

# THE DELHI AGE

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Vijay Tendulkar receiving award from Mahasweta Devi

### Vijay Tendulkar gets Katha Award

BY ANNIE SAMSON

**T**he best writers create stories; which are imaginative and powerful instruments for the linking of cultures. Katha, a voluntary organisation working in the field of education and publishing, rewards such writers with the Katha Chudamani Award for lifetime literary achievement.

This year the award was presented to the Marathi playwright, writer, essayist, and journalist Vijay Tendulkar by none other than writer and activist Mahasweta Devi at the India Habitat Centre on September 10.

"I meet Tendulkar from time to time and we share the common experiences of the Forties," Mahasweta Devi said. She pointed out that even in her seventy-sixth year after India's independence, she finds the absence of freedom all around her; and complained that painters, sculptors, teachers and writers do not feel free to express themselves; they are not getting the freedom they are entitled to.

Tendulkar began his career as an apprentice in a bookshop, read proofs in a printing press and later worked as a journalist in *Navghurat*, *Maratha* and *Loksaitha*. His first story, *Amelhyavar Kon Prem Karnar* was published in 1947, which led Tendulkar discovering himself as a dramatist.

Tendulkar who has to his credit path-breaking plays like *Sakharan Binder*, *Giddhade*, *Baby*, and *Ghasiram - Korwal* among others described his contribution as "modest and fortunate." Apart from theatre, Tendulkar has written some powerful screenplays for Marathi and Hindi films like *Sama*, *Umbartha*, *Aakrosh*, *Manthan*, *Arth Satya* and *Asghar*. For Tendulkar, writing is his first love and life is "an unplanned trip to nowhere, full of surprises.

Living and exploring life in its unlimited pattern defined writing for him.

Tendulkar admires Mahasweta Devi for her work among the tribals. He told her, "Sometimes I feel that I shouldn't have been a writer. You work among the tribals and have done something specific — but I went on developing and writing about my characters — shaping and reshaping them while something else was happening outside."

"My power of writing is only on paper and the utter powerlessness that I feel outside has created a pain in me. I feel like I have not changed a single person. When I wake up, I feel a shock. Everything looks like a nightmare. I put my protest in token demonstrations, but I feel the pain is increasing all the time," Tendulkar added.

**A**ll the speakers at the function were united in their resentment against the interference by the politicians into the field of art and culture. Krishna Sobti, the first recipient of the Katha Chudamani Award said, "We approve of politics but not the way it functions. You can listen to all that is being said, but if it is thrust down upon you then it is wrong." Sobti's writing is very society-centric and revolves around partition, feudalism dissolution of societal structures and human values.

Taking a dig, Tendulkar went to recount how once, one of the politicians had come up to him and enquired about his studio, mistaking him for a film producer. Then he had to remind him that he was a writer and not a film personality. Tendulkar was however quick to clarify, "Don't get me wrong. Politicians have educated me greatly. From my journalistic days, I have gained insight into their behaviour. They have a tendency to turn everything into an arts and culture issue."