

Queering Heteronormativity: Representations of Same-Sex Desire and Societal Taboos in Vijay Tendulkar's *A Friend's Story*

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Abstract: *Vijay Tendulkar's A Friend's Story (Mitramachi Goshta) occupies a crucial position in Indian theatre for its bold and unsettling engagement with same-sex desire and the rigid moral codes of middle-class society. Written at a time when homosexuality was largely silenced, pathologized, or criminalized in India, the play interrogates heteronormativity and exposes the violence embedded in social conformity. This article examines how Tendulkar queers dominant narratives of sexuality through the character of Sumitra (Mitra), whose lesbian desire challenges patriarchal, heterosexist, and moralistic structures.*

The play does not romanticize queer desire; instead, it presents a complex and often tragic portrayal of identity, repression, and societal hostility. Using queer theory, feminist criticism, and sociocultural analysis, this paper explores how A Friend's Story destabilizes binaries of normal/abnormal, moral/immoral, and masculine/feminine, revealing the oppressive mechanisms through which society disciplines non-normative sexualities. Ultimately, the play emerges as a powerful critique of social hypocrisy and a pioneering text in the discourse of queer representation in Indian drama.

Keywords: Vijay Tendulkar, *A Friend's Story*, queer theory, heteronormativity, same-sex desire, societal taboos, Indian theatre