



Mr. Vijay Tendulkar receiving the citation at the Katha Chudamani award function in New Delhi on Monday as author Ms. Krishna Sobti (extreme right) looks on.

Honouring a pioneer

IF FILMS like "Manthan", "Nishant", "Ardh Satya", "Kamala" and "Aakrosh" carry a strong social message and speak out against violence, caste war and exploitation in society, it is because their screenplays were written by the eminent Marathi playwright, Vijay Tendulkar, whose life journey spanning, more than five decades, has been marked by a heightened social sensitivity.

"Celebrating Tendulkar" is the theme of a literary festival currently on in schools and colleges of the Capital as part of a week-long tribute by Katha to the author and playwright who has influenced the course of many destinies in today's times. Tendulkar himself was here today to receive the Katha Chudamani award from the Jnanpith award winner, Mahasweta Devi.

"I am happy that I have not received this award from any politician but from such an eminent writer like Mahasweta Devi," says Tendulkar, accepting the honour. "Writing is like

breathing for me. If it stops, life itself will stop," he adds.

Incidentally, the man who created quite a stir with his play "Ghashiram Kotwal" believes that writers cannot be under the illusion that their writings will bring about any social transformation. "Forces of change are different and I do not think a dramatist or novelist can make an effective contribution."

Since freedom of expression has been central to his writing, Tendulkar is against any form of cultural policing. "We know better than any Government what constitutes culture and if there is need for any censorship, let us create that censorship," he argues.

Some of Tendulkar's path-breaking plays are being show-cased at the Katha Chudamani Literary Festival. The Theatre group Abhiyan is staging two plays -- "Sakharam Binder" and "Panchhi Aise Aate Hain" -- on September 4. There will be a play reading of "Ghashiram Kotwal" by the theatre group Asmita on

September 5. "Kamala" will be presented by the Katha Theatre Group in the form of an interactive theatre for two days where the artists will perform and they will interact. While it is open to all theatre lovers, the focus on September 6 will be on school teams and the next day, it will be on college teams and students.

Other events include an audio-visual exhibition on Tendulkar as a playwright, author, screenplay writer, essayist, journalist and photographer, being held at the Katha Centre till September 7, seminars and discussions in colleges, a talk show and even a quiz on "Indian Theatre and Tendulkar", entitled "Khamoshi: Jawaab Haazir Hai!" which was held here today.

A retrospective of the films for which Tendulkar had written screenplays is also being held at the India Habitat Centre as part of the Katha Chudamani Literary Festival.

By K. Kannan
Photo: S. Subramaniam.