

Ram Ganesh Gadkari was a versatile genius - a gifted poet, a powerful dramatist and a fine humorist. He was a great stylist. In the first phase of the renaissance in Modern Indian Literature, Gadkari brought out the hitherto unknown beauty and power of the Marathi language.

Prof. G. P. Pradhan, a keen student of English literature and a well-known writer in Marathi, has thrown light on the different facets of Gadkari's genius. His lucid exposition of the writings of Gadkari would make the readers conscious of the significance of Gadkari's contribution to Indian Literature.

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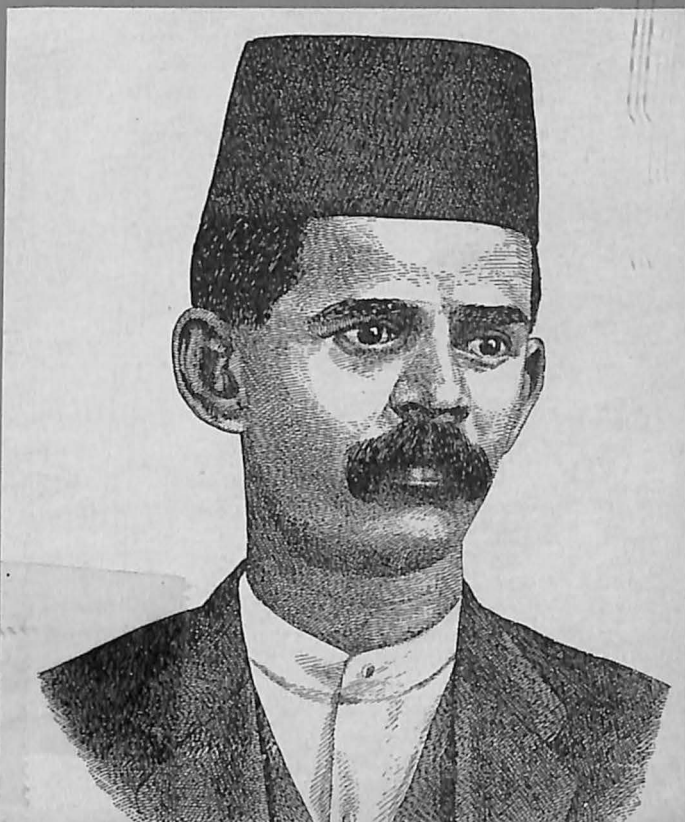


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RAM GANESH GADKARI

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Shuddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, the mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From : Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.
Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi.

MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

Ram Ganesh Gadkari (गडकरी)

G. P. Pradhan



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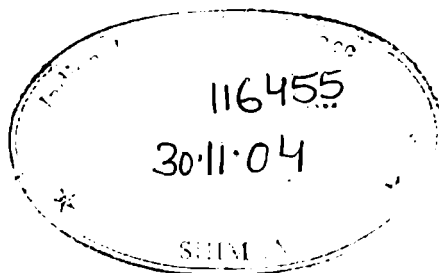
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A Biographical Sketch

Ram Ganesh Gadkari is one of the brightest stars in the firmament of modern Marathi Literature. His creative genius dazzled his contemporaries and in spite of the overwhelming changes in the literary taste of modern Maharashtra, the writers and the readers of successive generations have acknowledged the rich heritage left by Ram Ganesh Gadkari. Critics in Marathi feel that the task of analysing the greatness of Gadkari's writings, is still incomplete. Gadkari was a writer of rare versatility and left his deep impression on the different forms of literature which he used as the media for the expression of his creative talent. It would be an understatement to say that Gadkari has enriched Marathi language. In his hands Marathi developed her potentialities in a prolific manner. Gadkari showed that Marathi is capable of giving colourful expression to all the nuances of feelings and to the profound variety of ideas in different situations in human life. Gadkari mainly handled two forms of literature - poetry and drama. He portrayed the tragic and also the comic aspects of life, with equal ease. He could depict the sublime and also the ludicrous. He was acknowledged as a great poet, a powerful dramatist and a fine humorist; and he earned this reputation within a short span of life. Had he lived longer his genius would have blossomed with greater richness and variety. He wanted to write eighteen dramas - at least half the number of those written by Shakespeare - but death snatched him away when he had written only five dramas.

Gadkari influenced not merely the writers of his generation but also those of the later generations. Kusumagraja - one of the greatest Marathi poets, a great dramatist of modern times and a Dnyanapeeth Award Winner, has acknowledged the debt he owes to Gadkari and has described how Gadkari was the most powerful influence during his formative phase as a writer. Even a brief survey of Modern Marathi literature would be incomplete without describing the rich contribution made by

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Ram Ganesh Gadkari to Poetry, Drama and Humour in Marathi.

Ram Ganesh Gadkari was born in a lower middle class Maharashtrian Kayastha Prabhu family at Navasari in Surat District of Gujrat, on 28 th may, 1885. He lost his father at an early age. The family then shifted to Maharashtra. During school-days, Gadkari impressed his teachers by his brilliance and love for books, even though his performance in examination was not superb. Gadkari from his early days, was very fond of reading and read whatever he came across. He came to Poona and joined the New English School. After passing the Matriculation examination, Gadkari joined Fergusson College in Poona. He was deeply influenced by the academic atmosphere and was particularly happy when he could satisfy his intense urge for reading in the college library. He read voraciously. He had a rare love for literature and studied the writings of great English poets and dramatists. The romantic poets in English, and particularly Shelley, influenced him greatly. He read all the plays of Shakespeare, whose master-pieces cast a spell over young Gadkari. Besides this, he also read the writings of saint- poets in Marathi. Gadkari did not feel much interest in the conventional academic life. Due to his brilliant wit and remarkable conversational ability, he was very popular among the students in Fergusson college. After passing the previous (first-year) examination, he kept terms for the Intermediate Arts, but never appeared for the examination. The discipline necessary for success in examination, never suited his temperament. He was almost possessed by literature and at an early age became conscious that he would be able to give expression to his personality only through writing.

Gadkari lived in times when there was great activity in the political and social life of Maharashtra. Lokamanya Tilak symbolised the aspiration for Swarajya and was fighting against the British empire in a courageous manner. Gadkari kept away from politics. He had, however, highest regard for Tilak, both for his brave efforts for winning Swarajya and for his profound scholarship. Gadkari had also a great regard for social reformers and was influenced by the writings of Gopal Ganesh Agarkar. Though he had not the reformist zeal, he was distressed by the plight of Hindu widows and disliked the blind faith, which then pervaded Hindu society.

The ferment in the political and social life of Maharashtra had its echoes in the sphere of cultural activities and.

particularly in the field of literature. English literature and the modern ideas of the West had a profound impact on the creative writers of Maharashtra. Hari Narayan Apte was the first great modern novelist in Marathi, who wrote both historical and social novels. Annasaheb Kirloskar was the pioneer in the field of modern Marathi drama. Two other gifted dramatists, Govind Ballal Deval and Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar, enriched the Marathi stage. Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar was both a dramatist and a humorist, who used humour to expose hypocrisy in the orthodox Hindu society. Krishnaji Keshav Damle, who wrote under the pen-name 'Keshavsut', was the first great poet in modern Marathi. Gadkari, during the impresssionable period of his life, was influenced by these writers who were his predecessors.

Gadkari began his literary career as a poet. At that time, 'Manoranjan' was a very popular Marathi magazine. Kashinath Raghunath Mitra, the Editor of 'Manoranjan,' had a knack for exploring fresh literary talent. He had a broad outlook and made earnest efforts to mould the literary taste of Marathi readers by publishing the writings of young and promising writers. Gadkari's poems were published in 'Manoranjan' and he was immediately acknowledged as a new star on the literary horizon of Marathi.

Gadkari came from a poor family and had to earn his livelihood when he was still in college. He joined the Kirloskar Natak Mandali mainly as a teacher for new actors. That was why he came to be known as 'Gadkari-Master'. In the Kirloskar Natak Mandali, Gadkari did many other jobs such as doorkeeping and prompting. At that time he read the dramas of Kalidas, Bhavabhuti and of other Sanskrit dramatists. When in school, he had read abridged versions of Mahabharat and Ramayan. While working in Kirloskar Natak Mandali, he read these two Epics very carefully. Besides studying the writings of the Saint-poets Dnyaneshwara and Tukaram, he also carefully studied the poems of later day poets like Moropant and Waman Pandit. Gadkari was greatly interested in history, particularly in Maratha History. He also read with great zeal the writings of Mark Twain, Moliere and other Western writers whose master-pieces were available in English translations. As a poet Gadkari regarded himself as a follower of the great poet in modern marathi, Keshavsut. Gadkari's apprentice days in Kirloskar Natak Mandali made him conscious of his dramatic talent and at an early age of twenty two, he wrote two acts of

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his play 'Vedyancha Bajar' (A Medley of Madmen), and also a part of the play 'Hirannyakashyapu'. He then met Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar, a noted dramatist and a humorist. Gadkari was very much impressed by Kolhatkar and was greatly influenced by his writings.

Gadkari wrote five plays - 'Prema-Sanyas', 'Punya-Prabhav', 'Raj - Sanyas', 'Ekach Pyala' and 'Bhav-Bandhan'. Of these, he wrote only some parts of 'Raj-Sanyas' and died before completing it. He completed writing his play, Bhav-Bandhan on the last day of his life. Three of Gadkari's plays - Prema-Sannyas, Punnya-Prabhav and Ekach Pyala were staged during his life time and became immensely popular. Gadkari then earned a place in the heart of Marathi readers as a poet, dramatist and humorist. His plays created history on the Marathi stage and his creative genius flowered in the realm of literature. Gadkari never enjoyed good health. He was affected by tuberculosis and died at the premature age of thirty four. Thus during a brief period of about twelve years, Gadkari produced an impressive literary output through poetry, drama and humorous writings. Whatever he wrote, was always brilliant and captured the hearts of the readers and the audience. A great literary career was cut short by his death on 23 rd January 1919.

When Keshavsut, the great poet in modern Marathi died, Gadkari wrote a poem in which he said, "How can we say that Keshavsut is dead so long as his poetry continues to live forever?" This was equally true of Gadkari. A modern Marathi poet, G. D. Madgulkar wrote that after Gadkari, no one could proudly protect the fortress of Marathi as Gadkari did. Gadkari like a meteor flashed over the literary firmament of Maharashtra and also vanished like a meteor suddenly. However, through his writings he continues to live and the blaze of his imaginative writing continues to shine brightly for ever. The echoes of his writings reverberated through Marathi literature of the later period and secured for him a permanent place in the hearts of Marathi readers.

There are some writers whose life is full of extraordinary events and experiences. But Gadkari's life was almost uneventful. The only great event in his life was his writing. To him, his life lived in the realm of imagination, was far more important than his humdrum personal life. He read voraciously, observed life perceptively and then retired to the ivory tower of his lonely personal life. He meditated, contemplated and then

had his literary vision. His mind blossomed, his imagination flowered and he gave artistic creations to the world. Gadkari felt that his life had a meaning, because it had a purpose viz., to give expression to his creative urge and to lift the readers and the audience to a noble plane. Till the last moment of his life, he was preoccupied with his writings. The completion of a was so much shattered that the doctors attending on him said that he would die any moment. But Gadkari breathed his last only after completing the play 'Bhav-Bandhan'. However, many of his writings were left unfinished; some of these fragments published posthumously showed that Gadkari had planned a long career as a writer but it was cut short by death. The melodies of Gadkari which can be heard are indeed sweet, but those unheard would have been sweeter still.

II

The Poet

*We look before and after
and pine for what is not
Our sincerest laughter
with some pain is fraught
Our sweetest songs are those
that tell of saddest thought
- Shelley*

These lines of the English romantic poet Shelley, were an exact description of the love-poems of the great Marathi Poet, Ram Ganesh Gadkari who wrote under the pen-name Govindaraj. Like Shelley, Gadkari had a romantic approach to life and lived in a world of dreams. However, there was a sharp contrast between his dreams and the stark reality around him. Gadkari lived in an orthodox Hindu society dominated by taboos. There was no chance whatever for the fulfilment of his love. Moreover, Gadkari was not made of such stern stuff as to rebel against harsh reality. Though he resented the reactionary customs, he dared not fight against them. He only mused over his dreams and when they were shattered, he was overwhelmed by despair. Fortunately, this despair gave a stimulus to his sensitive mind and he turned to poetry for giving expression to his sorrowful experiences. Gadkari's despair never became morbid. There were two redeeming features of Gadkari's character. He had a typical Hindu mind, which could suffer agonies patiently, almost philosophically. He had also a rare sense of humour which enabled him to accept the incongruities of life with a smile on his lips. His despair did not destroy the poise in his life, because he gave beautiful expression to it through poetry.

Literature deeply influenced Ram Ganesh Gadkari during the formative stage of his life. He found poetry very absorbing. beautiful poems in Marathi and in English stimulated his sensitive mind and he felt an urge to give expression to his

feelings. However, Gadkari had a critical mind and he was not satisfied by a spontaneous overflow of his powerful feelings. His mind matured at an early age and he realised that he must recollect his emotions in tranquility and must develop his capacity for looking at his experiences with the detachment of an artist. He also felt that he must master the medium before giving expression to his responses to the different happenings in life. Though only one piece of his versified writing done at an early age is available, Gadkari must have tried his hand at poetry quite frequently and might have destroyed most of the poems, which he felt were not very artistic.

Marathi poetry of the earlier period -from the 13th to the 17 th century - was written by the Saint-Poets, Dnyaneshwar, Tukaram, Eknath, Namdev, Ramdas and others. It was mainly devotional poetry. Later on Moropant wrote Mahabharat in the verse form, and many other poets also used the different episodes in the epics Mahabharat and Ramayan as subjects of their poetic writings. The bards, during the Peshwa rule, wrote with great freedom. Romance and valour were their subjects. With the advent of the British rule, those who studied English, became familiar with English poetry. In collegiate studies, English literature - poetry, dramas and novels - had an important place. Young generation, which read and studied English literature, was greatly impressed by the romantic poets, Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron and Keats and also by the Victorian Poets, Tennyson and Browning. Krishnaji Keshav Damle, who wrote his poems under the pen-name Keshavsut, was the first great poet in modern Marathi. Keshavsut was influenced by romantic poets but did not just imitate them. He was a rebel at heart and proudly proclaimed that he heralded the new dawn. In his famous poem, 'Nava Shipai' (The Soldier of the new Era), he wrote that he was a soldier of the new era, a person with new vigour, who would challenge and defy those who would try to tame or curb him. He declared that he would break the bonds of caste and religion, and with his wide sympathies would soar to a horizon which would have no limits set on it. Keshavsut wrote beautiful poems like 'Satariche Bol' (The notes of a Sitar) and 'Tutari' (Clarion Call). Unfortunately Keshavsut died prematurely in 1905. However his poems evoked an enthusiastic response from Marathi readers. Gadkari was deeply moved by the poems of Keshavsut and declared that he was a disciple of Keshavsut. Gadkari who was hardly twenty when Keshavsut died, naturally imitated Keshavsut, in the

earlier phase of his writings. Gadkari and two of his friends, T. S. Karkhanis and G. N. Tipnis who were also great admirers of the poems of Keshavsut, started Tutari Mandal in Poona. Their idea was to carry on the tradition of Keshavsut who gave a clarion call for a new social order based on equality and humanist values. Gadkari expressed his great admiration for Keshavsut in his poem 'Is Keshavsut Dead?' In this poem Gadkari paid a glowing tribute to his master that 'Keshavsut sang and created a new awakening in society'. Gadkari declared that even though Keshavsut was dead, his poetry was immortal and his voice would always be heard. Gadkari wrote his poems under the pen-name Govindagraj. In his famous poem 'Dasara', there were the echoes of the ideas expressed by Keshavsut, particularly about social reforms. Gadkari also wrote another poem, 'Kavi and Kaidi' (The poet and the prisoner), in which there was an impassioned plea for freedom. In another poem, there was a protest against the bonds of tradition which suffocated the spirit of the poet. However, in spite of his admiration for Keshavsut, Gadkari did not have the revolutionary zeal of Keshavsut. Gadkari was essentially a liberal, who felt the need for social reforms, but he was not a rebel by temperament. It was no wonder therefore that Tutari Mandal, so enthusiastically formed by Gadkari, functioned for a very brief period.

Tryambak Bapuji Thombre, alias Balkavi, was another great poet, who was a contemporary of Gadkari. Balkavi was an ardent lover of nature and wrote beautiful Nature poems. Gadkari regarded Balkavi as a gifted poet and very much appreciated his chaste lyrical poetry. Both Gadkari and Balkavi wrote poems on 'Dawn'. But whereas in Gadkari's poem there are flights of imagination while depicting the picture of the dawn, Balkavi's poem is far more picturesque and touches the reader by its simplicity and by the ecstasy of the poet. Gadkari was always conscious of the genuine nature of Balkavi's poetry and acknowledged him as a greater artist than himself.

From times immemorial, writers and particularly poets have written of love. In Marathi, the bards during the Peshwa rule, wrote boldly about physical love. However, modern Marathi poets were influenced more by the poetry of Romantic Poets in England, who maintained that physical attraction was but one aspect of love and that love was essentially a noble sentiment in which two young minds united. Gadkari was the first Marathi poet, who wrote many love poems and described the different

moods of a lover. Gadkari lived in a society which was orthodox and in which girls married at an early age, even before their minds blossomed. Gadkari, therefore, cherished love as a dream rather than as a reality. Gadkari's love poems were written in various moods. He described the agony as well as the ecstasy of love. One of the most beautiful poems describing the ecstasy of love was 'Murali' (A Flute). In this poem Gadkari described Radha's feeling for Krishna which was a rare blend of devotion and passion. Radha said, 'O Lord Krishna, my only desire is to listen to your flute.' The poet made Radha give expression to her ecstasy when the 'Murali' of Krishna swept her off her feet and transported her to the seventh heaven of bliss. When Radha's mind was hovering about Krishna, she felt that she was enveloped in fragrance, though there were no flowers around her. She repeatedly urged Lord Krishna to play on his 'Murali', because the beautiful tunes coming out of the musical instrument made her feel that the moonlight was spread everywhere, the stones blossomed like flowers and the entire universe danced with joy. While listening to Krishna's 'Murali', Radha forgot herself, forgot the world around her and just became one with the melodious tunes. The musical notes were echoed in Radha's mind and the throbbings of her heart caught the rhythm of the song played on the 'Murali'. In this poem Radha described how her life was completely transformed by Krishna's 'Murali', and her only desire was to lose herself in the personality of her Lord. In the poem, Gadkari displayed a rare capacity for communicating the intense feelings of Radha in such a manner that the reader identified himself with Radha's mood and experienced the same rapturous joy.

Gadkari also wrote some beautiful love poems in which there was an expression of the joyous mood. 'Gulabi Kode' (A Rosy Riddle), is a lovely poem in which the romantic imagination of Gadkari finds apt expression. A maiden noticed that at sunset, the West turned red and so did the East even though the sun was setting only in the West. She asked her lover as to how the rosy hue of West was transferred to the East. The lover laughed merrily and playfully told her that he would easily solve the riddle and explain it to her in a whisper. He drew the maiden near him and under the pretext of whispering, kissed her on the cheek. And when the maiden blushed, he slyly asked her, 'I kissed you on the right cheek. Why then did your left cheek turn red?' Thus the lover explained the magic of

love, and solved the rosy riddle. The poet delightfully ended the poem with the lines, "How then the lovers spoke to each other through their lips is another rosy riddle."

'Pahile Chumban' (The first kiss), was another poem written in the same pleasant vein. The poet described how a maiden was sitting still and appeared to be deeply absorbed in something. To her lover, she resembled a beautiful picture and he could not resist the temptation of covering her eyes with his hands. The maiden was taken aback, blushed and removed the hands of her lover. At this, the lover was so excited that he kissed her. The maiden blushed deeply, smiled and coyly tried to push away her lover. The poet described how the first kiss was a unique experience which could never be repeated in life, and remarked, "One must enjoy the first kiss and even suffer death for that joyous moment."

Gadkari, in his love poems, described the ecstasy of love but in most of the poems he always sang of the parting of lovers. 'Goph' (The plaited cord) is a beautiful lyric in which the poet described how the threads of emotions of the lovers were woven round each other. However, this joy did not last for long and circumstances forced the beloved to untie the plaited cord. The harsh reality made parting inevitable.

In another poem, Gadkari wrote that the poet was but an anklet of the Goddess of love. When the poet asked the Goddess as to what he should sing, she told him to sing of the maiden who had captured his heart. The poet described his poem as 'Shabda Sharada' (Goddess of Words) and his beloved as 'Hrudaya Sharada' (Goddess of the Heart). In another poem, 'Tyach Tarakes Yachana' (An appeal to the Star) the lover made entreaties to the star (the beloved) whose rays made him forget himself and transported him to a different world.

In the earlier love poems of Gadkari, there was at times a feeling of gloom. However, it was a happy gloom, experienced by a romantic mind. There was a feeling of anxiety and sometimes a feeling of loneliness. However, this mood lasted only for a short time. The later love poems of Gadkari written after 1914 were overshadowed by despair. Like Shelley, Gadkari felt that the sweetest songs were those that told of the saddest thought.

'Prem ani Maran' (Love and Death), was one of the finest poems of Gadkari. In this poem, the poet described metaphorically the pangs of the lover's heart and his complete sense of fulfilment in just one moment when the beloved

reciprocated his love, even though that moment synchronised with his death. One day the lightening flashed in the sky and the heart of a huge tree was struck with love. The tree was so much smitten by the love for that ethereal daughter of the sky that he became haunted by her memory. He forgot his natural urges. He was almost cut off from the world to which he belonged. The wind blew with great gusto, but not a single leaf of the love-lorn tree moved. The spring came and was followed by torrential rains, but the tree did not flourish. The buds did not blossom into flowers. The world around the huge withering tree laughed with scorn. Some took pity and some felt sad over the unnatural state of the tree. The poet wrote that he who was struck with love always became forlorn. The tree was, as it were, practising penance and was yearning for just one moment of the fulfilment of his love. And then it thundered, the lightening flashed in the sky, came down with a tremendous force and struck the tree. Her one touch gave the love-lorn tree, all that he desired. He was cleft in two, but as he was falling down, his leaves fluttered, the buds blossomed into flowers and he laughed with a great gusto. The tree clasped his beloved and though that moment of their union brought him death, his happiness was complete. Death lost its sting when he could become one with his beloved. Just as a night-fly, falling fiercely in love with the flame, jumps into it and dies, so was the tree united with lightening and embraced death. He fell in love, yearned for his beloved and in the moment of fulfilment gladly embraced death.

‘Phanasache Paan’(The leaf of a Jack fruit), is another poem which shows that the poet musing over love, found a stimulus in something near him. The leaf of the jack fruit, made the poet remember the moments of happiness when he was in love. His recollection of those moments enabled him to experience love once again, with the same intensity. The poet, like Shelley, was conscious that it was, ‘Delusion too sweet though vain, too sweet to be mine again’.

‘Krishnakathi Kundal’(Kundal, a small village on the bank of the river Krishna), is a romantic story-poem. The setting is historical and the story has a tragic end. Raya, a brave and a young Maratha soldier in the service of Shivaji Maharaj, fell in love with Maina, a maiden from the village Kundal. They met on the bank of Krishna and married. When Raya had to leave for his duties as a soldier, Maina entreated him to take her with him; but he could not do so. Maina was miserable when Raya

went to the battle-field and requested the bird Maina to bring tidings of her dear Raya. However, Raya was killed in a battle and his heart-broken young wife, Maina, also died. Gadkari said that the river Krishna could not bear Maina's sorrow and went away from Kundal. The end of the poem was 'one flame mingled into another but Kundal, once on the banks of Krishna, was different than before'. Gadkari wanted to write a Khanda-Kavya, a long poem of many cantos on this theme but unfortunately he could give us only a fragment.

Gadkari also wrote poems which gave expression to his philosophic musings. There was a Peeple tree in front of his house and from his room he watched the fluttering of its leaves. He wrote a poem, 'Haltia Pimpal Panas' ('To a fluttering leaf of the Peeple tree'). The poet asked the leaf, whether the flutter was an expression of its grief-stricken heart, whether it was conscious of its existence or whether it was a plaything or a toy in the hands of Destiny? The poet seeing the lines on the leaf, referred to the deep lines on his forehead indicating his misfortune and he asked the leaf whether the lines on it had a different meaning. The poet then felt that the leaf danced to the tune of happiness in life. The poet thought of the Peeple-leaf, wafted by the wind on the forehead of a maiden in love, and said he would regard himself as fortunate if he could be that leaf. The poem which in earlier parts strikes a serious note, ends on a romantic note.

In the later poems of Gadkari, melancholy was the only dominant note. In one of the well-known poems, the poet addressed the Koel who uttered, 'Ku hoo', 'Ku hoo' at midnight. The poet described how the world was enveloped in darkness, how the dark clouds were flickering in the sky and how the musical notes of the koel soothed the mind darkened by despair. The poet said that there were thousands of singers to sing the songs of happiness and gladden minds which were already glad. However, the koel singing at an odd hour, alone soothed the strife-torn minds. The poet described his utter sense of loneliness and moaned that his hopes had been reduced to ashes. He then said that the sweet melodious voice of the koel brought comfort to him. He hoped that the koel's song would touch the heart of some maiden who would shed a tear and that tear would embalm the agonised mind. The poet's mood of utter sadness and the soothing effect of the musical notes of the koel uttered at an ungodly hour have been beautifully depicted in this poem. 'Ghubadas' (To the Owl) is another powerful

poem written in the same sad mood. The poet described his kinship with the owl and said to it, 'There is melancholy in my mind. I shall communicate it to the people. Let your cry accompany mine. Both of us together shall disturb the sleep of the world'. In this poem, Gadkari has described his contempt for hypocrisy and that he did not want the soft words of the parrot which gave a false sense of happiness; he preferred the shrill cry of the owl. The poet described the hollowness in life and said that life was only a chain of fleeting moments. The owl shunned by all, was regarded by the poet as his close companion and he urged the owl to join him in destroying the complacent mood of the world. The poet felt that the shrill notes of the owl resembled the sound of the drum beaten by Shiv during the Tandava dance. The poet was aware that there was something devilish about the cry of the owl, but he was happy that it struck terror in the hearts of many persons. The deep sense of despair pervading this long poem overpowers the reader and in the end he is stunned and stupefied when the poet said that his poems of despair were like the hooting of the owl. 'Smashanatale Gane'(The Song in the Cemetery), was another poem written in the same mood. 'Shevathe premgeet'(The last Love-Song'), was almost the culmination of this mood of despair. The poet felt that life was futile and prayed that Death should end all his sufferings. Gadkari in another poem wrote that he had gathered flowers and wanted to give them to his beloved; but God had snatched her to a far off place and the poet did not know what he should do with the flowers. The poet felt that due to cruel Destiny, instead of flowers, thorns had fallen to his lot.

'Osaad Adateel Ek Phool' ('A Flower in a desolate Well'), is also a fine metaphorical poem. The well was deep and nobody cared even to peep into it. People thought that it was a haunted well, in a far off corner. However in that dark and desolate well, a beautiful flower blossomed. It looked at its own image in water and fell in love with it. It stooped to kiss the image and the moment the flower touched water, there were ripples and the beautiful image disappeared. This broke the heart of the flower and it withered away. The ray of the Sun, which on the earlier day had seen the flower, came to see it again and was disappointed to see that the flower had withered and had dropped down dead. After reading the poem, one feels that the poet has, through the metaphor of the flower, depicted a moving picture of his own emotional experience.

Gadkari looked upon child as a symbol of innocence. He regarded children as flowers which bloomed as a result of the happy union of their parents. The poem 'Ghungur Wala' ('The Tinkling Anklet'), is a lovely lyric written by Gadkari. The young mother listened to the tinkling sound of the anklet of her new-born babe and was charmed by that sound. She urged her child to continue lifting and moving his leg so that the anklet would continue to tinkle in a musical manner. She thought that she was listening to a song. She recollected her happy days after her marriage, when love was not openly expressed and yet its perfume pervaded her life. Love, though silent, was then a sweet melody. The same song was being echoed through the tinkling of the anklet of the child. Gadkari thought children as beautiful flowers blossoming on the creeper of love which held its parents. 'Ghungurwala' expresses this idea in a fine poetical way.

'Chimukalich Kavita' (A small tender Poem), was about a ten year old sweet girl. The poet has described her beauty, her tenderness and the joy which she spread around her. The poet referred to the rosy hue in her white complexion and further said that the petals of a rose were folded and took the form of her lips. One beautiful image follows another and through them the features of the girl have been described in a picturesque manner. The language of the poem has a rare simplicity and the similes are indeed striking. The tatoo marks on her face appear to the poet as decimal points and he thinks that Destiny was solving an example in arithmetic in order to find out who should be the fortunate husband of the tender girl. The purity and the innocence are regarded by the poet as the outstanding features of her character. Gadkari's intense love for children finds expression through this poem.

'Rajhans Maza Nijala' (My swan Is Sleeping), is a very touching poem, describing the sorrow of a widow, whose child was snatched away from her by death. The mother, in the distraught condition of her mind, thought that her child was sleeping. When relations and neighbours came to take away the body of the child, the mother said, 'Please don't make noise. My child has slept just now. He is very playful and his sleep would be disturbed if you shuffle your feet.' The mother's ignorance of the stark reality of death moved even the strangers to tears and they turned away their faces. The mother's intense affection for the child made the unfortunate situation all the more poignant. At last the truth dawned on the mother and

overwhelmed by grief, she swooned. The poem when published in the magazine 'Manoranjan', touched the hearts of the readers by the intense pathos depicted by the poet.

Gadkari was a devout person and wrote 'Anamikache Abhang'(The Abhangas written by an anonymous person). The influence of the great saint-poet Tukaram was evident in them and yet the Abhangas are not at all imitative. They are an expression of the poet's devotion and contain many striking and stimulating ideas.

'Phutaki Tapeli' ('A Leaking Mug'), is the most philosophic of Gadkari's poems. The poet described the yearning of the mind to meet God. He however said that the instrument through which man wanted to meet God, viz. man's mind was imperfect. Just as a leaking mug could not retain water, so man's mind which is like a leaking mug, could not contain God. Only when man would transcend his limitations and identify himself with the universe, his mind would no more be a leaking mug and he would be able to meet God. There could be many interpretations of this poem.

Gadkari sometimes expressed profound thoughts in an apparently playful manner. Shakespeare in 'As you like it' said, 'All the world is a stage' and described the different phases in man's life. Gadkari in the poem 'Viram Chinhe' (Marks of Punctuation), has described the different phases in his own life. He said, 'When I was a child, I looked around with curiosity and wanted everything that I saw. However this childlike attitude was soon over. I saw 'commas' everywhere indicating that I had to take many pauses. I then started asking questions about everything, such as, was there a God and had life any meaning? Life then was dominated by 'question marks'. I then married and my better-half made me conscious of the joy of love and life. This was the 'semi-colon' in my life. I felt that life should not move ahead. However, with varied experiences of life, my vision broadened and I was bewildered by the complex nature of the universe. 'Interjection' was the response of my mind when I saw life around me. However, now nothing charms me. Oh God, allow me to come near your feet and give a 'full-stop' to my life.' The poem, though apparently simple, captivated the readers by the authentic way in which life was aptly described by the poet.

'Maharashtra-Geet'(Ode to Maharashtra), is a poem expressing Gadkari's deep reverence for the land of his birth. The patriotic sentiment pervades the poem. Gadkari regards

Maharashtra as an incarnation of sacredness and purity. He has described Maharashtra in glorious terms. According to Gadkari, Maharashtra is a blend of various fine qualities. He addresses Maharashtra as a rugged, sturdy land of stones and also a land full of delicate and tender flowers. He mentions the thorny shrubs as well as the fragrant flowers of Maharashtra. Gadkari sings of Maharashtra as a land of emotion, devotion and also of intellect, a land known for its great saints and also its great heroes. Gadkari, while bowing down before the traditional saffron-flag with Jaripataka, says that it symbolises the fact that Maharashtra combines in its character worldly and other worldly attitude, enjoyment and renunciation, affluence and asceticism. Gadkari mentions that Maharashtra has a close kinship with the vast sea and also with the majestic Sahyadri-Western Ghats. He refers to the major rivers Bheema, Krishna and Godavari and says that they are the fortune lines of Maharashtra. Gadkari proudly sings of the glorious historical past of Maharashtra in the times of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and mentions with pride the heroes, Tanaji Malusare and Baji Prabhu Deshpande, who became martyrs while fighting for Swaraj. Gadkari mentions with great respect Lokmanya Tilak along with Shivaji Maharaj. He sings of the great Saint-Poets, Dnyaneshwar and Tukaram and writes that whereas Dnyaneshwari was an expression of devotion, Geceta-Rahasya of Lokmanya Tilak was an expression of critical and sharp intellect. Gadkari's great affection for the simple peasant of Maharashtra and great pride in the rugged valour of the warriors of Maharashtra, find fine expression in this poem. It is no wonder that Gadkari pays tributes to all the Marathi poets and writers before him - the Saint-poets, the bards and also the poets and dramatists in modern times. Gadkari in the last stanza refers to the fact that Maharashtra is a land of Varakaries - devout people and also of Dharkaries - valiant fighters. He writes that the flag of Maharashtra reflects its twin ideals - affluence and asceticism. With reverence he says, ' Oh Maharashtra Desh, accept my Pranam'.

Gadkari thus wrote poems of varied nature, but he was particularly popular as a bard of love. He became an idol of the Marathi readers owing to his flights of imagination and fine

poetic diction. Gadkari influenced many poets of successive generations. However, the critics have rightly pointed out that in the poems of Gadkari there was more of imagination than intense feeling. His poems dazzled the readers but were different from poems of two of his great contemporary poets - Keshavsut and Balkavi - who captivated the hearts of the readers by their directness, simplicity and intense emotions.

III

The Dramatist

Though poetry was Gadkari's first love, his reading was never confined to poetry alone. During his student days in high school, Gadkari was a voracious reader and pounced on any book he came across. He had an innate critical faculty, and a rare sensibility. As a result, he threw away the trash and was attracted only to a few chosen books. At first he read books in Marathi and then turned to writers in English. After passing the Matriculation examination, he joined Fergusson College at Poona. There he got an opportunity to read masterpieces of English authors and also great literary works in other languages, translated into English. He read dramas of Shakespeare, the English translations of the plays of Moliere and Metarlink, and works of many other great writers. Owing to the acquaintance with the masterminds in the realm of Literature, Gadkari developed a fine literary taste and was particularly attracted to Drama as a form of literature. Gadkari who was then hardly twenty, was a keen observer of life and his reading further stimulated his mind. He saw the different plays in Marathi and felt a great fascination for the theatre. Annasaheb Kirloskar was the first dramatist in modern Marathi and his dramas 'Shakuntala' and 'Saubhadra' were very successful on the stage. Kirloskar Natak Mandali later on staged the plays by other dramatists, like Deval and Khadilkar. Gadkari at this time, decided to leave his collegiate education and joined the Kirloskar Natak Mandali, as a teacher for the boy-actors. Since then he came to be known as Gadkari-Master. Kirloskar Natak Mandali, while staging the plays, had set high standards and with popularity among the theatre goers, had also earned great respect in society. Marathi stage was then in an experimental phase. Dramatists and some eminent actors used to direct the plays. They were in close contact with some Professors who were keen students of literature. In Kirloskar Natak Mandali many actors were novices and needed instruction. Gadkari was

given this work and he did it with great zest. Besides doing his regular job, Gadkari also worked as a doorkeeper, which gave him an opportunity to study the responses of the audience. Here it was, that Gadkari came to know that the success of a play did not depend only on its literary merit. He came to know that words quite ordinary in themselves, assumed a great significance in a dramatic situation. Gadkari realised that conflict was the soul of the drama and that it was necessary to arouse the emotions of the audience. He learnt that the beauty of the written word had to be communicated to the audience through dramatic representation. In short, Gadkari while working in the Kirloskar Company developed an insight in the art of Drama. At this stage, Gadkari re-read the plays of Shakespeare and Moliere and understood them far better than when he had read them in the library. Gadkari thus became more and more involved in the theatre and began to feel that he would be able to make a significant contribution to the Marathi Stage. Gadkari had given an expression to his innermost feelings through poetry. However in him, the urge for communication was as powerful as the urge for self-expression. He knew that drama was a far more powerful medium of communication than poetry and felt that drama would afford him an opportunity for portraying innumerable facets of human nature and for presenting profound conflicts in human life.

Gadkari was keenly aware of the ludicrous element in life. While he was working in Kirloskar Natak Mandali, he saw around him many crankish individuals, particularly some persons who were so much overwhelmed by the dramas that they forgot the difference between art and life. Gadkari had also read Moliere and saw around him persons, who like the characters in Moliere, were carried away by some fads. He thought that he would be able to write a comedy out of this material. Thus at the age of twentytwo, he tried his hand at writing a comedy and wrote the two acts of the play 'Vedyancha Bazaar' (A Medley of Madmen). The play was serialised in the monthly magazine, Rangabhumi and raised great expectations. In this play Gadkari pays greater attention to characters than to the plot. One of the four characters is Balabhau and the scene portraying his meeting with Venu, the girl offered to him in marriage, is marvellously farcical. Balabhau thinks of himself as a romantic hero and instead of entering Venu's house in a normal manner, decides to meet her in a 'dramatic' manner. He takes a back-door entry, jumps into the premises of Venu's

house from a wall and in the process his knees are hurt and bruised. Venu, at that time comes to the back door to throw away the rubbish into the dustbin. Balabhau has never seen a play in which the heroine was engaged in such a prosaic act. But he overlooks the drab situation and starts speaking like a pseudo-romantic hero. He says that a scrap of paper in that rubbish appears to him like a love-letter and further says, 'Fortunate indeed is the dustbin and equally fortunate is the donkey hovering about the dustbin.' Venu rightly thinks that Balabhau is a madman and sternly tells him not to touch her. At this, Balabhau starts singing the famous song in the Marathi play, Saubhadra, 'Nacha Sundari Karu Kopa' (Oh beautiful damsel, don't get angry with me.) Balabhau further, like the hero in a melodrama, faints while singing. If only Gadkari had written the play with Balabhau as the central character, it would have been a fine farcical play. However, in the later part of the play, Gadkari portrays other characters, obsessed with different fads. One of them always thinks that he is ill, is constantly taking medicines and thinks that others should also do the same. Another person is making puns in every sentence, while still another person is obsessed with spiritual pursuits. Gadkari wrote only two acts of the play. This incomplete play is yet to be judged more by its promise than by achievement, because this was Gadkari's first attempt at play-writing.

Gadkari was then contemplating many themes. He wanted to write a play on the mythological legend of the demon, Hiranyakashyapu, who was very proud of his strength and was killed by Narsimha - an incarnation of God Vishnu. The title of the play was 'Garva-Nirvana' (Pride destroyed) because Gadkari wanted to show how Hiranyakashyapu's pride in his invincible prowess was destroyed by Narsimha. However, Gadkari also left this play unfinished. Some of his biographers have said that Gadkari feared that the play might be interpreted as an allegory on British Rulers, who proudly proclaimed that the Sun never set on the British Empire. Those were the days of political turmoil. Lokamanya Tilak was sentenced to six years' imprisonment for sedition and sent to Mandalay. The play 'Kichakvadh' (Killing of Kichak) written by Khadilkar and staged by Maharashtra Natak Mandali was banned by the

British Government, because they suspected that through the character of Kichaka from Mahabharat, Khadilkar wanted to suggest the character of Lord Curzon the Viceroy, who was autocratic and who had partitioned Bengal. Gadkari was a moderate, and did not want to incur the wrath of British government. Gadkari did not complete the play 'Garva-Nirvan'. However, the political reason given for keeping the play unfinished, might be only a conjecture by critics. Gadkari thought that he should write a play on a social problem and therefore gave up the writing of a play with a mythological theme.

PREM-SANYAS

'PREM SANYAS' is the first complete and full length play written by Gadkari and it has to be judged as a creation of a promising writer. It was staged on 23rd March, 1912 by Kirloskar Natak Mandali. It was fairly well received and during one year, there were over thirty performances of the play at Poona, Bombay, Solapur and other important places in the Bombay Presidency. During the period of writing 'Prem Sanyas', Gadkari's genius as a poet had fully blossomed. It is quite natural, therefore that the presence of the poet in Gadkari, is keenly felt in 'Prem Sanyas'. The theme of the play is 'Unsuccessful Love'. Gadkari had written poems of love many of which were overshadowed by despair. In 'Prem Sanyas' too, he has presented the story of Jayant and Leela, the young lovers who are parted by Destiny. Gadkari lived in a society, which was very orthodox and which was particularly hostile to the remarriage of widows. Leela is the daughter of an orthodox father - Babasaheb. She is married at an early age and has lost her husband. Jayant and Leela knew each other from childhood and were drawn to each other. However, Jayant was already married. In spite of these circumstances, Leela showers affection on him. Jayant loves Leela, but feels that as he is married to Manorama, it is a sin to think of marrying Leela. Jayant is a noble-hearted young man but is hasty and sentimental. He has no love for his wife Manorama, because she is very different from the image of the heroine with a poetic charm which Jayant

between his intense love for Leela and the consciousness of his moral responsibility as Manorama's husband. The circumstances also conspire against the lovers. After Manorama's death, there is a possibility of the union of Leela and Jayant. But a false charge of Manorama's murder is brought against Jayant. He is set free but Leela does not know about it. She thinks that Jayant will be hanged and in a fit of despair, commits suicide. The plot of 'Prem-Sanyas' is rather complex and not well-knit. There are many loose ends.

Besides Leela, there is her sister Susheela. Her husband Vidyadhar has disappeared after an accident and is believed to be dead. However, he is alive. The sub-plot of Vidyadhar and Susheela is also very weak. The dramatic purpose of the sub-plot is to bring out the contrast between the characters of Leela and Susheela and enhance the effect of the character of Leela. There is also another sub-plot depicting the unfortunate events in the life of Druman. This sub-plot serves the purpose of emphasizing the villainy of Kamalakar who is shown as an unmitigated villain, plotting against Jayant and Leela and destroying innocence and chastity, whenever he gets a chance.

Gadkari was conscious of the fact that as the plot of his play was serious, it would become dull if no comic relief was provided. He knew that comic relief would enhance the effect of the serious plot. He had a fine sense of humour and displayed brilliant wit through the character of Gokul, whose forgetfulness had no limits.

Khadilkar, who was an eminent dramatist of that time, and who had an appreciation of the talents of Gadkari, was present when 'Prem-Sanyas' was first read out by Gadkari in the company of a few chosen friends in Kirloskar Natak Mandali. Khadilkar said, 'Gadkari, you have cramped the material for four dramas in one.' This remark of Khadilkar was a tribute to the overflowing dramatic talents of Gadkari and also a realistic appraisal of 'Prem-Sanyas'. Gadkari wants to depict the tragedy in the life of Jayant and Leela, who have intense love for each other, but who are caught in circumstances which prevented their union. At the same time Gadkari has introduced the problem of the remarriage of women in orthodox Hindu society. There are discussions about this problem in the first

scene in the first act of 'Prem Sanyas'. Leela's father Babasaheb is orthodox and conventional while Tatyasaheb, his brother is a fervent advocate of social-reforms and particularly of widow remarriage. In the dialogue between the two brothers, two opposite points of view are presented by Gadkari in this scene. This dialogue and the recurring reference to the fact that Leela is a widow, led some critics to believe that widow remarriage was the theme of the play. It certainly forms a part of the theme, and Gadkari has blended it with the main theme of unsuccessful love.

The plot appears convincing in the earlier part of the drama, but becomes rather loose, almost incredible, in the later part. There are many weak links, which are concealed owing to the brilliant dialogue, which is the chief merit of the play. Kamlakar, the villain, is painted with a broad brush. He has illicit relations with Druman who gives birth to an illegitimate child and in a panic-stricken condition kills the child. Kamlakar also abducts Manorama - Jayant's wife and tries to make a criminal assault on her. Manorama attempts to commit suicide and later on dies. Jayant is arrested on the charge of murder. These complications and Jayant's sudden acquittal - all this is flimsy stuff. It clearly indicates that Gadkari had not yet matured as a dramatist. Such defects are found in the earlier plays of most of the great writers.

Gadkari regarded Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar, an elder writer, both a dramatist and a humourist, as his Guru. 'Mativikar' (The disease of the intellect), a drama by Kolhatkar had influenced Gadkari. He wanted to write a play, which would be an improvement on 'Mativikar'. There are striking similarities between the characters of these two plays. Jayant resembles Chakor - the hero of 'Mativikar' and Jayant's criticism of orthodox Hindu society is the same, as that of Chakor. The villain Kamlakar in 'Prem Sanyas' is almost the replica of Harihar Shastri, the villain in 'Mativikar'. The wickedness in both of them, has no redeeming feature. Both are defeated in the end. Harihar Shastri commits suicide, while Kamlakar is killed by a decoit. However, it must also be pointed out that 'Mativikar' was a failure on the stage, while 'Prem Sanyas' was quite successful. The success of 'Prem

Sanyas' is due to the stylistic excellence of the dialogue and the brilliant wit displayed by Gadkari, in the scenes where Gokul appears as the central character. Besides this, the characters of Jayant and Leela and the expression of their tender love, captivated the minds of the audience. The poet in Gadkari enabled him to depict the characters of Jayant and Leela in an artistic manner. The play 'Prem Sanyas' has no organic unity. It is beautiful only in parts. Acharya P. K. Atre, a disciple of Gadkari and the foremost dramatist of the next generation, observed that 'Prem Sanyas' had many blemishes, particularly in the construction of plot. However, the drama made the Marathi people of those times, conscious of the fact that a new brilliant star had appeared on the horizon of the Marathi stage. With his first drama, Gadkari earned prestige as a dramatist. The intense pathos in the play deeply moved the audience, the brilliant poetic dialogues dazzled the intellect and the hilarious humour made people laugh heartily. This rare combination of pathos, poetry and wit in Prema-Sanyas was never witnessed before on the Marathi stage.' Atre, however, candidly remarked that after witnessing the performance of 'Prem-Sanyas', only the characters of Jayant and Leela and the boisterous fun in the scenes presenting Gokul and Mathura lingered in the mind of the audience.

Gadkari is indeed successful in presenting the conflict in the mind of Jayant - the conflict between his duty as a husband and his love for Leela. Jayant wants to get out of the conflict by trying to show that his love for Leela is platonic. However, he cannot keep up the appearance for long and realizes that his love for Leela is a manifestation of the attraction which man and woman feel for each other - both emotional and physical. Gadkari has portrayed the character of Jayant through dialogues which have a rare artistic fervour about them. It is, therefore, natural that the audience was moved by them.

The scenes in which Gokul figures, are full of fun. In the second scene of the first act, Gokul appears and talks about his forgetfulness in a very amusing manner. While listening to the dialogue between Gokul and his wife Mathura the audience was greatly amused by sparks emitted out of the perennial friction between the couple. There is another scene in which Gokul calls Vidyadhar to his place and narrates how life has become unbearable to him, because of Mathura. Gadkari has made Gokul exaggerate the faults in Mathura in a humourous manner and that naturally made the audience laugh heartily. With his

characteristic forgetfulness, Gokul forgets to close the door and while he is talking about Mathura to Vidyadhar, Mathura has entered the house and has quietly listened to her husband's confidential talk. Gadkari here uses the device of dramatic irony very effectively. When the slanderous remarks of Gokul become unbearable to Mathura, she enters the drawing -room and takes him by the scruff of his neck. What follows is rollicking fun. The court scene in which Gokul appears as a witness, is another instance of Gadkari's wonderful wit. Gokul even forgets the years of his life and owing to his confused and confusing answers, the Judge dismisses him as a witness.

Gadkari depicts the agonies of Jayant in a poetic manner and in order to relieve the tension, presents the wordy dual between Gokul and Mathura. The audience, while witnessing the performance of 'Prem-Sanyas', was carried away both by the poetic presentation of the pathos in Jayant's life and by the comic element in Gokul's character. The audience suspended its disbelief and accepted all that Gadkari offered in 'Prem-Sanyas'. Gadkari firmly established himself as a dramatist with his very first play.

PUNYA - PRABHAV

'Punya-Prabhav' ('The impact of Virtue') is the next play written by Ram Ganesh Gadkari. Vasundhara is the heroine of the play: She is an embodiment of the noble virtue of fidelity. Vrundawan, who has vile designs on Vasundhara, is overawed by the nobility of her character and in the end there is a complete transformation of his villainous nature. Gadkari felt that woman in Hindu society, with her infinite capacity for sacrifice and unfailing devotion to her husband, was a symbol of all that was pure and noble in life. Vasundhara is an incarnation of these qualities in Hindu woman, adored by Gadkari. In spite of the loose construction of the plot and in spite of many incredible happenings, the theme of the drama viz. the impact of a woman's noble character on a villainous individual, gives artistic unity to it.

In the first scene of the first act, Gadkari introduces Ishwar, a minor character in the play. However, through his soliloquy and through his conversation with Vasundhara, Gadkari has given the context and the information necessary for the development of the plot. Ishwar loved Vasundhara and wanted

to marry her. However, when Vasundhara was married to Bhoopal, Ishwar decided not to marry, renounced worldly life and went to a far off place. Vasundhara who along with her son Dinar and a maidservant, has come to the temple, is surprised to see Ishwar appearing like a Sanyasi. She knew Ishwar before her marriage and had a great respect for him. She is sorry when she learns that Ishwar has taken to the path of renunciation. In their conversation, there is a reference to Vrundawan, who also wanted to marry Vasundhara. Vrundawan, though disappointed, had married Kalindi. Ishwar and Vrundawan stood at the opposite poles. Even after his marrying a saintly and simple lady like Kalindi and after getting a child, Vrundawan is still possessed by his passion for Vasundhara.

In the second scene in the first act, Kalindi, while showering all affection on her husband, Vrundawan, has a feeling that he does not reciprocate her intense love for him. Vrundawan pities her and at the same time wants to get rid of her. In the last scene of the first act Bhoopal appears on the scene. He is very close to the King, who trusts him and who wants to send him on an errand to defeat a rebel. Bhoopal expresses his reluctance and asks for a little time to take his decision. Vrundawan, who is also trusted by the King, has resolved to remove Bhoopal from his path and starts his wicked course by poisoning the cars of the King against Bhoopal. In the Second act Vrundawan resorts to a strategem, which is far from convincing. While Bhoopal is intimately talking to his wife Vasundhara, Vrundawan rushes inside and tells Bhoopal that there is a possibility of a murderous attack on the Prince. Bhoopal who is very loyal, immediately rushes to the palace. Vrundawan has told the King that Bhoopal wants to murder the Prince, and when the King sees Bhoopal entering the room of the Prince with a sword in hand, he is convinced that Vrundawan had given him the correct warning and consequently Bhoopal is arrested. Bhoopal is stunned by what has happened. He knows that Vrundawan has played the dirty trick, but Bhoopal can do nothing. He is taken to a dark chamber with fetters on his hands and feet.

In the third act, Vrundawan meets Bhoopal in the prison-cell when Bhoopal asks Vrundawan, why he has acted in such a vile and a cruel manner, Vrundawan bluntly tells him that he wants Vasundhara. With characteristic villainy, he declares that only when Vasundhara will surrender to his passion, that Bhoopal will be set free. Bhoopal, who is a noble

soul, cannot even bear the sinister suggestion and requests Vrundawan to kill him. Vrundawan, who has succeeded in becoming the confidant of the King, has also got Vasundhara and her child arrested. This also is far from convincing. Vrundawan meets Vasundhara in her cell, gives expression to his evil design of seducing her and threatens her that her son Dinar will be killed if she will not surrender. Vasundhara is shocked but unequivocally states that she will be ready to face any ordeal to defend her chastity. When Vrundawan says that she will see her son's dead body the next day, Vasundhara in a stoic manner remarks that whatever God wishes will happen.

In the fourth act, Kalindi tries to dissuade her husband from his villainous resolve to seduce Vasundhara. Vrundawan bluntly brushes her aside. Kalindi takes a bold decision to put her own son Ketan in place of Dinar, Vasundhara's son. Ishwar, however, averts the calamity by keeping the body of a dead child there. Vrundawan does not know this and thrusts the dagger through the body of the child, thinking that he was killing Vasundhara's son. Vasundhara does not budge an inch from her resolve to defend her virtue. Vrundawan after this heinous deed, tells Vasundhara that she will have to surrender to his passion if she wants to save the life of her husband, Bhoopal. Vasundhara, remarks that the valour of her husband is like the Himalaya and he does not need her protection.

In the fifth act, when Vrundawan again confronts Bhoopal with the choice between his life and the chastity of Vasundhara, Bhoopal is rather disturbed and requests that he may be allowed to meet Vasundhara. Then follows the scene in which Vasundhara informs Bhoopal of the death of her son, whom she believes to be dead - killed by Vrundawan. The extraordinary grit of Vasundhara instils courage in the mind of Bhoopal and when Vrundawan comes, Bhoopal tells him that he is willing to die. Vrundawan again brutally asks Vasundhara whether she still wants to defend her virtue. Vasundhara cannot bear the idea of the death of Bhoopal and says to Vrundawan that she will meet him. When Bhoopal tries to dissuade her, she reassures him that God will enable her to emerge safe out of the ordeal. The scene rises to great heights and creates awe in the mind of the audience.

In the last act, Vasundhara goes to Vrundawan's bed-chamber. In the earlier acts Gadkari has suggested that there is a conflict in Vrundawan's mind, conflict between his immoral desire and the consciousness of his guilt. In this scene

the conflict becomes more acute and intense. Vasundhara speaks from the exalted moral plane, repudiates all the arguments of Vrundawan, brushes aside his entreaties and succeeds in arousing the moral man in him. Her noble character evokes an appropriate response from Vrundawan. His passion is vanquished and he bows to Vasundhara with respect. The play has a happy end. Vasundhara and Bhoopal are reunited. The king comes to know of Vrundawan's villainy but forgives him.

'Punya-Prabhav' became instantly popular and continued to enjoy the same popularity for a number of years. The secret of this success is that the problem of the choice between chastity and everything else dear to a woman, is handled in a very powerful manner by Gadkari. There are incredible happenings in the plot. The humour introduced by Gadkari through minor characters like Kankan and Nupur is not integrated with the main plot. In spite of brilliance in the dialogue, such humour fails to impress a fastidious audience. However, Gadkari never loses his grip over the conflict between the villainy of Vrundawan and the indomitable courage of Vasundhara emerging from her virtue. Materlink, in his play 'Mona Vana', had presented the conflict arising out of the choice between a woman's chastity and the freedom of a country. In Gadkari's play no social issue is involved. The conflict is confined to the domestic life, and yet Gadkari succeeds in lifting it to the plane of eternal significance.

It must be admitted that though Vrundawan is shown as a villain, he is not an embodiment of elemental passion which converts man into a beast. The expression of such elemental passion was found in the Epic Mahabharata. In all the speeches of Vrundawan and in his soliloquies, it is evident that he wants to humiliate Vasundhara rather than possess her physically. When Vrundawan had made the offer of marriage, Vasundhara's father had turned it down on the ground that Vrundawan belonged to a lower family. He had also made an insulting reference to the character of Vrundawan's mother. This insult deeply hurt Vrundawan and he wanted to take a revenge on Vasundhara. Had the fire of elemental desire for Vasundhara burnt in Vrundawan's heart, there would have been no conflict in his mind. But Vrundawan is touched by the innocence of his wife Kalindi and is overawed by the strength of character of Vasundhara. He even says that he will be satisfied if Vasundhara will just put a garland round his neck. Such a symbolic act will satisfy Vrundawan's urge for avenging

the insult to his mother. Gadkari thus appears to be in two minds regarding the motivation of Vrundawan's action.

Vasundhara is an incarnation of all that is noble and pure in a woman's life. To her no sacrifice is too great for defending her character. Her courageous decisions are the expression of her inner strength and self-confidence. On the intellectual level she is superior to Vrundawan. On the moral level she rises to great heights and lifts Vrundawan to a human level from the abysmal depths to which he had fallen. The character of Vasundhara gives the drama its artistic unity. Gadkari has depicted Vasundhara as a noble heroine and the effect of her towering personality is enhanced by its contrast with Vrundawan's immoral intentions. The effect of her character is also enhanced because both Bhoopal and Kalindi are weak characters depicted in a hazy manner.

There are eleven humorous scenes in *Punya-Prabhav*. Out of these, seven scenes are just appendages. They do not help the development of plot. In two scenes, the crude point of view about woman's virtue is represented through minor characters, and owing to its sharp contrast with Vasundhara's behaviour, it emphasises the nobility of her personality. Gadkari has drawn five humorous characters with a broad brush. Kankan, who is a hefty soldier, always thinks that any woman would fall in love with him, because of his athletic built and heroic looks. Nupur is a scandal-monger. Sudam is constantly suspicious of his wife. He and Nupur believe in the truism, 'Frailty thy name is woman'. Kinkini is keen on getting married and imitates Kalindi in a foolish manner. Damini is a greedy woman who always craves for golden ornaments to adorn herself. There is more of wit than of humour in the different scenes in which these minor characters appear.

In spite of these shortcomings, *Punya-Prabhav* captivates the audience through the character of Vasundhara and through the skilful presentation of the conflict between a woman's virtue and a man's vile intentions. The dialogues in which striking thoughts are given a profound expression, also hold the audience spellbound. In the second scene of the second act Bhoopal and Vasundhara are sitting in a garden on the moon-lit night. The dialogue between them is highly poetic. The peculiar blend of philosophic musing and poetic flights in the speeches of Bhoopal mesmerises the audience. Gadkari regards woman as the best representatives of Hindu culture and touches the chords of the heart of the Marathi People who always take

pride in the noble side of traditional Hindu culture.

RAJ-SANYAS

Gadkari lived in times when India was ruled by the British. Lokamanya Tilak was courageously fighting against the British rule, but the general atmosphere was depressing. Sensitive persons like Gadkari, who hated slavery but who were not brave enough to fight for freedom, found solace in depicting glorious pictures of the historic past. In Maharashtra, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is the symbol of national pride. Gadkari was a keen student of history and had read all the historical documents carefully. He realized that the life of Sambhaji, the son of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was full of dramatic events. He, therefore, decided to write a play on Sambhaji's life.

Sometime in 1914, Gadkari went to Malvan in Konkan and visited the historic fort Sindhudurga, the fort surrounded by the sea on all sides. Gadkari was moved when he saw the roaring waves of the sea dashing against the wall of Sindhudurga. He later on told his friends that the idea of writing a play on the life of Sambhaji dawned on him in a flash. After visiting Sindhudurga, Gadkari immediately wrote the 'The lullaby by five Goddesses' who were lulling the infant Shivaji to sleep. Gadkari told his friends that just as St. George guarded England, St. Andrews protected Scotland and St. Patric was the patron Saint of Ireland, he believed that Five Goddesses in Maharashtra protected the Maratha Kingdom. Gadkari was confident that this lullaby at the beginning of his play would captivate the audience and transport them to the historic times. Gadkari, who was greatly influenced by Shakespeare's Tragedies, thought that he should write a tragedy on the life of Sambhaji, who though brave, was rash and reckless. Sambhaji had not understood the historic significance of his father's achievement. He inherited the kingdom but had not realized the responsibilities of a king. However, in spite of the flaws in his character, Sambhaji was heroic by nature. After he was captured, Aurangzeb threatened him with dire consequences unless he would accept Islam; but Sambhaji stoutly refused to yield. He was tortured in an inhuman manner, but he stood firm and accepted death heroically. He thus became a martyr. Gadkari thought that the character of Sambhaji was a challenge

to his talent as a dramatist. He took up the challenge and wrote the first scene in which he showed Sambhaji jumping from the walls of the Sindhudurga into the sea, to rescue a young maiden, Tulsi. While Sambhaji was carrying Tulsi in his arms, Tulsi was clasping him firmly. Gadkari wrote a rare romantic scene, in which he rose to great poetic heights and displayed splendid flashes of imagination through rhetorical dialogue.

Though Gadkari conceived the idea of *Raj Sanyas* in 1914, he did not begin the writing of the play till 1916. From the notes, which he made and which his friends read, it could be seen how Gadkari had very carefully planned the play. He read and reread all the historical material then available and wrote some parts of the play - two scenes of the first act, five scenes of the fifth act and only one song of the first scene of the third act.

Unfortunately Gadkari did not live to complete *Raj-Sanyas*; but from whatever parts of the play are available, one can realize that Gadkari would have risen to rare heights had he completed the play. Gadkari wrote, 'It is a principle play. The principle underlying the plot of *Raj-Sanyas* is the principle of renunciation by a king.' Explaining this idea further, he wrote, 'There is a conflict between the private life of a person and his social obligations. When the social responsibility is onerous, the personal desire should die and the person must live a life bereft of all pleasures, a life devoid of desires, a life entirely occupied by one's duty. In such a life there would be action, but it would be action unconcerned with its fruits. Such action, performed in a detached manner, must sweep aside all the personal ambitions and pursuits. God has no desires and permeates everything. The king is a living person whom we can see in flesh and blood, but he is in reality a symbol of God. He should therefore be devoid of desires and should not enjoy the fruits of his office.'

Gadkari did not live to complete the play, but in the last scene of the fifth act, the principle about which Gadkari wrote, was given a full expression. In this scene, Sambhaji is in the custody of the Moghuls. He knows that death is imminent, and he is in a repentent mood. At this stage, Sabaji, an octogenarian, a devoted follower of Shivaji Maharaj, covering himself with a cloak approaches Sambhaji in the prison-cell. Sabaji has secured a permit with the stamp and asked Sambhaji to escape the clutches of the Moghuls with the help of the permit. The plan of Sabaji is that Sambhaji should cover himself with the cloak and go out while Sabaji would put

himself in place of Sambhaji. Old Sabaji is thus willing to sacrifice his life for Sambhaji, whom he regards, not only as his master but also as the King who should revive the glorious rule of his illustrious father. Sambhaji is greatly moved by Sabaji's nobility. However, Sambhaji is conscious of the defects in his own character. He gives expression to his mood of repentance in a very touching manner. Sambhaji's speeches in this scene have tragic grandeur about them. Gadkari's prose in this scene is inimitable. Noble ideas are expressed in appropriately superb words. Sambhaji in the end refuses the offer of Sabaji. He remembers his father, Shivaji Maharaj, who had dedicated his life to the cause of the emancipation of his motherland and to the welfare of his people. He never aspired for personal glory. Sambhaji knows that he cannot follow in the footsteps of his great father. He refers to the principle of the life Shivaji Maharaj that the King is a Master who does not enjoy the fruits of his kingdom. Sambhaji has, throughout his life, behaved in quite a different manner. His is a life of lust. In the last moment, however, he hands over his crown to Sabaji and tells him that his step-brother Rajaram should be crowned as King. Thus this last deed of Sambhaji has a tragic grandeur about it. In this scene, Gadkari has blended the historical truth with an imaginary event, so marvellously that the entire scene appears convincing. Whenever Raj-Sanyas is represented on the stage, this last scene casts a spell over the audience.

The other characters in Raj-Sanyas have also been depicted with great skill by Gadkari. Tulsi is the wife of Daulatrao, the naval chief at Sindhu Durga. She is romantic and has an adventurous spirit. She puts her small boat in the stormy sea. The boat is upturned by the waves and Tulsi shouts for help. Sambhaji, who alongwith Daulatrao and others, is standing on the walls of Sindhudurga Fort asks Daulatrao to rescue his wife. When Daulatrao refuses to save her and blames her for recklessness, Sambhaji jumps into the sea and rescues Tulsi. The two adventurous young persons are caught in each other's arms in a dangerous situation. The amorous passion surges up in their bosoms and in that moment they accept each other as lovers. Sambhaji then takes Tulsi with him to Raigad. However, when his wife Yesubai gives him a hero's welcome for his valour, Sambhaji becomes conscious of the dignity of a King and turns Tulsi away. To Tulsi the pangs of this mortification are unbearable and she vows to take a revenge on the Maratha Kingdom. When later on Yesubai is arrested by the soldiers of

More, who is helping the Moghuls, Tulsi experiences a demonic joy. She is happy that Yesubai, the queen, is humiliated. She takes the golden anklets of Yesubai and is about to wear them. At that moment, her father Hiroji Pharjand, who is a devoted servant of Shivaji Maharaj, appears on the scene. He is terribly enraged to see the blasphemous act of wearing the anklets of the queen by his daughter and kills her. The character of Tulsi is a rare combination of the spirit of adventure, overwhelming passion and a revengeful attitude. She meets her death in an appropriately dramatic manner.

The characters of Rayaji and Shivangi have also enhanced the effect of the tragedy. Rayaji is the son of the famous Tanaji Malusare, a brave lieutenant of Shivaji Maharaj, who fought like a lion and became a martyr while capturing a fort which later came to be known as Sinhagad. Rayaji is one of the Generals of the Maratha Army. While he is doing his duty, he meets Shivangi. Both of them fall in love with each other but are unfortunately parted, owing to the peculiar circumstances. Both Rayaji and Shivangi constantly remember each other. Rayaji who is accompanying Queen Yesubai, accidentally meets Shivangi and both of them are very happy. When the lovers are about to be united after a long parting, the soldiers of More, who had joined hands with the Moghuls, besiege the mango-grove, where Queen Yesubai is resting. Sabaji then entrusts the responsibility of rescuing Yesubai to Rayaji. An open attack on More's soldiers is not possible. Rayaji therefore asks Shivangi, his wife to wear the golden anklets of Yesubai. The soldiers think that Shivangi who is wearing golden anklets, is the Queen and arrest her. This is indeed a great sacrifice. This episode of Rayaji and Shivangi thus lift the plot to a noble level and again emphasizes the principle of sacrifice for a noble cause.

Gadkari has used the device of contrast in a very skilful manner. There are two noble characters - Sabaji who wants to sacrifice his life in order to save the life of King Sambhaji and Rayaji, who sacrifices the life of his beloved in order to save Queen Yesubai. In sharp contrast to these two noble persons, there is Jivaji Kalamadane, whose pen is more dangerous than an assassin's sword. Jiyaji, a clerk serving under the crafty Kalusha, is selfish to the core and has no qualms of conscience when he ruins innocents by the stroke of his pen. Jivaji has respect for none, not even for Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, and boasts that with his pen he would destroy kingdoms. Gadkari

has introduced the character of Dehu an ignorant and uncouth person, who has tremendous brawn and little brain. No wonder he is duped by Jivaji Kalamdane. The dialogue between the two is full of wit. The heartless Jivaji and the foolish Dehu provide ample humour in Raj-Sanyas.

Raj-Sanyas would always be remembered for its stylistic excellence. The prose has a beautiful rhythm and if it is to be rendered in English, blank-verse would be the appropriate medium. Raj-Sanyas enjoyed immense popularity on the stage. Even eminent actors, playing the role of Sambhaji, dared not omit a word from the rhetorical dialogue. Marathi language, in the hands of Gadkari, reached an excellence, which is still unsurpassed. When Raj-Sanyas was staged, the audience was transported to the glorious historic past of Maharashtra and was held spellbound by Gadkari's art of presenting the virtues of valour and sacrifice through memorable characters and powerful dialogue. Sabaji's offer to make the utmost sacrifice for his king and country, makes Sambhaji realise in a flash his true duties as a King. He also realises that he would serve his people better through his death than he had through his life. Dead Sambhaji then would be a greater source of inspiration to people than living Sambhaji. Such was the drama of principle which Gadkari started writing and though it was left unfinished, the part which Gadkari had written, reveals all its glory.

Ekach Pyala

'Ekach Pyala' (One glass only) is one of the finest tragedies in Marathi literature. In many respects 'Ekach Pyala' is the pinnacle of the literary achievements of Gadkari. This play was a resounding success when it was first staged in 1919 and it continues to enjoy almost the same popularity for half a century. Besides being a successful play on the stage, 'Ekach Pyala' is one of the master pieces of Marathi literature. Sudhakar, the central character in the play, had to struggle against poverty and all other difficulties in his early life. However, because of his brilliant intellect and capacity for work, and also due to the hand of help extended by his friend Ramlal, Sudhakar got over all odds in life and became a successful lawyer. He had a keen sense of self-respect and never submitted to any one. He had married Sindhu, whom Ramlal regarded as his sister. In the opening scene of the play, from the dialogue between Sudhakar and Sindhu, all this

information about Sudhakar's early life, the rare quality of his intellect and his sensitivity regarding his self-respect, have been conveyed. Ramlal is to leave for England for taking a degree in medicine, and has come to meet Sudhakar and Sindhu before his departure. He has great admiration for the qualities of Sudhakar, but he is also conscious of a major weakness in Sudhakar's character. viz. he was always likely to be carried to extremes. The opening scene is very lively owing to the different moods of different characters. Sindhu, who is very much devoted to her husband and who has an intense sisterly affection for Ramlal, is feeling rather sad owing to Ramlal's decision to go abroad. She is making an effort to restrain her emotions. Ramlal is naturally disturbed due to the imminent parting from persons dear and near to him. While referring to the happy married life of Sindhu and Sudhakar, he praises Sudhakar but also tells Sindhu that Sudhakar always needs a guardian to help him keep his balance in life. Sudhakar makes playful observations and makes fun of the emotional outbursts of Sindhu and Ramlal. And yet he remarks, 'God is kind and merciful and would always guard Ramlal even when he would be crossing the stormy seas. However, if God so desires, he would drown me even in a small cup.' This is an excellent instance of dramatic suggestion, for in the fifth scene of the first act we find that Sudhakar takes a plunge in the cup of wine in which later on he is drowned. Sindhu's mood of melancholy is an instance of the coming events casting their shadows before. Gadkari was deeply influenced by Shakespeare and had carefully studied Shakespearian Tragedy. In 'Ekach Pyala', he depicts the character of Sudhakar on the lines of the heroes in Shakespearian tragedies. Sudhakar has many extraordinary qualities but has one tragic flaw in his nature viz. he cannot control himself and always goes to extremes. In the first act, Gadkari shows Sudhakar caught in the midst of a situation in which his temperament gets the better of his judgement and pushes him to a dangerous path. Sudhakar was an intelligent and a successful lawyer. As he was making an argument on behalf of a client, there was an altercation between him and the judge. Sudhakar felt offended by some remarks of the judge, lost his temper and made some rude statement. He could not control himself and abused the judge, who took a very stern action and passed an order which suspended Sudhakar from practising in the Court of law for six months. The incident created a sensation and Sudhakar became the

target of criticism and the butt of ridicule. Sindhu would have exercised her restraining influence. However, as Sindhu was pregnant, she had gone to her father's place. Sudhakar was feeling very lonely and the pangs of the insult became unbearable to him. It is at this juncture that Taliram who is a drunkard, suggests to Sudhakar to take just one cup of wine in order to forget his agonies. And Sudhakar does it. He thus puts his foot on the steep and gliding path of the vice which ultimately takes him to abysmal depths.

As in Shakespeare, in Gadkari's play too, a serious scene is many times followed by a hilarious one. After the first scene in which Sindhu's mood of sadness touched the audience, there follows a scene in which Taliram, the reckless drunkard in his conversation with Bhagirath, wittily describes the power and the glory of wine. In the later part of the scene, there are hot exchanges between Taliram and his wife, Geeta. Herein also certain remarks of Taliram, displays Gadkari's brilliant wit. Taliram declares his intention to start a wine-club and give it the name, 'Arya Madira Mandal'. The fourth scene presents the meeting of the Arya Madira Mandal in which drunkards from different walks of life - an orthodox Sanskrit Pandit and a Muslim, a radical and a liberal and many others are brought together for a drinking bout. The dialogue in this scene causes real mirth. Taliram remarks that it is his noble intention to give respectability to wine and he has named their drinking club as 'Arya Madira Mandal', because the word 'Arya' always evokes respect in the minds of people. He further says that this club will give scholarships to students to do research in order to prepare wine which has no offensive smell.

The fifth scene, though brief, is important for the development of the plot. Sudhakar's pride is deeply hurt owing to the suspension of his 'Sanad'. He tells Taliram that he had not a wink of sleep and had a splitting headache. Taliram says that there is but one remedy which would bring relief. When Sudhakar asks him, what it is, Taliram suggests, 'Please take a cup of wine and lie down quietly'. Sudhakar, who is at first a little shocked at the suggestion, agrees to take wine in order to overcome his mental agonies. Little does he know that wine will overpower him and besides his agonies, his intellectual abilities and his character would also be drowned in that fatal cup of wine.

In the first scene of the second act, it is found that within a short time, Sudhakar has become a regular member of the

'Arya Madira Mandal' and is lost in the whirlpool of drinking bouts. For some time, he tries to conceal this from his wife, Sindhu, but Ramlal comes to know from Taliram's wife Geetabai that Sudhakar has become a wine addict.

v Gadkari again uses the method of presenting a humorous scene after a serious one. The third scene in the second act of 'Ekach Pyala', presents the meeting of the 'Arya Madira Mandal', in which every member, after getting drunk, spoke something which makes the audience laugh heartily. There are certain remarks such as the digs at the social reformers and also at the orthodox people, which had a significance in the context of those times and were appreciated by the contemporary audience. Shastribuwa praises Lokamanya Tilak for his orthodox views and says that he does not like Agarkar's reformist views; and then in the same breath he asks for more mutton. Khudabax wearing Shastribuwa's Pugree, Shastribuwa wearing Khudabax's fur-cap, and both embracing each other - this makes people laugh heartily and appreciate the ironic observations that wine ends all differences and brings together people of all castes and creeds.

The third Act opens with a scene where at the beginning, Sindhu's affection for her child is expressed in a beautiful poem. Sindhu's happy mood, however, changes suddenly and she speaks of the anxiety that has enveloped her mind. Just then Ramlal tells her that Sudhakar has become a drunkard. Sindhu is shocked to hear this and faints. When she is recovering, Sudhakar who is dead drunk, enters and through his raving, Gadkari suggests that this is just the beginning of the sufferings of Sindhu.

The short scene in which Taliram and his wife Geetabai quarrel with each other, brings out Gita's keen sense of self-respect and her defiant attitude when Taliram abuses her. The sharp contrast between the characters of Sindhu and Geetabai has been emphasised in the fourth scene. Sudhakar in the company of Taliram is drinking, when Sindhu enters and protests. Sudhakar then uses foul language and goes to the extent of asking Taliram to cut the Mangal-Sutra of Sindhu. Taliram poisons the mind of Sudhakar and tells him that Sindhu has an intimate relationship with Ramlal. When Taliram is about to carry out Sudhakar's order, Sindhu's brother, Padmakar appears on the scene and kicks Taliram. When Sudhakar asks his wife to get out of the house, Padmakar tells Sindhu that she should not stay in that hell even for a moment

and quit her home. In this tense situation, Gadkari reveals the main facet of Sindhu's character viz. her intense devotion to her husband. Sindhu is angry with her brother for calling her home a hell and says that Sudhakar's abode is a heaven to her. She bows down before Sudhakar and puts her head on his feet. Sudhakar kicks her, but she addresses him as Vaikuntheshwar - the Lord of heaven - and prays to him not to push her away. Sudhakar asks her to take a vow that she would not accept a farthing from any of her relations and Sindhu, the dedicated wife, willingly takes the vow. She refuses to listen to the advice of her brother and declares, 'A devout wife has no other relations except her husband. She is not her father's daughter, nor her brother's sister, nor her son's mother; she is only the wife of her God-given husband'. Sindhu feels that Sudhakar who is in a pitiable plight needs her most and it is her sacred duty to sacrifice everything for him. Gadkari regarded Hindu woman's infinite capacity for sacrifice as the noblest trait of her character. Sindhu symbolises that noble womanhood.

Gadkari did not want to present Sindhu as a weak and submissive wife. His object was to establish her as a perfect woman nobly planned, a woman whose inner strength enabled her to accept all hardships with a smile on her lips and whose moral strength lifted her to the highest level of human excellence. Sindhu declares that she would be with Sudhakar through sunshine and storm. She believes that mind is its own place and in the company of her husband she would be able to make a heaven of hell. She refuses to take a critical view of any of Sudhakar's actions, and declares that it is her firm resolve to worship him like a God. In this scene, Sindhu appears like a flame which can never be extinguished. She is unhappy because Sudhakar, owing to the vice of drinking, is stooping low. She further knows that this is but the beginning of Sudhakar's fall and anticipates the degrading depths which he would reach in the near future. Sindhu accepts this situation as a challenge to the values of life which she cherishes. She is aware that her efforts to bring Sudhakar back to his former self through coaxing and cudgelling would not succeed. She decides, however, not to submit to his vice meekly. She thinks that the only way to face that trying situation is to accept martyrdom. She believes that all that is heinous in Sudhakar's life would be destroyed by the fire of her sacrifice. She knows that her brother and all those who have affection for her, do not want her to suffer and therefore offer her shelter and protection. But

to Sindhu, acceptance of such help will be just escapism from the ordeal which she is facing. She does not want to run away from reality, however harsh it may be. She is determined to face it courageously. She knows that it is certainly not easy to bring back Sudhakar to the path of virtue and duty. But she has a rare exalted notion of the role of a wife, and she decides to play that role heroically. She feels that life is to be lived in the spirit of sacrifice, for that is only the way of turning Sudhakar, away from the vice of drinking, because of which he has lost his dignity and self-respect. Sindhu is confident that her martyrdom will at long last make Sudhakar repent. To her this will be the reward of the dreadful ordeal which she is accepting with a resolute mind. Sindhu thinks that life is worth living only if it has a moral fervour; the material end was of no consequence whatever. Gadkari's masterly characterization of Sindhu is revealed in this scene. Sindhu sparkles like lightning and dazzles the audience. It is no wonder that the tragic grandeur of Sindhu's character casts a spell over the audience..

Whereas in the last scene in the third act, Gadkari lifts the play to tragic heights, in the second scene of the fourth act, he shows that he is also a master in depicting the pathos in human life. Sudhakar becomes a reckless drunkard and as a result Sindhu has to do petty jobs even to feed her child. The scene depicts Sindhu's pitiable condition. She does not even once mention her sufferings, but she is miserable because she has not the money even to buy milk for her child. The dialogue between Sindhu and Geetabai is very dramatic as it brings out the sharp contrast between the two characters. Sindhu has a keen sense of self-respect and does not want Geetabai to take pity on her. But there is none to help her in her penniless condition and therefore she requests Geetabai to help her. Geetabai has great respect for Sindhu and is very angry that a noble woman like Sindhu has to suffer the pangs of poverty, due to her husband's addiction to drink. Geetabai, who has suffered in a similar manner due to her husband Taliram's excessive drinking, feels that a woman should not meekly submit to the tyranny of her husband. Geetabai is a woman with a sharp tongue and condemns Sudhakar's behaviour in strong terms. The effect of this scene is further enhanced through the device of dramatic irony. Sudhakar has entered his home unnoticed and listens to the conversation between Sindhu and Geetabai. Sindhu's love for her husband, her noble notion regarding the duties of a wife and her sense of self-respect,

even in poverty - all these arouse the feeling of repentance in the mind of Sudhakar. His conscience is awake at least for a moment. While Sudhakar listens to the sharp remarks of Geetabai, he feels that she is lashing him for his vice. Geetabai's words make Sudhakar conscious that he alone is responsible for the terrible sufferings of Sindhu and a sense of guilt is aroused in his mind. When Geetabai leaves, Sudhakar who is emotionally overwhelmed, bursts into tears and covers his face in his palms with an utter sense of shame. Sindhu tries to soothe him and asks him not to mind the harsh words of Geetabai. Sudhakar then promises Sindhu that he would give up drinking from that very moment. Sindhu feels that this is a boon given to her by God. When she requests Sudhakar not to give up his sacred vow any time and touches his feet, Sudhakar realises the contrast between Sindhu's noble character and his debased self. Gadkari has made Sudhakar conscious of the fact that Sindhu has risen to great heights of magnanimity and purity whereas he has sunk to the lowest depths of vice. The speech is a beautiful rhetoric in which fine ideas are expressed in apt and beautiful words.

Gadkari regarded the child as an incarnation of innocence and sweetness and a tender bond which held the parents together. At the end of the scene, Sindhu and Sudhakar kiss the child with fond affection. At least temporarily, the audience forgets the tension in the life of Sudhakar and Sindhu and is moved by the momentary happiness in their life, while they are showering affection on their child.

In the next two scenes, Gadkari shows that Sudhakar's conscience is aroused only temporarily and that he has become a complete slave to drinking. When he joins the company of drunkards, he talks about their moral degradation and at the same time admits that he is in no way different from them. In the scene of the Arya Madira Mandal, Gadkari again introduces very witty dialogue. Taliram is very ill. The allopathic doctor and the Vaidya practising Ayurved put forth competing claims regarding their ability to kill a patient. This part of the scene is hilarious and adds to the effect of the speech of Sudhakar which is a memorable rhetorical passage on wine. Acharya Atre, a great dramatist in Marathi, has appropriately described this speech of Sudhakar on wine as 'Madiropanishad'-An Upanishad on wine.

The last scene in this act is full of pathos. Sudhakar who is dead -drunk, is in a devilish mood. He calls his own infant son

a bastard, hits him with a stick and kills him. Sindhu is also wounded when Sudhakar hits her on the forehead. The act ends with the following words of Sudhakar : 'I want more wine. Just one cup.' And the audience is stunned and stupefied. Padmakar, Sindhu's brother, has seen this dastardly act of Sudhakar and informs the police. The last scene of fifth Act of 'Ekach Pyala' opens on a note of pathos. Sindhu who has so far courageously faced all the miseries, breaks down after the death of her child and is on the point of death. And yet the spark of her devotion to her husband is not extinguished. As Padmakar has lodged a complaint, the sub-inspector of police has come to take the statement of Sindhu. When he asks Sindhu what Sudhakar had done, Sindhu tells him that while she was walking down the staircase, due to extreme weakness she fainted and her child was crushed under her body. She says that Sudhakar has no hand in that unfortunate happening. Even after repeated inquiries, Sindhu states that Sudhakar is in no way responsible for the death of their child. Sindhu is nearing her end, but till the last moment, she shelters Sudhakar because she regards it her solemn duty to protect him and not to allow the world to find fault with him. Sindhu knows that the hand of death is about to snatch her and she wants Sudhakar to be by her side during her last moment. Her entreaties to Sudhakar to keep her head on his lap and to give his hand to her are very touching. Sudhakar then realises that she is a Goddess in human form and asks her to forgive him. Sindhu even during her last moment thinks of his well-being and asks him to take care of himself. She says that she is indeed fortunate because she can rest her head on his lap while dying. She requests Sudhakar not to touch wine thereafter. Sudhakar puts poison in the last cup of wine which he quickly gulps down. He bows down before Sindhu, keeps his head on her feet and dies.

'Ekach Pyala' is a powerful tragedy. Sudhakar is the central character of the drama. He is an intelligent and a proud man. Like all intelligent persons, he is a lonely man. He cannot share his sorrow with any one. His wife Sindhu is a devoted wife and worships him like a God; but Sudhakar cannot and does not communicate to her his agonies. Sudhakar who wants to forget the insult that he had suffered and the consequent unbearable pangs of his mind, falls a victim to the suggestion made by Taliram and takes just one cup of wine. This cup while cheering also intoxicates him and becomes his constant companion. Sudhakar who knows no restraint, becomes an

addict. Gadkari thus depicts the fall of an intelligent and a proud person who always goes to extremes. Once on the gliding precipice of vice, Sudhakar loses all his dignity and ill-treats his wife. He destroys the happy family-life, and in a drunken state kills his child and hurts his wife, who also dies as a result of prolonged suffering. Sudhakar is intermittently conscious of the nobility of his wife and realises her greatness, only when it is too late. This proud person, who resents even the idea of being pitied, ends his life by putting poison in the last cup of wine which he swallows.

Gadkari was not interested in just portraying the tragedy of Sudhakar. He also wanted to depict the character of Sindhu who was a symbol of all that was noble and great in Hindu womanhood. Sindhu, who came from a rich family, regarded her home a sacred temple. She willingly sacrificed everything to keep the sanctity of this temple. She was shocked to find her husband in the grip of vice. She entreated him to give it up, but she never expressed her sorrow and suffered patiently. Her suffering became more acute but she could pass through the ordeal in a stoic manner. She accepted her misery with rare courage and thought only of the happiness of Sudhakar and their child. 'Ekach Pyala' as a tragedy became poignant owing to Sindhu's noble character, her infinite capacity for sacrifice, her unswerving love for her husband and her philosophic acceptance of her destiny.

Taliram was a foil to Sudhakar. While Sudhakar oscillated between his servility to wine and his repentance for his servility, Taliram regarded drinking as a ritual. The comic relief offered by the scenes presenting the bunch of drunkards - Arya Madira Mandal- and Taliram's justification of drinking, enhanced the effect of the tragedy of Sudhakar and Sindhu. Gadkari did not want to preach but presented the moral degradation in the life of Sudhakar in such a powerful manner that the drama created in the mind of the audience a feeling of disgust for the vice of drinking.

The dialogues in the scenes presenting Sindhu as the central character, are simple, natural and extremely moving. The speeches of Sudhakar on the other hand are full of rhetoric. Gadkari's imagination found flowery expression through these speeches. The hilarious scenes presenting drinking bouts, the pathetic scenes depicting Sindhu's suffering, the poignant scenes emphasizing the sharp contrast between Sindhu's nobility and Sudhakar's moral debasement - all these have been

superbly blended by Gadkari in *Ekach Pyala*. That is why *Ekach Pyala* is still regarded as one of the finest tragedies in Marathi.

Modern critics and particularly women-writers, however thought that Sindhu symbolised the exalted concept of Hindu womanhood, but at the same time took her devotion to her husband to extreme. She never made any effort to make Sudhakar improve his behaviour. She shielded him, and in a way contributed to her own suffering. Modern women-critics in Marathi have described Sindhu's attitude as abject surrender to her worthless husband. They thought that Sindhu's mistaken notion about the duties of a wife was the fatal error in her character, and was the mainspring of the tragedy in her life. This criticism on the plane of ideas is valid; but a work of art has to be judged as an integrated creation wherein the characters and the plot emerge naturally from the theme in the mind of the writer and have an inevitability about them which cannot be questioned.

BHAV-BANDHAN

'Bhav-Bandhan' is the last play written by Gadkari. When he had completed three acts of this play in 1918, his health started deteriorating. In spite of his serious illness, Gadkari went on writing. He wrote the last scene of 'Bhav-Bandhan' on the night of 23rd January 1919 and within a short time he breathed his last.

Literature was the only solace to Gadkari's agonised mind and he almost compelled Death to wait till he had written the last scene of the last play he wrote. Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar, the eminent writer in Marathi, who was Gadkari's mentor, in his preface to 'Bhav-Bandhan' wrote, 'Many soldiers die on the battle field. Gadkari was unique in that he died while he was writing. While the play was about to take an entry on the stage, the playwright took his final exit from the stage of life.' Like Antony in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Gadkari must have felt that 'the long day's task was done and he must sleep.'

'Bhav-Bandhan' was very successful on the stage in spite of its loose plot. Gadkari would certainly have removed at least some of the blemishes in the play if only he had lived to see it performed on the stage. Gadkari had told his friend V. S. Gurjar that he wanted to write a comedy in which he would depict the character of an innocent and a simple old man caught in the

clutches of an arch-villain. In 'Bhav-Bandhan, Ghanashyam is the arch-villain. Dhundiraj is the innocent and simple old man caught in the clutches of Ghanashyam. Gadkari at first wanted to write a comedy but wrote a play in which laughter and tears intermingled and the interest of the audience in the rather loosely constructed play was sustained.

In the opening scene of 'Bhav-Bandhan', Gadkari presents two characters who are in sharp contrast with each other. Ghanashyam is an intelligent, calculating and crafty young man. Dhundiraj is a simple, innocent and a gullible old man. Ghanashyam is measured in his speech. Dhundiraj is loquacious and always digresses from one topic to another. Ghanashyam remembers everything. But Dhundiraj forgets everything. Through this contrast between the two characters, the dramatic effect is achieved by Gadkari. He also makes use of the loquacity of Dhundiraj for introducing other characters in the play. The scene mainly serves the twin purpose of establishing the characters of Dhundiraj and Ghanashyam and of sowing the seed of the plot. The digressions in the speech of Dhundiraj cause a good deal of mirth. However, Gadkari enlists the sympathy of the audience with Dhundiraj by depicting his transparent and childlike innocence. Ghanashyam wants to propose to Dhundiraj's marriagable daughter, Malati. When he declares his intention, Dhundiraj, with his characteristic innocence and liberal nature, tells him that he had no objection whatsoever.

Ghanashyam is working as a clerk of a money-lender, Dhaneshwar, who is a crook. Ghanashyam was Dhaneshwar's accomplice in many misdeeds. Dhaneshwar's daughter Latika is an intelligent, young girl; but she is aggressive and rather injudicious in speech, hurting others with sharp words. Latika is a close friend of Malati, the daughter of Dhundiraj. When Ghanashyam makes the proposal to Malati he did not know that she was in love with Manohar. Latika feels that Ghanashyam is transgressing the limits of his position. She chastises Ghanashyam in rude language. Ghanashyam who is a villain at heart, decides to take revenge not only on Latika but also on Malati. Ghanashyam plans to trap Dhundiraj and also Dhaneshwar so that he would have both Malati and Latika at his mercy. It is not difficult for Ghanashyam to catch simple Dhundiraj in his clutches. He uses a simple trick. Dressed as a sub-inspector of police, he brings the charge of theft against Dhundiraj and tells him that he will be set free provided he

gives a written confession. Poor Dhundiraj falls a victim to the wiles of Ghanashyam and gives the confession of the crime, he has not committed. Later on, Ghanashyam uses the document, he has Dhundiraj at his mercy and extracts a promise from him that he will give his daughter in marriage to the old money-lender Dhaneshwar. In the meanwhile, Ghanashyam with the help of one of his foolish acquaintances Maheshwar, steals some documents of Dhaneshwar, which are a clear proof of Dhaneshwar's illegal transactions and would easily implicate him in criminal prosecution. Ghanashyam thus has the crook money-lender, Dhaneshwar in his clutches and forces him to give two promises - one that he would marry Malati and the other that he will give Latika in marriage to Ghanashyam. Thus the revenge that Ghanashyam wanted to take would have been complete and the lives of Latika and malati would have been ruined. However, as in Shakespeare's romantic comedies, Gadkari creates a situation in which tables are turned on Ghanashyam. Latika and her lover Prabhakar with the help of Maheshwar, plan to trap Ghanashyam. Their plan, coupled with a chance incident, probable only in a romantic comedy, succeeds and Ghanashyam is outwitted. Thus the young lovers, Prabhakar and Latika, and Malati and Manohar, are united and Ghanashyam who is defeated, is rendered liable for punishment. But Dhundiraj with his rare generous mind, does not want any one to suffer. He destroys the evidence against Ghanashyam, who is overwhelmed by the magnanimous action, and falls at Dhundiraj's feet. Thus in 'Bhav-Bandhan', the course of love in the lives of young lovers does not run smooth but in the end the lovers are united, and the play ends happily.

'Bhav-Bandhan', in spite of the improbabilities in the plot, is very successful on the stage and very popular. This is mainly due to the fine delineation of characters by Gadkari. Latika is proud, self-opinionated and has a sharp tongue. However, when caught in the clutches of adverse circumstances, she becomes meek and docile. Her contempt for Ghanashyam as expressed in the first act and her acceptance of defeat when Ghanashyam avenges the insult suffered at her hands, produce a fine dramatic effect. Malati never hurts others and accepts the moments of happiness and sorrow in her life with restraint. She appears far more mature than the impetuous Latika. Gadkari also displays great skill in depicting the character of the villain, Ghanashyam. In sharp contrast to the villain, Dhundiraj with his inimitable style of talking in a longwinded manner, his simple

affectionate nature and his trust in God, touches the hearts of the audience. The minor characters, Maheshwar, Indu and Bindu, make the audience laugh heartily. Both Indu and Bindu are black in complexion and very ugly. Maheshwar's witty remarks on their ugliness, are heartily enjoyed by the audience. Maheshwar, while acting as a stooge of Ghanashyam, poses that he is a blind singer from Karnatak. It is very difficult for him to keep up this appearance and this creates funny situations. All the scenes in which Maheshwar appears, are hilarious. Thus in 'Bhav-Bandhan' there is humour based on words, humour created owing to funny situations and humour emerging from the character of Dhundiraj. But besides this, Gadkari has, in the character of Dhundiraj, beautifully blended laughter and tears. Dhundiraj with his forgetfulness and digressive speech causes laughter; but when Malati, in order to save her father from disgrace, agrees to marry old Dhaneshwar and asks for her father's blessings, Dhundiraj says to her, 'You need not study Shastras or Shruti. You need not go to holy places, but you must never forsake God Shiva, who is the saviour of us all.' Malati has readily agreed to sacrifice her happiness. Dhundiraj is miserable and yet is asking his daughter to face the ordeal with faith in God. The simple words of Dhundiraj are very touching and move the audience to tears. Gadkari who had a rare insight in human nature, thus presented through the character of Dhundiraj, a kind of rainbow-humour, intermingling pathos with humour.

It must be admitted here that 'Bhav-Bandhan' does not reach the heights achieved by Gadkari in 'Ekach Pyala', 'Raj-Sanyas' and 'Punya Prabhav'. But it is a delightful comedy in which characters hold together a loose plot.

Summing up

Gadkari wrote poems and humorous articles but drama was the medium which suited his genius more than any other form of literature. Gadkari had read Shakespeare, Moliere and many other dramatists. But Shakespeare was his ideal. He used to say, 'Shakespeare wrote thirty six dramas. It is my ambition to write at least eighteen dramas.'

Gadkari, owing to his close association with the theatre, knew that drama was an art in collaboration, in which the dramatist, the director and the actors collaborated with each other. Gadkari was fortunate in getting gifted actors like Bal Gandharva, Chintamanarao Kolhatkar and Ganpatrao Bodas to play important roles in his plays. Bodas was a very intelligent

director. Gadkari also knew the mind of the audience and knew how to touch the chords of their heart. Gadkari was not interested in presenting only the small domestic conflicts in life through his dramas. He thought that human life became significant only when men and women lived for a noble and a lofty ideal. Thus in 'Punya Prabhav' he presented the character of Vasundhara who regarded her chastity as the most precious possession of life and who was ready to sacrifice everything in order to protect it. Sindhu in 'Ekach Pyala' thought that a woman should live and die for her husband. She was an incarnation of 'Arya Pativrata'. In 'Raj-Sanyas' Sambhaji, in spite of all his weaknesses, adored the exalted ideal of the king, as a person who did not enjoy the fruits of power and position. Sabaji was the symbol of loyalty. These ideals, presented through dramatic plots, noble characters and rhetorical dialogues, made Gadkari a great dramatist. These noble ideals were expressed in appropriately profound style. Many of the memorable speeches in Gadkari's dramas had the rhythm of the blank verse in Shakespeare.

Gadkari had a keen sense of the art of the drama. He never allowed the interest to flag. Suspense was always kept up while developing the plot. In the important scenes, Gadkari created tension in the minds of the audience and then afforded relief through scenes which were full of wit and humour. However, the plots of Gadkari's plays had many loose threads and the sub-plots did not enhance the effect of the main plot. In spite of these blemishes, Gadkari succeeded in captivating his audience with his brilliant dialogues. It would not be proper to apply the canons of criticism accepted in modern times. Gadkari's plays have to be understood in the spirit in which they were written. They have stood the test of time. The great actors and actresses of successive generations deemed it a matter of pride and privilege to play the major roles in the plays of Gadkari. Marathi language in the hands of Gadkari showed that it was an appropriate medium for expressing great ideas, noble thoughts and all shades and nuances of human feelings. The poet in Gadkari was always present in the dramas of Gadkari. The humorist in Gadkari also appeared in his dramas. It was no wonder therefore, that Gadkari cast a spell over Maharashtra and great writers such as Acharya Atre and the Dnyanapeeth award winner, Shirwadkar claimed that they were the disciples of Gadkari and tried to emulate his greatness.

IV

The Humorist

Ram Ganesh Gadkari had remarkable powers of intellectual perception. From an early age, he observed life around him with a discerning eye. The striking characteristics of men and women were quickly perceived by him. As he was passing through varied experiences, he realized that life was very complex and was full of contradictions. Gadkari was a voracious and a critical reader. He read and re-read the works of many great authors - poets, dramatists and also humorists. His potentialities as a writer developed, his mind matured and his imagination blossomed. Gadkari had a rare sense of humour. He was very witty in his conversation and enjoyed talking to his chosen friends for hours together. He laughed heartily and had an infinite capacity for making others laugh. Gadkari was conscious of his superior intelligence and of his literary talent; but he had a sympathetic mind and therefore never showed, in fact never had, any contempt for others. His laughter was never derisive and contemptuous. Gadkari, who was keenly aware of the suffering in human life, felt that humour could certainly make life bearable even in the midst of acute grief. Gadkari regarded man's capacity for laughter as a boon to life. His own personal life was far from happy and his poems were an expression of the sad state of his mind. However, sense of humour was also a significant facet of his personality. He saw the incongruities and the absurdities of life and enjoyed laughing at them. Gadkari regarded Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar as his Guru. He highly appreciated the humorous writings of Kolhatkar. His witticisms strikingly resembled the witticisms of Kolhatkar in 'Sudamyache Pohe' (A collection of humorous essays). But there was one remarkable difference between the two. Kolhatkar had a reformist's zeal and used his humour for exposing the absurdities and oddities in the so-called religious practices and in social customs. But there was no reformist fervour in

Gadkari and he never used humour for exposing or criticising any of social or religious customs. In a light-hearted manner Gadkari poked fun at the follies- both individual and social. For instance in the orthodox Hindu society, the father had to make strenuous efforts in order to find a bridegroom for his marriageable daughter. Gadkari handled this theme in three articles through humorous situations and created characters which the readers greatly appreciated. One of the main characters in these three articles, Timbunana, had a marriageable daughter, Thaki, who was very ugly. Timbunana started on the mission of finding a bridegroom and was accompanied by his friend Balakram who narrated their various experiences. Balakram was Gadkari himself and he wrote his humorous articles under that pen-name.

There was a sequence of humorous incidents in the articles on the mission of Thaki's marriage. In one of these, there was a description of the arrogant pose taken by the father of a marriageable boy. One of them in order to show his unwillingness to entertain a proposal for his son, wanted to say that he was not thinking of the marriage of his son during that year. However, in his arrogant mood he remarked that he did not propose to get his son married in this life. Gadkari through another incident has shown how people regarded the daughter as a curse. Once Timbunana was blessing a newly married girl. In a fit of absent-mindedness, instead of the traditional blessing 'May you have eight sons' -Ashta Putra Saubhagyavati Bhava - he said 'Ashta Kanya Saubhagyavati Bhava' - may you have eight daughters. This was regarded as a curse by the relations of the girl. They were enraged and gave Timbunana a severe beating and filed a suit against him. The judge who also had a daughter, knew that if Timbunana's words would come true, it would be a disaster and therefore he found Timbunana guilty and punished him. The forms of the punishment described by Gadkari were quite funny, one of them being that Timbunana would have to travel every week by metre-gauge railway, which in those days was very slow. Such topical references were naturally appreciated by the readers of those times. Timbunana was asked to read the drab editorials of a wellknown daily of those days. In another situation when Timbunana and Balakram were discussing the probable expenses for the dresses of the bridegroom, Balakram gave the figure which appeared extravagant to Timbunana. He then made a suggestion that instead of spending so much on some other bridegroom,

Balakram should himself marry Thaki. At this suggestion Balakram fainted. What followed was hilarious. The description of the operation on Balakram's heart, the decision to put a substitute heart and regulate it by keeping a watch near it - all this was humour achieved through exaggeration. In another instance Gadkari ridiculed the superstition that if the planet Mars was unfavourable to a girl, she would become a widow at an early age. In order to avoid this defect in the horoscope of Thaki, Timbunana's daughter, Balakram prepared a new horoscope in which Mars was dropped altogether. How this enraged the father of a young man and how his eyes which were red owing to anger, resembled Mars, was very humorously described by Gadkari.

The three articles describing the plight of the father of a marriageable daughter can be enjoyed even today. Gadkari while describing the ridiculous social customs, was never bitter. He used the device of exaggeration in a very skilful manner and made people laugh at the absurdities in their own life. Gadkari's gift for characterisation also added a flavour to this series of articles - 'Thakiche Lagna' (Mission of Thaki's Marriage). Timbunana and Balakram have been portrayed with great skill. Gadkari showed that when young men saw the duo - Timbunana and Balakram - they hurriedly ran away in order to avoid the onslaught of Timbunana and his associate. Timbunana's plight is pathetic and yet Gadkari has created fun out of it. One humorous situation quickly followed the other and kept up the interest throughout the series of articles. Timbunana was not just an individual. He was the representative of the lower middle class persons who found that settling the marriage of their daughter was a great ordeal. Timbunana's ungrudging acceptance of his lot evoked sympathy. But the whole situation was full of absurdities and therefore it made the readers laugh. The dramatist in Gadkari enabled him to make humour more effective, particularly by juxtaposing the serious and the ludicrous. Gadkari referred to the dowry system, but instead of serious criticism he rightly thought that the system could be attacked in a pleasantly sarcastic manner. He referred to the excessive demands for dowry and remarked, 'Had the system existed in ancient times, Dhritarashtra in Mahabharat, with his hundred handsome sons, would have got more dowry than the kingdom of Hastinapur and the catastrophe of war would have been averted.' Gadkari's flourishes of pen, sometimes assumed the form of lashes. For

instance, while commenting on the impertinence of the parents of marriageable boys, Gadkari observed, 'A person bitten by a mad dog started barking like a dog after hearing the thundering sound of clouds; similarly, the parents of a marriageable young man, hearing the sound of the band on the eve of the marriage season, became wild with the poison of arrogance.' Gadkari mentioned many absurd reasons for rejecting a girl as a bride and poked fun at foolish superstitions.

Gadkari, who was himself a gifted poet, wrote an article ridiculing the pseudo-poets. Gadkari poked fun at rhymesters and exaggerated their weaknesses. These pseudo-poets, according to Gadkari, were hopelessly conventional. Most of them wrote poems on their happy childhood. Gadkari mischievously remarked that a poet remembered his childhood because as a child he was clasped and kissed by young maidens in the neighboring households. Gadkari referred to the poses taken by the non-poets to appear as poets. Many of them heaved sighs, shed tears and wanted to show that they were in love and the pangs of separation from their beloved were unbearable to them. Gadkari made an observation that these pseudo-poets shed such profuse tears that they would be nice substitutes for a fire-brigade. Gadkari also ridiculed the ignorance of the pseudo-poets. They tried to show that they were lovers of nature. One of them praised a peacock for his sweet voice; the other heard the song sung by a butterfly; the third referred to the swans in the Western Ghats. Gadkari described how a poet read out his poem full of pathos. While reading the poem, the pseudo-poet started weeping. The listener also caught the contagion and started shrieking with grief. When he posed that he had fainted, the poet ran away and the listener escaped from his clutches. This article 'Kavincha Karkhana' (A Factory of Poets) had some brilliant portions, but in parts, it was all dull. It could not be regarded as a representative piece of Gadkari's humour.

Gadkari as a humorist was at his best in the short skits which he wrote. His 'Deedpaani Natak' (A drama of a page and a half) was simply brilliant. Prof. Kotibuddhe was shown as a pedantic scholar who spoke the obscure scholarly language while trying to comfort his child who was crying. Prof. Kotibuddhe told his son in bombastic words that crying was injurious to health and would affect the circulation of blood. While asking the child not to cry, the Professor referred to Lord Krishna's advice to Arjuna in Bhagwad Gita. When the child

was crying more and more loudly, the Professor started describing the various stars in astronomical terms and asked his child to watch their course instead of crying aloud. At this stage, the ten year old daughter of the learned Professor came, took the child in her arms and started singing the song for children, 'Chandoba, Chandoba, Bhaglas Ka' (Oh moon, are you weary?) and such other rhythmic songs. The child stopped crying, was amused by the song, nodded to the clapping of his sister and started laughing. The learned Professor in stead of realising his mistake, was sorry that his daughter was singing a song which was meaningless. The skit was wonderful. The pompous, pedantic Professor has been gently ridiculed by Gadkari showing that though he talked of psychology, he was completely ignorant of the mind of the child.

Another skit 'Mook Nayak' (A Dumb Hero), is also marvellous. It is a portrayal of an 'Anti-hero' so much lauded in recent years. In one scene after another, in different situations, the hero always remained silent. In the first scene, twelve days after the birth, the child did not cry and women who had assembled for the ceremony of giving him a name, expressed surprise at the silence of the child, who was given the name Vikrant. In due course he was taken to the school by his father but he did not utter a single word. In school when he was beaten by his school-mates, he only cried and ran away. When the head-master took the oral examination, Vikrant could not answer a single question. When his marriage was settled, his consent was taken for granted and he was not allowed to say a word. When he was seventeen and attained manhood, someone pushed his wife into the bed-chamber. Vikrant did not say a word. Later on, even though Vikrant had not passed the qualifying examination, he got a clerical job because someone put in a word for him. He was utterly incompetent in his job. When his boss took him to task, he did not utter a word of protest or explanation. In the next scene, each of Vikrant's eight children, asked for something- an exercise book, a toy or a comb. But Vikrant was silent. When his wife angrily said that there was nothing in the house and she could not even cook rice that evening, Vikrant just remained silent. Vikrant retired silently and also died silently. In the last scene, when he was cremated, one man remarked, 'A good man is gone. He never meddled in anything. Nothing which could be criticized by others was done by him, except his eight children'. Thus, Vikrant, the anti-hero remained dumb throughout his life.

Gadkari in the preface wrote just one sentence, 'Drama is a picture of life'. The play ended in the following manner: 'The flames of the funeral pyre went high up and the curtain was burnt'. There is an amazing brevity in this skit. Gadkari has shown how Vikrant always remained passive and yet the normal course of life went on. He was born, went to school, joined service, married, had children, went on living without uttering a word and also died silently.

Gadkari who had a long association with the theatre wrote some humorous articles such as 'Natak Kase Pahave' (How to see a drama), but these articles were not very striking. He had however, written a brief article of twenty five lines 'Jagucha Report' (The report given by Jagu), which was wonderful. Jagu, a boy who had been brought up in the company of actors since his childhood days, was naturally familiar with the theatre. He was taken to a marriage ceremony. He gave a report of the ceremony to his playmates in the following manner : 'The stage was made of bricks, but was very small. Passes for the show appeared to be distributed free. Ladies had assembled round the stage. There was Shehnai and Tasha, but the persons played on them only when someone among the audience asked them to play. There was one male actor, one female actor and one priest. The female actor appeared nervous and was looking down. Probably this was her first appearance on the stage. The priest was speaking very loudly and as the male and female actors had forgotten their speeches, he prompted loudly; they repeated whatever the prompter said. At last the main characters married and there was a chorus.'

Gadkari always liked children. He appreciated their pranks very much. He wrote a fine, brief farcical skit 'Sakalcha Abhyas' (Studying in the morning). Gadkari had written this skit mainly for school-going children. Gadkari's observation was minute and out of a daily occurrence he had woven the fabric of a delightful farcical skit. Two brothers Damu and Dinu were school-going children and were studying in the morning. Both of them were playing mischiefs with each other while studying. Damu was finding the meaning of difficult words from the dictionary. Dinu was cramming, the names of Tehsils from one District. In their pranks, ink was spilt, pencils were broken, they shouted at each other, beat each other and again turned to their studies. While they were cramming they were totally inattentive; they distorted the original words and in place of Oxford and Cambridge, Damu was saying 'Chaskar

and Khepari'. There was great confusion. It was time for going to school. They hurried up. Damu took Dinu's books and vice versa. The exercise books and Dinu's clothes were soiled with ink. They had forgotten all that they were cramming. But the boys were in high spirits and they rushed to the school in their playful mood. This representative picture of school-going children had a remarkable freshness about it.

Gadkari could produce an excellent parody, particularly when he saw ordinary things being given an undue importance. In those days, in some magazines, there was a feature 'Swayampak Gharatil Goshti' (Tales from the Kitchen), in which instructions for preparing certain delicacies were given. Gadkari wrote an article using certain familiar Marathi terms. Gadkari used them in an altogether different context, and described them as delicacies. In Marathi when a house is ruined the term used is 'Ghara Darache Khobare' (Khobare means the Kopra). Gadkari described the delicacy as follows : 'When the husband has taken to drinking, the wife should leave the household affairs to servants and go to her father. Within a period of six months, one gets 'Gharadarache Khobare'. This delicacy can be prepared only once in a life-time.' This article is an instance of Gadkari's subtle sense of humour.

Gadkari has written six humorous poems, some of which are fine parodies. In the poem 'Rangoli Ghatleli pahoon' (On seeing the beautiful designs of Rangoli), Gadkari has given a mischievous twist to a line in the poem of Keshavsut - an eminent Marathi poet. In 'Kay Karave' (What should one do?), the poet described that he could ward off any danger, drive away an attacking buffalo by opening an umbrella, but was at a loss to know as to what he should do, when his wife who was a shrew, started attacking him with her sharp tongue.

In another poem, Gadkari described the din and bustle among the women in a marriage ceremony and remarked that their noise far excelled the noise of thundering clouds, ringing bells and the deafening sounds on the battle fields. Gadkari also wrote a poem on some people who were constantly worrying about anything and everything, for no reason whatever. Gadkari called them 'Chintatur Jantu' (The insects who had always some anxiety in life.)

'Sang Kase Basalo' (Tell me how we sat) was another pleasant poem with a touch of romance. In the first meeting the lovers sat at a distance from each other. In their second meeting they moved close to each other, and after a few months, the

lover slyly said to the beloved, 'Tell me now how we are sitting', suggesting the intimacy between them. Here Gadkari through the suggestion of romance tickled the readers.

In most of the plays of Gadkari, humour was created through minor characters. Gadkari wrote his first play 'Vedyancha Bajar' (A medley of idiots) which almost bordered on a farce. Balabhau, a major character in the play, was brought up in the vicinity of a dramatic company. He did not understand that what was represented on the stage was, on most occasions, larger than life. He felt that all the world was a stage and whatever happened in life was an image of what was represented on the stage. Due to this foolish notion, he imitated the hero in a romantic play and leapt from the compound wall in order to enter the house of Venu, the girl whom he adored. He expected that like the heroine of a drama, Venu would either be singing or gathering flowers. He was shocked to find that Venu was cleaning the floor. When Venu wanted to ward off a fly hovering about her face, Balabhau remembered the scene in Sanskrit drama Shakuntala, where a bee hovered round the face of the heroine. He talked like an actor and when he made advances, Venu sternly asked him not to touch her. Then Balabhau felt that like the hero in a romantic drama, he should faint. He then sang a song and showed that he fainted. There were two other characters in this play whom Gadkari showed as victims to some fad. One of them Annasaheb was constantly anxious about his health and took all sorts of medicines. He expected others to behave accordingly and said that during the Diwali-festival, the whole family should enjoy taking some medicine together. Another character, Madhavrao constantly read books like Bhagwad Gita, Shankar Bhashya, Upanishads and felt that life was Maya. If only Gadkari had developed the play on these lines it would have been a resounding success. But as this was only his first experiment of writing a play, the comedy was left unfinished.

In all the serious plays, Gadkari provided comic relief through humorous characters and situations. Gokul, a character in 'Prem-Sanyas', was forgetful to the extreme and was terribly afraid of his wife who was a shrew. Gokul relieved the tension in the Play. In 'Punya-Prabhav', minor characters like Kankan, Nupur, Sudam and Damini displayed different kinds of stupidities and provided comic relief. In 'Raj-Sanyas', the character of Dehu was another instance of foolishness. In 'Ekach Pyala', the scenes in which the drinking bouts of 'Arya

'Madira Mandal' were represented, were full of humour. In 'Bhav-Bandhan', there were many humorous situations such as Mahashwar taking the garb of a blind singer from Karnataka and speaking Marathi. Gadkari was fond of making puns and in 'Bhav-Bandhan', there were many humorous situations in which his wit found abundant expression. Gadkari also presented humour emerging from the character of Dhundiraj, who was a simple old man, loquacious and always digressive in his speech. The innocence and the generosity of Dhundiraj have been blended with the defects in his character and produced humour in which laughter and tears mingled.

Gadkari thus could write humour based on words; some of the finest puns in marathi were interspersed in his writing. Gadkari's plays abounded in humorous situations. And above all, there was humour emerging from character - which was the hall-mark of Gadkari as a humorist. Gadkari looked at life not as a critic but as a sympathetic observer. His humour was a kind contemplation of the incongruities of life.

Epilogue

Gadkari made a significant contribution to Marathi literature through different forms - poetry, drama and humour. He also enriched Marathi language. During his life-time, for over a decade he ruled the realm of literature like a Colossus. But his influence did not end with his death. He cast such a spell over the writers of his times and those of the later generations, that his presence is felt on the Marathi stage and in Marathi poetry, even today. Devotion to literature was the mainspring of Gadkari's life. He had a fine literary taste and a keen and genuine appreciation of the master-writers like Kalidas and Bhavabhuti, Dnyaneshwar and Tukaram, Shakespeare and Moliere. Gadkari was criticised by some critics for the exuberance in his writing, particularly in many of the speeches in his dramas. However, as was said about certain writers of the Renaissance in English literature, one can defend the exuberance in Gadkari's writing on the ground that 'it is better which riots out of plenty than that which proceeds out of want'. Gadkari had a rich and fertile imagination and he skillfully used it as an instrument of expressing profound ideas and intense emotions. P. B. Bhave, an eminent short-story writer in Marathi, while countering the criticism against Gadkari's gorgeous style, remarked, 'Gadkari was a majestic water-fall. It would be wrong to apply the tests of a water-tap to it.'

Though Gadkari had a fine sense of humour, melancholy was the dominant note in his writings, particularly in his poems. Some of the writers on Gadkari, have traced the source of his mood of despair to his unhappy personal life. Gadkari could not marry the girl whom he loved. His first marriage was unsuccessful and he died shortly after his second marriage. He loved children but had no child. He had faith in God but it did not give him philosophic strength. Gadkari's faith in God was just a solace to his agonised mind. It was no wonder, therefore,

that disappointment in his personal life and suffering in life around him clouded his vision.

Gadkari neglected his health. He always burnt the midnight oil while reading and writing. His life in the dramatic-company was full of irregularities. No wonder, his health broke down at an early age. This was also a factor which contributed to his sadness. Gadkari had many acquaintances but had few friends. He was a lonely man living in a world of his own imagination. He hated hypocrisy and was impatient with fools, even with mediocre people. He was disturbed by the contradiction in human life and in one of his poems he wrote, 'It is far better to be alone than face the contradictions of life'. He found solace in the untimely song of a koel and felt a sense of kinship with an owl, which was always awake during night. Gadkari found that in life around him, there was sorrow rather than happiness, hypocrisy rather than honesty, falsehood rather than truth, thorns rather than flowers, ugliness rather than beauty. His sensitive mind yearned for a better world than the society around him. When he felt suffocated and throttled by misery and when he was overawed by the sense of perverse Destiny, he escaped into the world of his dreams. He regarded life as a fitful fever and felt that it was worth living only so long as he could give expression to his creative urge as an artist. Gadkari thus was a restless soul and his sweetest songs were those that told of saddest thought.

Appendix

Raj Sanyas, Ram Ganesh Gadkari's great historical play has Sambhaji, the son of Shivaji Maharaj as its hero. When Sambhaji was made a captive and kept in a dungeon by Aurangzeb, he was overwhelmed by a repentant mood. At this point, Sabaji, an octogenerian devoted follower of Shivaji Maharaj, approached Sambhaji. He had surreptitiously secured a permit with the Emperor's stamp and asked Sambhaji to escape the clutches of the Moghuls. The plan was that he would put himself in the place of Sambhaji and sacrifice his life so that Sambhaji would be free and would again don the royal robes as the Maratha King. Here follows the English rendering of the scintillating dialogue between old Sabaji and king Sambhaji.

The original Marathi dialogue has been rendered into blank verse by the foremost Marathi Poet, Gyanpeeth Award winner, Kusumagraja. This would give the reader an idea of the grand style and the pleasing lilt of the lively dialogues penned by Ram Ganesh Gadkari.

Raj Sanyas : from Act V Scene V :

*Sambhaji : Do the Gods for whom their heaven stales
Alight on earth and make your heart abode,
Does nectar stream along your saintly speech ?
My Sire, I am crushed, you do not crush me more
Your kindly words compound my shame, oh no....
I will not on your death purchase my life
A worthless one, even the damned in hell
My presence will abhor, I yet I am
I'll welcome death than live a garbage life
I will not yield...*

*Sabaji : My lord, you are my king,
May millions die but must their master live.
My lord, you live and every tree will bear
Thousand blooms like me, in every dale
With Titan's might will every rock arise.
My wintered life is naught, I live with death
That roves around, and for this noble cause*

*My soul will leave with bliss this shattered nest,
 But you must live. My comrades call
 And need you at the helm, their only hope,
 Fight they will undaunted, you must lead...
 Your crown, my king, in people's heart does reign,
 I pray, you mind the title you inherit
 'Saviour of the trodden and their Star
 Leading them to fight.' --*

Sambhaji : *No ! Oh No !*

*That glorious title but I have defiled
 A wanton depraved brat I am, I turned
 The holy pool in a sewage full of filth,
 I used our sacred flag my friend, alas,
 To wipe the dirty drops on a boozers lips,
 I killed my kins and friends in random wrath
 These thousand guilts and sins around me press
 And cry revenge, I am not what I was...*

RAM GANESH GADKARI

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