

Lecture 6:
A Friend's Story

Welcome back to today's session in our last session we actually discussed Tendulkar's, play *Silence* the court is in session, which was written and published in 1967, and we saw how it's a play on the dramatization of patriarchy, patriarchal social and sexual mores, and the way, a young school teacher Miss. Benari, becomes a victim, of this patriarchal drama, even as she tries to actually aggress, and transgress, the sexual mores of a community and as the theatre critic, show meek, Banda possesses correctly, that it was part of Tendulkar's, dramatic strategy that Benares immediate prosecutors, a persecutors in the play are as powerless, as she and we saw thus that in the play, the other characters in the play, besides Miss Benari, are actually quite helpless and, and, and, and, in some sense struggling, to make ends meet they have, they're all amateur actors many, of them are you know? Inter, inter intermediate failed, some is a one of them is a pretentious lawyer and so on. Right? So, they're all very insecure characters. So, it is part of Tendulkar's, dramatic strategy, that men are raised immediate persecutors, in the play are as powerless, as she and all the exemptions to cut Benari, down to size or more they're, striving after power than a real exercise of power so, we also see how the project their own insecurities, their own desires and fantasies, on to Miss. Benari, and they make her the object of their insecurities so, as a matter of fact Tendulkar's plays at considerable length on the individual powerlessness of each of her assailants, each of them grabbing, every opportunity to expose or humiliate another and ganging up only to attack Benari, in the process exposing their own powerlessness and the desperate need to assume a pretence of power in the collective. So, this is a court from show meek, Banda possesses introduction to the players now. Let's move on to another similar play in the sense that it, it overlaps with *Silence* the courtesan session in terms of again it's a critic, of and it's satirizing of certainly institutional forms of power, of sexual mores and you know? And this plays a specific focus on sexuality. So, the name of the play is a friend's story Right? and it's it, was one of Tendulkar's plays, that wasn't long in the making I think, he writes about his play in the preface to the translation of his collected place where he talks about you know? How, this play came to be and this is what he says about here the first germ, where the first germ, for the play came Right? Came from? I was in my teens this is Tendulkar's speaking, I was in my teens when the woman who became Mitra, in a friend's story came into my life, this was in the early 1940s, we lived in Pune then my elder sister, took me to a play staged on the annual Day celebrations, of her college the performance was at night and she took me as her escort, since, young girls were not supposed to be out alone at that time, the play was a melodrama and all the characters, both male and female, were played by women students Mitra, played an old man, hers was a strong character in the play, upright aggressive plain speaking and manly even at his age. A woman playing a man role, a male role, is generally greeted by, college students with catcalls readers of laughter and naughty remarks. She looks like a woman despite all efforts to conceal her feminine attributes, such as long hair and dress, was also her voice and manner not so, when Mitra appeared on the stage as an outspoken manly old man, of course the students new her as one of them, a woman student and must have been ready to greet her with the choicest of dirty remarks but, when Mitra made her entry, there was respectful silence among the audience, to my amazement she looked like a man and an old man, at that though not a soul as a character in the play how, you'd show through, the voice was gruff and throaty, the face looked rugged with a white moustache and make up, the gate and Manawa unmistakably, masculine this is my first memory of all I remembered that I had seen her many times before riding a cycle to a college she used to wear a white saree, a plain borderless blouse with a collar, and white tennis shoes not chapels, she never wore any colours she appeared tall for a woman and her frame lacked feminine curves, on or off the cycle she was erect and manly her appearance in the stage therefore was not only convincing but, or inspiring at the first, very first glance her performance that night made a deep impact on my juvenile mind, not the play but Mithras performance this performance remained with me later on my sister, gave me some information about Mithras background and family, Mitra became a real character in my mind and remained so, a female who was so, very much like a male many years

after that I had a new friend who was older than me, he was an actor, in the course of her long conversations he mentioned Mitra. she had been his friend during the college days he used to act in place with an all-male cast at annual days in collage and Mitra used to play the male in plays, with an all-female cast my actor friend helped Mitra situation which she had shared only with him, I was keen to hear him, talk about her she was still to be seen in Pune ,I came to know about him from 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 up in a major crisis for Mitra, he practically, finished her life I still remember the shock waves and the confusion produced in my young mind. I had just begun my career in writing them but, what I heard about Mitra did not prompt me to write about her at once, it took me some years to surface in the form of a short story, it was written in the mid 50s, with the same structures the play written years later the title was Mitra, it had been one of the, the Diwali annuals Marathi, and was appreciated it was a story of relationship between a boy, were just touched 20, and a slightly older young woman, who fascinates and frightens him at the same time. The boy is a narrator it is his experience, the thought of writing and staging a play on a same-sex relationship was out of the question yet, the play Mitra, materialized out of some compulsion which had no logic, it grew in spite of the near impossibility of a play on a lesbian being staged, let alone seen by traditional Marathi audiences, the play got written in spite of me, it was staged by a group of youngsters it did, not have a run only a few shows which were hated by, the women and sneered at by, the men in the audience so, this is what Tendulkar's, has to say about the early story that he wrote, on which then became display much later on. so, the story itself as Tendulkar's own quotation suggests is about a woman named Sumitra, who was called Mitra, in the play, who has an intense infatuation for another woman called Nama, Namritha, and the narrator of the story, of the play is this man called Bappu, he is called Bappu and he is a young bachelors of arts undergraduate and he is starting in college his actual name is Shrikanth Marathi, but he is called Bappu and Bappu the stage directions say that he's anywhere between 18 ,and 30, years old he looks younger than he actually, is he's seen talking to himself, slowly he begins to address an audience so, what happens? in this play is that it's formally, organized around Bappu, as a narrator who narrates what what's, what's been happening? And what will happen? In the play and he constantly steps in and out of his role as a narrator, on one hand is a narrator, on the other hand he is also a fellow actor. So, if you look at the way the play opens it begins with Bappu's, narration and kind of he introduces the other main protagonist, of the play which is Sumitra. Right? So, the entire play revolves around Sumitra, her rather manipulative relationship with Bappu, Bappu's love, and fear, and fascination for Sumitra, and later on his hatred for Sumitra, because he realizes that despite his love and compassion for her, she manipulates and takes much advantage of him and, and he she, is he is the only one to whom she actually comes out as woman who likes or desires other women. Right? So, but it's only till the very end of the play that Sumitra, actually exposes her vulnerability but until then Sumitra, is a very you know? hot-headed independent fiercely, independent woman who doesn't, trust anyone who doesn't, rely on me in any one she feels that she's been completely rejected by society but, she is determined to make her way through without depending on anybody else. Right? So, she has this fierce sense of individual, individuality but we get to know, also in the play that this outward apparent sense of Independence actually thinly-veils, a deep sense of heart and misery, and insecurity, the other characters in the play are is Nama, Nama who is Sumatra's, I mean beloved and you have Manya, del V, del V, is Nama's boyfriend, also college going student Pandey, is Bappu's roommate, and so you just have about five characters in the play. Right? And the entire play is framed by Bappu's, narration as he steps in and out of his role as a narrator. so, he narrates this particular incident he steps back he participates in the action that he has just narrated, it could be a flashback, or it's something that is going to happen. Right? So, to open with Bappu's lines Bappu, says and this is how, the what has transpired so, far in the play and the character of Sumitra, is introduced. You can't tell, a love story in a dispassionate voice, even as you narrated it becomes, your own why does it

happen? Why do, we live through somebody else's love story, as if it were our own? why do we go through death? When they die, this is Mithra's love story, Mitra, Sumitra, Sumitra Devi, Sumitra, was not related to me in any way, she was my friend, friend why can't you have a woman for a friend? Sumitra was my friend. I was my first year in college, when Sumitra, came from elsewhere and joined as a second year, BA student. She was different from all the other girls or so I thought. The other girls were the helpless touch-me-not kind but , there was a masculine vigour in Sumitra dev's stride and speech, she was carefully her laughter came in loud buzz, she had eyes which met you in straight combat, her broad forehead suggested intelligence, her entire personality had a natural aggressive masculinity but, with a figure irresistibly attractive to men. She was an instant hit with the students, Mitra, Singh needs tried to grab chances for lessons, exchanging lessons and notes with her sorry nerds tried to grab chances for exchanging lessons and notes with her. The scams would stand in scattered groups to whistle at her and bass snide remarks I, I was neither scholar nor sportsman, I did not have the guts to become a champ, I had absolutely no interest in politics, no professor could have recalled my name without some effort, I was one of the crowd who entered college solely fulfilling the benches in the in the classroom, I had just one special trait an inferiority complex. How, could I hope to get anywhere near Sumitra? I couldn't even dream of engaging her in conversation, strangely enough that's the way it turned out so, in the initial opening lines of Bappu, you realized that he is not a very conventional man, but he is not a sportsman ,he's not a scholar, he doesn't have guts, he says he has no courage to resist, resist or rebel and he feels that he's, just there in college to fill the classroom, he also feels extremely insecure around Sumitra because, Sumitra seems, supremely confident. There is something very there's an actual aggressive masculinity to this woman, which other men find irresistible. So, it's hand, it's very interesting that Bappu, and the other men in the story especially Pandey, are irresistibly drawn to Mitra, precisely because, she's not one of those docile touch-me-not, girls but she, is she's very confident she's very outgoing, which these men misunderstand has a sign of sexual availability. Then Bappu, discovers a photograph of Sumitra dev, which he found on the floor, and he is very anxious that other people other men might may discover this photograph and so, he is very concerned about Sumatra's reputation. So, he went to the, he went to his room and he looked at the he gazed at the photograph for age and he was surprised and repulsed by, turns, he says," Is she a woman at all, look at that dress and who are those hairy and bare-chested, men with cigarettes in their mouths". Right? So, he sees hairy and bare-chested, men with cigarettes standing behind Sumitra, in the photograph. Right? So, there is this very ambiguous response of disgust, repulsion and fascination, with a woman who was not a conventional woman, but Sumitra, is least concerned with this, she is not really, she doesn't really, care that he has discovered a photograph of her, then when Sumitra, speaks later on she says she introduced herself to Bappu, saying we lived in Sangli, when I was a child there was a family called Bharata, in the opposite house they had a son, I used to play dodge ball, with him I would hit him every time he would never dodge the ball, when he got hit too often he'd, go home running, crying for his mother, my mother used to say I had hoodwinked, God to be born a girl I was always with the boys, used to play all their games for marbles to Gilly Dhandra, even Kabaddi, it was great fun. Can you swim Bappu? No Bappu, who's embarrassed says, "No I was something of a weakling you know? My mother would not let me go anywhere nears the river" so, using an interesting ironic contrast between Bappu, who was not a conventional man, who's not into physical sports and, he's not an athletic person. But Sumitra is someone who always room was playing with boys, she hardly ever was with girls and her mother thought that, mother had tricked her into being born as a girl. So, we me that, that's an initial impression of this woman who swims, plays tennis and so, on and so forth and then there is this other passage later on in the play, where Bappu, suggests his love for her, he realizes that he is so, he is not able to suppress it, he says to the audience Bappu says, "when you see a person for the first time, you form a certain impression it changes when you actually meet that person, it changes to something quite different from what it was at first, not

entirely different but more real, it was in this sense that Mitra, began to seem more true and real, to me I don't know why? But, I felt a little closer to her, in college I never trust myself to unnoticed but, one day she herself called out to me in the corridor, Bappu, see me this evening I have a job for you, I did manage to say yes, my heart racing madly I felt I would burst in my efforts to control it for a long time I felt other students burning with envy". So, he has this unspoken love for Sumitra, but Sumitra is not concerned, she is not concerned she's quite indifferent to Bappu's, feelings and she is never, she never shows herself as someone who was she never exposes herself for her vulnerabilities so, it she seems rather inaccessible and emotionally distant. Later on we also get a sense of Bappu of, Sumitra a sense of isolation she does feel isolated she feels that, she has no one and it's, it's she also says that and she doesn't immediately confess to Bappu, about her sexual orientation but, then she just searches you know? That she doesn't know, why she's been made the way she has, and she wonders why she is, the way she is and why do we become our own slaves? she says, and she asks. So, she's unable to she tries to actually develop a close connection with the Bappu, but then Bappu, isn't able to quite understand what she wants, Right? she was there's a scene where some holds, grabs hold, of Bappu's hand and, and squeezes it but, then Bappu, is not able to interpret this touch, he just hopes that perhaps, she's also in love, with him. Later on we also discovered that Sumitra had attempted suicide, so the play goes back and forth in time, and there are times when it is a flashback, after she's heartbroken when Nama does not accept her romantic, advances and she tries to commit suicide but, then she fails and Bappu, who gets to know and then he, he recounts that to the audience and then she also Sumitra, also suffer is the stigma, of attempted suicide. I mean everyone in the college looks at her strangely and oddly, later on in the act first act Sumitra, also betrays her sexual orientation to Bappu, and she tells him a story about herself. So, this is what Sumitra, has to say about her life, and this is insinuates about her own life. She says, the elders in the family got angry with her but, the girl didn't care when she came of age rather early, they got worried they became very strict, what will people say? Was the bugbear they set up to control her, we sought to stamp her mind with the fear of men, at a time she didn't know, why men were dangerous? Those who made the rules were men themselves, father, grandfather, were not they men? What why were they, at her constantly? She followed their rules without protest, then they fenced her in. She found it very difficult to live in the world, that of closed enclosed pens, but she did hey are you listening? then later she says well pretty soon, everyone decided that darling girl, had to be fixed up with a decent boy, they tried hard created opportunities for them to meet evenings were set aside for this a gentle force was exerted the girl obeyed orders, then she later on, goes on to say, the girl went on doing this knowing fully, well that she yearned for the company of men but, not for that kind of relationship, when she met that boy, she felt no physical thrill no flutter of excitement her, heart didn't miss, miss a single beat but the boy felt, it all and took it for granted that the girl did too, she found the whole thing rather bizarre, she asked herself why she didn't feel the way other girls did? Why did I feel so completely at home in the company of men, why did I never feel shy? Why did I feel so, much at ease in putting my hand around their shoulders? Why did I find it strange when I sensed a man's excitement? Men were good company but, they were their ways with men women seemed weird and unpleasant. Then later on she continued saying, she hasn't told anyone about it, only you don't know, why but I'll, tell you the crazy thing she did there was a servant in the house, he had been with the family, a long time he had shown interest in the girl several times, in a way that only the girl could see, a girl is, a girl after all, you know what I mean he was like that so, this is what Sumitra, confesses to Bappu, that she is a woman who discovered, that she was confined to the house soon after she matured, physically matured, then her family used that as an excuse to keep her at home and she was wondering why the men in the family make the rules for everyone, and then they her family, fixed up with a man in marriage but, she realized that from her childhood she only should be enjoyed, the company of men but only as friends, she never had any kind of a sexual desire for them but she was drawn to other girls, and she wondered

why she wasn't like other girls, and she wondered why she didn't feel excited by, the presence of men and later on she tries to have this, this I mean she leads on a male servant to the house, but then nothing ever comes out of it. Right? So, she realized that she could never become a man's partner and in the midst of the story she also lights a cigarette. Right? So, the whole act of smoking becomes an act of masculinity, for Mitra in the play and Bappu of course is very disappointed but, he is not entirely hostile or disgusted he listens to her, he seems to have, seems to feel, some compassion for this woman but, at the same time he also tries to convince her to change, to become like other normal, normative women and then later on we in the towards the end of the first act we discover that Bappu's, roommate Pandey, who is however has been appointed as the secretary of the drama committee, has you know? Has been asked for the principal of the college to perform two plays one with an all-male cast, and one with an all-female cast, and they the principal does not want boys, and girls, to act together so, in the all-female play he makes Sumitra play, the male role so, if they want a hefty woman, who can play the male role and after he watches Pandey, after Pandey, watches Sumitra, acting in the play he's, completely besotted by Sumitra, and her masculinity, it's very fascinating, and interesting, that all the men in the in the play who are fascinated, and drawn to what Sumitra, are drawn to her because, she is not a normative, normal feminine woman, it's because, of her masculinity that so, the men are drawn to the masculinity in this woman. Right? And it's not to her femininity. So, that is what they, find attractive. And towards the end of the first act we also see Sumitra, confessing her feelings for Nama, and he only more surely wants Bappu, to help him facilitate this the first rendezvous, secret rendezvous, that Sumitra wants to have with Nama, in Bappu's, room. So Bappu, tries very hard to make Pandey, his roommate leave his room to make it available for Nama, and Mitra, but Nama, does not end up coming to the room and so, Pandey just assumes that Bappu, wants to have some sexual fun with some girl but, he makes up excuses and he makes him leave but, then after Nama, does not appear or does not come to the room Sumitra, is very disappointed and she then later realizes who discovers that Nama, is having an affair with Mania Dalvi, her boyfriend. Right? And Mitra, Sumitra, wants Bappu, to actually find out about Dalvi, and Nama's affair with him and so the, the play is actually full of unrequited relationships, required love, Pandey's, in love with Sumitra, not knowing that she is lesbian Sumitra, is in love with Nama, but Nama, has a boyfriend called Dalvi, and Bappu, is in, is in love with Sumitra but, he's not able to express his love for her, and later on the disciplined, when he discovers that she is lesbian then there's nothing he can do about it, so he, he just remains a compassionate friend almost, at the end of the play. Later on Bappu, discovers that Sumitra, has forged his handwriting, and his signature to Right? threatening a letter to they'll, be asking him to let go of Nama, and for which Bappu, is thrashed Bappu's thrashed by, by Dalvi and Bappu, of course is innocent but then later he discovers to his indignation, that Sumitra, has been writing a letter in his handwriting, with a signature, and he/she, posted the letter from the, the post office where he lives and so, he was very disappointed and upset with Sumitra, for forging his handwriting and signature, and when Bappu's, thrashed after he's trashed by Dalvi, Sumitra, doesn't seem to be very remorseful, or regretful, for what she's done Right and so, the sympathy, of the readers of a sleep in Bappu, for having been manipulated by, this woman. So later on Bappu also tells Pandey, that Mitra is lesbian after which Pandey, leaves he gets his coming he gets commissioned as a soldier in the Second World War, so he leaves. Then later on the many other complications in second act when Dalvi, discovers Nama, and Mitra, in Bappu's, room and he takes Nama, away much to Sumatra's, anger and anguish and Bappu, who also tries very hard to convince Mitra, to give up Nama, but she is stubborn and relentless she refuses to let go off her. Bappu, also has a conversation with Nama, asking her if on whose side she is on but, you know it, is, it, is, it's, at this point when Nama, tells Bappu, who asks are you on Sumitra side, or are you on Delvi side and Nama, is not able to give a very clear answer, she says well I like Mitra, as a friend I, I like many things about her but Manya Dalvi, is a different matter altogether, I mean there is no comparison, what I mean is, I'm not

able to say what I mean the truth is I, I think I don't know what I mean I'll go. Right? So, she's not very clear about what she means but, later on we realized that she is not very happy with Sumitra, she wrote her, she, she confesses later on that she finds Sumitra love rather suffocating, and possessive. Right? And that exactly becomes the moot point of the play, that on one hand it seems to portray, a woman who has been sidelined, stigmatized, you know? Humiliated for her sexual orientation, but on the other hand it's also a comment, the play is a comment, on the nature of love as a source of power and authority because, you have a woman like Nama, who's been torn apart I mean almost being possessed by both Dalvi, and, and an Mitra and they both compete for her attention but, in the process of competing for the same woman you also realize that there is this other side to, to what these people call love, what Mitra calls love especially, that can become very ugly when it becomes possessive, and authoritarian and when it, when it comes with a sense of entitlement. So, they're not concerned about Nama's, feelings and what she wants but they just want her for self so it's again, love becomes a way of exercising and exerting power over somebody else and Bappu, in the entire play becomes a narrator a commentator who on the nature of, of love, I mean he himself doesn't, force himself on Sumitra, he understands that she is, she has she only desires women, she all he also tries to facilitate her, his run her on the Woo's with, with Nama, but even though they are not successful and he is also a very good friend to her his compassionate and he's, kind supportive of her but she is not very good to him she, she manipulates him she's, not concerned, when he gets beaten up he's, not concerned, or she's not concerned, by the fact, that he is the one who's being stigmatized and and, and, and ill treated by the other classmates because, he is her friend and so on, and so, forth so it becomes rather hard because Bappu, seems to be the voice of balance of sanity. Right? But, because he neither stigmatizes Mitra nor does he wholeheartedly embraces her, her lesbianism. So, it becomes an interesting form to have a male narrator who was not a conventional man somebody, who seems to be rather caring and maybe, if not effeminate but soft and gentle, not a conventional man but and, and a woman who is lesbian, being a very masculine lesbian, woman who is not able to accept the fact that society has stigmatized and rejected her and she is determined and at all odds to actually, get what she wants which is Nama. And Bappu, was actually unable to convince Mitra, to give up on Nama. Right? Because Mitra, wants only Nama, this she doesn't want anybody else. Right? He's unable to convince her to give her up, or get married and this comes out to, her it comes out in towards the end of the second act. Later on that we also want Bappu, to rent out his room to him so, that she can, he can have his secret rendezvous with, with Nama. Right? But towards the end Bappu, realizes that he doesn't want to get involved, in either of these affairs and he only wants to give up his room and move to another place where he will not be hurt or and and what also happens towards the second act is there is, is that, he, he is he realizes that, that, that Mitra has been manipulating him and that is when his perception of her changes, and on the middle of act three, that is where Bappu, changes his perception he says, "suddenly realized I had stopped liking Mitra, I didn't want to see her a kind of revulsion came over me, this was the first time it happened in our friendship, it had reached a breaking point, I cut short of a meeting that day, maybe she was not aware of it, I was full of anger, more than had ever experienced, and I didn't know, what it was about that night? I decided, I would do everything possible to free Nama, from Mitra, hold to hell with Mitra, I didn't care anymore about what she thought, why did I get so furious Mitra had not hurt me, not at all, anyway I went whenever she had hurt me. I had felt slightly snubbed nothing more, I had felt I had not felt anger, but this time what I experienced was definitely anger, whether it was Nama, or someone else. How could anyone treat another human being as a plaything" and this is exactly what happens this is, his response after he discovers from Nama, that she is leaving to Calcutta, to get married to another man, so she doesn't get married to Dalvi, she moves to Calcutta, and she gets married to another man and he, she asks him to promise her, that he will not tell anyone, but he actually ends up telling Sumitra out of, out of sympathy and when Sumitra, gets to know she rushes to Calcutta, to try and stop the marriage, but it does not happen and so, he is very upset with

Sumitra, for betraying his word, a word. So she says that and so, he continues to say, “what right had Mitra to blackmail, Nama”, because Mitra, decides to actually emotionally blackmail Nama, and, and ruin her reputation for abandoning her, the second time, close all our options and keep her for herself, how could she force Nama into loving her, in every way it was brutal, I would not accept this kind of mania and that is when he decides to write a long letter to Pandey, who's at the war front, about his, his anger and his, his bitterness with ,with Mitra for betraying him and so that is when his perception of Sumitra changes. So, despite the fact that Sumitra, and Nama, have occasional encounters, and meetings, we realized that Sumitra is only needs Nama to validate her own sense of hurt, her own sense of isolation. Right? I mean she wants to be loved and desired but, she is not a person who's willing to love someone and give them the freedom to be, to be on their own to just be. Right? So, her love becomes very suffocating and possessive, it becomes a sense of authority, and later on someone in the college writes a story about Mitra, and for which her reputation is spoiled and then she's in the verge of being rusticated by, the principal from college but Sumitra is not concerned, she just wants she doesn't care, about anyone anymore. Right? You see her cycling everywhere, you see her smoking, you see her seem absolutely indifferent, to anyone and she then also tries to she constantly borrows money from Bappu, despite the fact that he, has she, has not been a good friend to him, he still gives her money online lends the money, and then I finally he doesn't ask for his money back but then later on he realizes that she needed money, despite the fact that she came from a very well-to-do, family to actually I mean earn enough money to buy a ticket, or train ticket to go and see Nama. And it's only towards the end of the plane, when we see with Pandey, and Dalvi, and Bappu, get together, Pandey, come back from the war and they get together, and they learn from Bappu, all that has happened with Sumitra, and you know? when Pandey, of course is now in difference Sumitra, he realizes that she's a lesbian, and they get together, and they have a drink, at a club, which is meant for army officers, and there they seized Sumitra with dressed up in a saree, dancing, and drunk, and performing for the officers in the club and that is where, when she's, drunk that she actually exposes her vulnerable side and she says to the officers while she's drinking, “you know Something? no, you should know Bappu is a pig, he is a pig a first-class pig, thinks he has the right to boss me, do this, don't do that, don't go there, sit here, thinks he is the boss, the boss I kick him, kick him, kick the bastard, thinks Mitra, is a is an umbrella no, no a chair a handbag, put I down and we'll end it, it will stay there, I am not a handbag, I am a human being, I have my will, I'll do, what I like, go to Calcutta I'll room this, I'll room there searching for Nama, doesn't matter if I don't find her, but who the bloody hell is Bappu? a pig, pig, I hate him, hate him”, then later on she says, “no I'm not a good little girl, I'm a whore, a lesbian do you know that or lesbian bitch, a freak, he says don't lie, don't depend on me, wrote off the money, wrote off friendship, is over he said all Right? Let it be over, who'll, who lied, I lied, I didn't lie, not to him, I lie to my mother, but not to him, you know what? told him, what I didn't tell anyone he, he was my mother, mother Bappu, mother Bappu gone, friendship is over, Nama is over, no dependence, no dependence, Bappu gone, Bappu is dead, dead, dead, I killed him I ,I, I”, loud broken sobs, I killed Bappu, got into pieces, I got into pieces it so that's what she says towards the end of the play, where she feels that, she is remorseful for what she's done to Bappu, that she has betrayed his friendship, but also the fact that now she feels finally free of all obligations, she doesn't, have an Nama, anymore and she has nothing to tie her to anyone, so she does, she does feel, that that towards the end she embraces her own sense of isolation and objection and she ends her life, this time successfully. So it becomes, you know? she in the process of you know having who or female character, who is marginalized, who is, who has a non normative sexual orientation, was a lesbian ends up actually you know fighting social norms but in the process you know? In the process of challenging social norms goes overboard. Right? And then ends up becoming this, this manic woman who is obsessed into getting the woman she wants, even at the cost of hurting everyone else, and this is what Rohini Hattangadi had to say because, the play was performed once in 1981, before it was

banned and so, this is what Rohini had to say, and she's a very fine Marathi actress, and this is what she had to say about, her what how she understood the role of Mitra, she played the role of Mitra. So this is what Rohini Hattangadi has to say about, what she thought about her character, she says some that for many years, I had a wish. Right? From my college days. Right? From the days I had, acted in plays that got through Audra and Sherman, that I wanted to add my new play by Tendulkar's, play which nobody had done before and then a chance came along when a optic was going to do Mitachi ghost on which is the Marathi title for a friend's story, I wrote the script and liked it, the subject was new and different, in the first instance almost unpalatable, the central character of Sumitra, is that of a lesbian a chance and a challenge for any actress to play such a character Sumitra, that is Mitra, being different is the core essence of the play, the reactions the people around her, her friend her lover, her lover's boyfriend, in fact Mitra, rival and boy who's, fond of Mitra, show the reactions of the society, through representative characters, and then the end which is inevitable, then in fact Tendulkar had portrayed Mitra, character so, well in the play that was not necessary to do any extra homework but, to get a better idea, I did some reading on homosexuality, and came to a broad understanding, that these attractions are of two, kinds one based on circumstances, and to physical hormonal, imbalance, Mitra belongs to the second category, while growing up she looks around and realizes that she's different, she accepts it up to a point, then allows herself to flow, with the stream and lets herself go, the reasons for this are her stubborn nature, her desire to do, what she wants to do, social conflict and then her rebellion, there's one person who tries to understand her and that is Bappu, in spite of not liking her attitude Bappu always helps her, and is always beside her. Then later on Rohini, says looking at Mitra, one cannot make out her abnormality, boys at colleges, at college, for I find attractive Pandey, who feels that, he's in love with Mitra, leaves the city to join the army as soon as he comes to know through Bappu, what Mitra preferences are. Mitra, is from middle-class, surroundings with parents in her family, when she realizes her abnormality she is totally disturbed, she tries to fight her own battle, and Bappu's a main support for her, when Bappu to doesn't, understand her and feels that while going to Calcutta, she has gone overboard, she's angry, at Bappu and at herself and breaks away, from him, for Mitra, it is not breaking away from Bappu, but breaking away from herself, from her being Mitra, she tries to be feminine and cannot do it, and one day commit suicide, and succeeds. The appearance of the character portrait is very important, it creates a lasting impression with the audience so, while deciding Mitra's attire we had to take into consideration the period and the locale of the play, the Locale is not very clear from the script but, one can forego that. About the period one can rely, on one reference Bappu, once, once mentions that Pandey went to the war, somewhere in Europe, so we can take this to be world war two, as a middle-class Martian, the woman's attire should be a saree, Tendulkar's also had this in mind Mitra in saree, should look manly so I kept the pallu tied tightly around my waist, the collared blouse was slightly longer, no jewellery, just a wristwatch and a Shabnam bag hanging, from the shoulder the colour of the saree was off-white, after meeting Nama it would be pinkish, sometimes I will be smoking a cigarette, I remember I had never smoked in my life before but Mitra had this habit, so I had to learn, smoking on stage is difficult, but it only if you do not smoke, it looks fake when he just takes smoke in the mouth and let it out Mitra, had to look like a habitual smoker, not that I had to, but I started practicing right from day one of the rehearsals. Slowly I got the hang of it, I learned to release the smoke while talking, I used my hands to show Mitra, restlessness, standing with hands folded across the chest, looked manly and showed her closed mind I don't know, how but one mannerism evolved during rehearsals, rubbing the elbow of one hand, with the palm of the other hand, it looked all Right? So continued with it later, I used to make it more vigorous, as the restlessness increased. While rehearsing for the play, I had an amusing experience to go for the rehearsals I had to travel by, local train in Mumbai, I used to like standing at the door feeling the wind against the face, my face, one day while travelling a eunuch boarded the train there was not much of, much of, a rush the train stopped at the next station, a few ladies got down in a few

entered they looked strangely at the eunuch, I was watching them and they look on their faces isn't Mitra, also different that look on their faces said so many things to me, from that day onwards Mitra came closer to me still, while reading Mitra sri Gothra one day one feels that if the references to the time in the play deleted the play is of today because, things have not changed much in the past few years for a different person a different in courts. Tendulkar's, wrote displays seven, or eight, years before we actually staged it maybe earlier in those days nobody talked about these things openly, let alone put up a play on a subject, even when we performed it, it was labelled as a bold subject, of what sort of subject is it, I did not run too well as a commercial play but those who saw our performance will remember it, I remember it, as an unforgettable experience. So, this is what Rohini Hattangadi has to say about a character of Sumitra, and how she began to acquire certain habits on stage like smoking, or rubbing her elbow with her palm, or folding her arms, across her chest, to give her a masculine demeanor, and appearance. So, this is our discussion of a friend story, and the next session we'll be discussing another very famous and well-known, play by Vijay Tendulkar, which is in Ghashiram Kotwal.
Thank you.