

## Friends, associates recall fiercely independent playwright

'How does the world run', is a question that troubled eminent playwright Vijay Tendulkar, whose death Monday left the connoisseurs of theatre and cinema emotionally shattered.

One of Tendulkar's old associates, actor-director Amol Palekar went down memory lane on his close friend and mentor.

'I think we got together in 1966. I was a young painter and Vijay had come to my house to see my paintings. It was a moment of pride and honour for me and we discussed about paintings at length. Then, I walked down to the railway station with him and he took a local train to return home,' said Palekar, his voice choking with emotions for his friend.

Dwelling on their shared special moments, Palekar said he could recall many and it was difficult to pick and highlight any one.

'However, I consider it a great privilege to have interacted closely and worked with a titan like Tendulkar and other giants of the modern Indian theatre, like Badal Sarkar, Girish Karnad and Rakesh Mohan,' Palekar told IANS, soon after attending Tendulkar's funeral Monday afternoon.

He recalled how Tendulkar and Sarkar would pamper him and encouraged him by giving him a rare platform to grow as an artiste.

Palekar's voice shook when he recalled his last meeting with Tendulkar. 'It was last week, before he lapsed into coma. I had gone to meet him in hospital and he gave me a wonderful smile. He said feebly that he would not be able to talk much. I patted his hand, and said that we would catch up with a good conversation after I returned from a trip abroad. He smiled and shook my hands. That was the last I saw of Tendulkar. This morning, I heard he was no more..'

Satyadev Dubey, who shared a long association with Tendulkar, told IANS from Mumbai. 'We knew each other for 45 years. I had directed one of his plays called 'Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe'. I also acted in the Hindi version of that play - 'Khamosh! Adalat Jari Hai'.'

'I have worked in three or four plays with him. We shared a very quiet relationship. He always gave me the freedom to work the way I wanted to. His death has come as a major loss to our industry and it cannot be described in words. Both of us were very fond of each other and used to enjoy each other's company,' Dubey recalled.

'Once, three or four years back, we met at a common friend's place and he asked me... 'Dubey, I only want to understand how does the world run?' That is one sentence of his I remember clearly and would remember always.' Dubey told IANS.

Sudha Shivpuri, better known as 'Baa' in 'Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi', was the main lead in Tendulkar's play titled 'Khamosh! Adalat Jari Hai'. She told IANS by phone from Mumbai: 'This play was really nice and although I have met him just two to three times, he came across as a very nice person. I have worked with both his daughters and the whole family was very intelligent. Meri taraf se unko shraddhanjali hai (My tributes to him).'

Veteran film director Lekh Tandon told IANS from Mumbai: 'I have great regard for the novels he has written. I only shared a professional relationship with him and there was a time when both of us were keen on doing a project together. But it didn't materialise. He was a great man and I pray for his soul.'

Maharashtra Governor S.C. Jamir described Tendulkar as 'one of the most brilliant and progressive playwrights, an activist and social thinker produced by Maharashtra.'

Expressing his deep condolences, Jamir said that Tendulkar was widely read, his study of the world theatre was immense.

'Tendulkar was bold in his thinking and expression, and was ever ready to experiment with new ideas. As a fiercely independent thinker, Tendulkar fought for the rights of artists and citizens all his life. His literary works as indeed the screenplays penned by him have withstood the test of time because of the strong social message they contained,' said Jamir.

Himani Shivpuri, TV, film and theatre artist, said: 'I have acted in one play written by him. When I was a student at the National School of Drama (NSD), he had come to take a lecture. He introduced us to the world of theatre. Tendulkar sahaab was a prolific writer and for those in theatre, he was their idol.'

Himani loved his plays like 'Gidhade' (1961), 'Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe' (1967).

Noted theatre person Lushin Dubey told IANS in Delhi: 'Although I haven't worked with him or done any of his plays, I have read them and I must say that we have lost a very sound writer.'

( © IANS / India eNews)