has used all the three-fold tradition of Indian theatre – the classical, the folk and the modern in this play. No other major playwright before Tendulkar has made such extensive and innovative use of folk theatre. The affective direction by Jabbar Patel contributed a lot to the success and popularity of the play. He made use of humming in addition to the songs and music so that the audience has what Vasantrao Deshpande, a classical singer and composer himself calls "the first sangeet natak in the real sense of the term."<sup>12</sup> The folk form *Tamasha* is used very effectively from the beginning to the end of the play to expose the social and political evils in society. The play has several dimensions and effects. Tendulkar achieves his effects by the use of the various techniques of his craft.

*Encounter in Umbugland*, focusing the political situation of India in 1971, represents Tendulkar's "New Woman" in the character of Vijya who turns the tables on her treacherous male advisers.

By *Kamala* Tendulkar, questions the false social norms prevalent in the society, asks everyone to conform to its yardstick of decorum and propriety. It says that irregular and abnormal behaviour is not to be



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tolerated. No reason is good enough to justify and find excuses for a person's erratic behaviour. The play explores the layers of the internal mind and exposes the psychological findings. An unfortunate woman sold away in the flesh market and a so-called happy housewife married to a daring journalist, and both have a revelation of finding themselves on a common platform of sexual slavery in this male dominated world moved Tendulkar to probe into their pathetic condition. As the centre of the play is a self-seeking journalist, Jaisingh Jadav who has bought Kamala for Rs. 250 at an auction in a flesh market. He wants to present her at a surprise press conference to prove that such things still happen in modern, democratic India. The play has raised certain cardinal questions regarding the value system of a modern success-oriented generation which is ready to sacrifice human values even in the name of humanity itself.

*Kanyadaan*, the most controversial of all the plays, dwells on an extremely sensitive social and political issue, namely, the conflict between the upper castes and *Dalits*, a phenomenon still rampant in several parts of India. Despite sixty three years of independence *Dalits* continue to suffer abject misery and ill-treatment at the hands of the upper castes. Politicians, instead of trying to uproot this evil, seem to capitalize on it.

The play is perhaps supposed to be based on the life of the Dalit poet, Namdev Dhasal. It is criticized as anti-Dalit and has provoked a great deal of anger and protest. The play depicts the conflict between the ideal and the real through the delineation of a daughter's sacrifice in pursuing her father's ideals. Jyoti, the daughter of a socialist politician, Nath Devalalikar, marries a young Dalit poet, Arun Athavale, with her father's approval and encouragement.

Over-idealistic democratic couples, their revolutionary daughter who marries a down caste poet and gets disillusioned in the consequent turn of events due to the unexpectedly barbaric behaviour of her life partner are presented on stage by Tendulkar with a contemporary relevance. These extraordinary and selective unique characters represent the plight and realities of common people, their aspirations, sufferings, frustrations and agonies. The play concerns the unmistakable ambivalence in the words and deeds of both the promoters and the beneficiaries of Dalit upliftment programmes. The play also exposes the oppression, exploitation and humiliation of women by their father and husband. It is an example of a situation where, in a patriarchal society, a woman is used or downtrodden by man to suit his purposes. Though the book received Saraswati Samman, it provoked *chappal throwing* when the play was staged in Marathi. Tendulkar says,



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“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 to have earned both this honour and that insult. As its creator, I respect both verdicts.”<sup>13</sup>

The play *A Friend's Story* was based on Tendulkar's story *Mitra* which was written in the mid – 50s. The story is related to the life of a girl who lived in Pune, and whom Tendulkar had seen on stage performing a male role. In the preface to the play Tendulkar says:

“I was keen to hear him (her friend) about her (Mitra). (She was still to be seen in Pune) I came to know from his talk about a trait in her that I had not heard of before. She had a craving for a girl, and had an affair with her which ended in a major crisis for Mitra..... I still remember the shock waves and the confusion produced in my young mind.”<sup>14</sup>

The play explores violence, sensuality, wickedness that resides in human nature. The violence projected in the play is of psychological, physical and verbal violence. The play explores the nature of both homosexual and heterosexual love. Since the play's main focus is the projection of violence, it exists in a sexually perverted or deformed person and the psychic violence that society callously exhibits towards such an individual.

“*Safar*, a hard hitting play by Tendulkar deftly unveils the complex and mulish attitudes that permeate our middle – class society.”<sup>15</sup> They are the hideously ugly attitudes that are likely to make men topple down. The central character is locked within the confines of home by his over protective parents. At one end while he is content with the arrangements, he wants to break away. But fear, anger, hatred, loath impedes his need to go ahead in his journey of life. Finally, what remains is a dullful, frustrated individual (symbolic of our society), resigned to his pitiable fate. The play is a fine portrayal of the complexities of human character.

*The Cyclist* was intended to be Tendulkar's last play, and perhaps his ultimate comment on himself and the reality surrounding him. Tendulkar had recognized for its intellectual integrity, innovative form and content. His plays have generally dealt with themes that unravel the exploitation of power and latent



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violence in human relationships seeking always a well deliberated resolution. “As an intended last play”, *The Cyclist* is different from Tendulkar’s large body of work. It is a skillfully crafted, uninterrupted piece about the adventure of life told through a cyclist’s journey. As an experimental playwright, Tendulkar’s every play, in its form and structure, is different from the previous one. This complex theme he takes head on, and tackles with a simple form and language – “an episodic structure and naturalistic *mot naif* dialogue.”<sup>16</sup> Life’s complexity can perhaps be best understood when told in simple terms. “In this, Tendulkar joins other great journey writers such as Homer (*The Odyssey*), Voltaire (*candied*), Ibsen (*Peer Gynt*) and Beckett (*Waiting for Godot*).”<sup>17</sup> Tendulkar has described his plays as about the reality surrounding him. He knows the meaninglessness of life.

In 2004 Tendulkar’s original written English play *His Fifth Woman* published. This play graphically describes the injustices and inequalities suffered by women in this male-dominated mundane world and explore the life after death. It visualizes a picture of the next world based on egalitarianism where there is no distinction between the rich and the poor and between the man and the woman. The play is considered to be a prequel to his famous 1972 play, *Sakharam Binder* because it delineates the thoughts, behaviour and activities of Sakharam prior to the onset of that drama.

The play touches the heart rending pinnacle that shows the miserable and pitiable predicament of the women led at different stages of life. The playwright, here, articulates the various tribulations endured by a girl in her onward journey to womanhood and thereafter, in the form of the words of the spirit of the fifth woman who feels deliverance there,

“No question of having a body. Getting beaten by men. Having menstruation every three weeks. And the bother of carrying someone in your belly for bloody nine months. And the pains of giving birth eulogized by men as the joy of motherhood.”<sup>20</sup>

Again Tendulkar works under the naturalistic influence and presents the reality of life. He boldly says that Sakharam’s game will continue till the woman needs food and shelter due to her economic impoverishment. He advocates the cause of the economic independence of woman, which will ensure that their wishes and body may not be trampled down under manly vanity. Dr. Balwant Bhaneja aptly says,



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“His plays show how complex the responses of the human heart and soul are leaving us with no option but to engage with his protagonists and the emotional world they inhabit.”<sup>21</sup>

Known for his reticence about his work, Tendulkar rarely watched his plays being performed. He nevertheless opened up when questioned about his “failures.” You knew just why he enjoyed film makes Ritwik Ghatak’ quip,

“The audience flopped, not my film!”<sup>22</sup>

When Tendulkar explained that *Baby* did not make drama of cruelty, it just showed the way people lived. “People don’t like to acknowledge that kind of matter of fact reality. Where else could the girl go?” Was he cynical! “No, I just refuse to pamper myself with illusions.”<sup>23</sup>

No one could accuse Tendulkar for shying away from unpalatable, even unutterable, truths. Whatever the audience had response, it had never been a factor in Tendulkar’s writings. Perhaps that is why he hated doing screenplays where he had to accommodate other people’s requirements. He says,

“My director is patiently waiting for me to see what he sees. I’m struggling to make him see what I see.”<sup>24</sup>

Again he confesses his incapacity to worn under one’s expectations, when he was being taken to a director’s ideal location,

“We are here. But this world has undergone a vast change after my director grew out of his sweet childhood. He stood there, dejected, and I stood with him wondering what was so sweet about this place? Why had he trudged so much for it? And how am I going to use it in my script which has to be ‘pleasant’, with ‘magical’ elements of pure, simple nostalgia for a world which is no more and which every member of the audience would like to have back? The director has engaged another writer in case I do not deliver the goods. I will be happy to hand over the project to him and go back to my easy chair.”<sup>25</sup>





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But the director is pleased with Tendulkar's jotting. "I am destined to die writing film scripts,"<sup>26</sup> Tendulkar groans and begins to flesh out the script, in English, his language for screenplays. The dramatist's dislike arose from the fact that the writer has little freedom in cinema. The word is subservient to the visual. Tendulkar publicly criticized changes film makers made to his script, though on occasion he also praised such changes as better than his original. With the highly researched *Sardar* screenplay profiling Vallabhbbhai Patel, he took no chances but published the film script independently for the record.

Tendulkar's contribution to the Hindi Cinema is a note-worthy, especially during the period of 1970s and 1980s. The playwright did not change his mind even after awards and accolades for classics such as *Aakrosh*, *Ardh Satya*, *Manthan* and *Akriet* which were marked by verbal economy and stark silences. The film maker Shyam Benegal remembers Tendulkar's beautifully handwritten draft, no word scratched out, breathing an "incredible sense of drama, no such thing as an information scene to tie up the narrative. He never simplified a character either. In *Nishant*, the woman [Shabana Azmi] runs away with her abductor, in a turning of the Ramayana on its head!"<sup>27</sup> Jabbar Patel who directed his play *Ghashiram Kotwal* and screenplay *Simhasan*, explains that,

"With Tendulkar language was gesture. When you read it, you know what to do, what gesture or movement to make."<sup>28</sup>

Again Shabana Azmi sums up Tendulkar's approach:

"Tendulkar takes no positions, waves no flag, just focuses on truth."<sup>29</sup>

The National Film Award winning the movie, *Manthan (The Churning)*, 1976, was made by Shyam Benegal. It was based on a story written jointly by Verghese Kurien and director, Shyam Benegal. It is set amidst the backdrop of the White Revolution of India which started in 1970, ushering an era of plenty, from a measly amount of milk production and distribution. Aside from the great measurable success that this project was, it also demonstrated the power of "Collective might." It won in the 1977, the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Hindi and National Film Award for Best Screenplay for Vijay Tendulkar, and was also Indian submission for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film for 1976. Casting by Smita Patil, Girish Karnad, Naseeruddin Shah, Amrish Puri, the film traces, a small set of poor farmers of Kheda district in Gujarat had the vision and foresight to act in a way that was good for the society and not



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for the self alone.

In 1983, the trio, Shyam Benegal, Govind Nihalani and Vijay Tendulkar had made the movie *Ardha Satya*. It is a story of the relationship between a policeman, Amrish Puri and his son, Om Puri. The father's portrayal in this film is rather cruel. But since he is the production of Vijay Tendulkar, it is not proper to justify this character by a single side. Because it is not possible for Vijay Tendulkar to write a simple character that has been given only one characteristic. His characters have to be completely complex in nature because they belong to real life. His characters are seen in real life. It is not possible for Govind Nihalani to Show Tendulkar's characters seized under monotonous behaviour and his characters have to face the volatile conditions and behaviour because life is like that only and prototypes don't work here. That's the beauty of films written by Vijay Tendulkar that many characters, shown as supporting characters in the film, can be explored further to make them the major and lead characters of different films. In 1983, Tendulkar got the Filmfare Award for the best screenplay.

Besides this, Tendulkar is the author of original stories and screenplays for eight films in Marathi, including *Samna (Confrontation, 1975)*, *Simhasan (Throne, 1979)* and *Umbartha (The Threshold, 1981)*. *Umbartha* is a groundbreaking feature film on women's activism in India. Tendulkar wrote the original scripts and dialogue for eleven Hindi films. *Nishant, Manthan, Aakrosh, Ardha Satya* and *Aghat* are defined the paradigm for the 'Middle – Cinema' movement in India, positioned between the Art Cinema of such film makers as Satyajit Ray, and the commercial cinema produced by Bollywood. In addition, he has written and directed discussion shows on current social issues for Indian television in Hindi.

Tendulkar's dramatic output and theatrical activities in Marathi and his work in Hindi Cinema have received wide recognition. His lifetime achievement in the literary and performing arts has been recognized by the Government of India's Padmabhushan (1984), the Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar (1990), the Janasthan Award (1991), the Kalidas Samman (1992). The Pandit Mahadev Shastri Joshi Award (1999) and the Dinanath Mageshkar Award (1998). Among his other honours are a Nehru Fellowship (1973-74), an Honourary Doctorate from the Ravindra Bharati University, Calcutta (1992), and a Lifetime Fellowship from the National Academy of the performing Arts, New Delhi (1998).

He is the co-founder and president of the experimental theatre group, Avishkar (Bombay) and has served on the Board of Directors of the National School of Drama (New Delhi), and the Bharat Bhavan



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Rangmandal (Bhopal). He has been a member of the Advisory Council of the Shriram Centre of the Arts (New Delhi), a trustee of the National Book Trust (New Delhi), as well as the President of the National Centre for Advocacy Studies (Pune). Due to his bulk of contribution to the Indian English Theatre and experiments with the dramatic form, Tendulkar has been acknowledged as the new horizon in Indian English Dram

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