



## POWER- POLITICS IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S *GHASHIRAM KOTWAL*

Omprabha Arjun Lohakare

Late Sow. Kamaltai Jamkar Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Parbhani, Maharashtra

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### ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this research paper is to look into how power manifests itself in *Ghashiram Kotwal*. The play depicts the struggle between power and violence. The main theme of *Ghashiram Kotwal* is power and crime. Tendulkar is a harsh critic of those who abuse control to achieve their own selfish goals. Nana Phadnavis is Peshwai's strong minister in Poona. He appoints Ghashiram as the city's Kotwal. Ghashiram was named not because of his abilities, but rather because he offers Nana his young and lovely daughter Gauri. Nana tells him that he must remain silent about his pregnant daughter's death. Finally, Nana issues a death warrant for Ghashiram. Vijay Tendulkar reveals the brutality, treachery, sensuality, and immortality that lurks beneath the surface of modern politics. *Ghashiram Kotwal* shows how power politics is characterized by hypocrisy, greed, and violence. *Ghashiram Kotwal* is a symbol of poor people who are exploited by politicians. Nana Phadnavis represents those in politics who use the poor as puppets and discard them after they have served their purpose.

**Keywords :** *Power, Politics, Hypocrisy, Violence.*

### INTRODUCTION :

Vijay Tendulkar is widely regarded as one of India's most accomplished playwrights. He has written thirty full-length plays and twenty-three one-act plays in his career as a playwright. He broke the tradition of well-made plays and evolved new theatrical traditions that were appropriate to represent the contemporary social reality with his play *Manus Navache Bet (An Island Called Man)* (1955), which was the first major play to be staged in the year 1956. He brought about a sea change in the conventional conventions of Indian theater. He is considered as a significant translator in the Marathi language. He has translated total ten works of fiction, including nine novels, two biographies, and five plays.

In 1972, Dr. Jabbar Patel, the director of the Progressive Dramatic Association of Poona, was responsible for the production of the first version of *Ghashiram Kotwal*. The story of *Ghashiram Kotwal* is based on an actual historical event that took place in Maharashtra

during the Peshwai period. It has written with the intention of shedding light on the cruelty, crime, and corruption that are prevalent in contemporary politics. It was adapted into the English language, and it went on to become one of the plays with the longest runs in the history of Indian theater. This play is a comment on anti-Brahminism.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the power dynamics that is reflected in the play *Ghashiram Kotwal*. The play revolves primarily around the concepts of power and violence. Tendulkar has a low tolerance for those who seek to advance their own interests by abusing their power. Nana Phadnavis is a highly influential minister in the reign of Peshwa. He chooses Ghashiram to serve as the city's Kotwal (administrator). The only reason Ghashiram was promoted to this position was because he offered Nana his beautiful daughter Gauri.

The play is about Ghashiram and how power creates and destroys him. The drama is about

the hypocrisy, humiliation, and decadence of powerful people who would do anything for power and money like Ghashiram and Nana Phadnavis. It's also about power-hungry people who destroy their opponents. People are pawns, to be utilized when necessary and discarded when they are no longer useful. The power operates via the use of social structures such as religion and caste. This is one of the main reasons why the play is so relevant to the social situation that find ourselves in today. The violence, treachery, sensuality, and immortality that are latent in contemporary politics are brought to light by Vijay Tendulkar through the play. *Ghashiram Kotwal* reveals hypocrisy, greed, and brutality that are the defining characteristics of power politics.

One can gain a deep comprehension of Nana and Ghashiram's respective personalities by paying close attention to the conversation that follows between the two of them:

NANA. No! Send her. I'll make you Kotwal. When will you send her?

GHASHIRAM. After I have the order, signed and sealed, in my hand!

NANA. Bastard. You've got me in narrow pass.

GHASHIRAM. Yes, the narrow pass of my only daughter. (Tendulkar 54)

Ghashiram Kotwal is the representative of the weak and helpless members of society where the politicians exploit people for their own gain. Nana Phadnavis is the representative of those individuals in politics who employ the disadvantaged as their puppets and then discard them once they have served their purpose.

Ghashiram comes from a struggling Kannauj Brahmin family. He travels to Poona in order to survive. This poor Brahmin was jailed and assaulted by the people in Poona for stealing. This occurrence makes him want to take revenge on Poona. Then, Ghashiram makes the decision to turn this city into a pig kingdom. He

decides to take revenge on the people of Poona as well as the city's filthy and corrupt governmental system. He gives his own daughter in order to obtain the post and position of Kotwal. He makes the decision to transform Poona into a kingdom ruled by pigs.

This clearly shows that a man's desire for power can make him so oblivious to his surroundings that he will dig a hole for himself, as is the case with Ghashiram. After entering Nana's house, he observes that Nana is very susceptible to being persuaded by others. Gauri, Ghashiram's only daughter, is the only candidate for the role of Nana in this story. It shows that politicians will resort to unbelievable practices in order to strengthen their hold on power. Women are devalued and reduced to objects that men use for their own amusement and pleasure. Majority of the time, they act in a way that violates class codes, social values, morals, and the norms of the society. The need for revenge wins out over his feelings of responsibility as a father. Ghashiram loses his humanity and his conscience as a result of the strong desire he has for revenge. Nana implores Ghashiram, "Just one more time, Ghashiram. Just one more time, you bastard." (Tendulkar 52) Ghashiram shows his talent by refusing to send Gauri to Nana for the second time, despite Nana's pleading with him. Ghashiram declines to comply with his request, and then, in the manner of a shrewd opportunist, he makes the following proposal: "All right, Sir, to shut people's mouths, make me the Kotwal of Poona." (Tendulkar 54)

This shows that Ghashiram appears to be exploiting Nana's lecherous tendencies in some way. When it comes to the game of power, he is unaware of Nana's crafty strategy. In the play, Nana and Ghashiram are both brought down to a lower level. Ghashiram believes that once he has authority over Pune, he will rescue his daughter from the lustful clutches of Nana.

There are some incidents in the play that show the arrogance of those who hold power while simultaneously highlighting the helplessness of Ghashiram. When Ghashiram ascends to the position of Kotwal, he unleashes a wave of terror across Poona. People are compelled to apply for a permit in order to engage in any activity that deviates from their typical routine. Ghashiram starts to make the rounds, question people, and starts thrashing them on suspicion. Someone who was discovered on the street after midnight is given a punishment by him. Nana does nothing when people complain to him about Ghashiram's oppression, even though he knows about it. One Brahmin is detained on the suspicion of theft, and a woman complains that her husband and his brother were detained by Kotwal's soldiers for not having the permit to cremate their deceased father. On the other hand, Nana Phadnavis becomes enraged because the interruption to his revelry. This shows that politicians look out only for themselves and disregard the interests of the public and common people. Tendulkar has leveled criticism at politicians, showing that power can be exploited to exert control over society and those in positions of authority often exercise that authority over the powerless and the innocent.

After few days, Ghashiram reaches a point where he is extremely content using his power and he thinks of remarrying Gauri in a respectable family. There have been reports that his daughter has gone missing. Ghashiram gets the news that his daughter Gauri died during childbirth. In the meeting between Ghashiram and Nana, Nana is able to show Ghashiram his palace. Nana uses his authority and power to demoralize Ghashiram. He uses the political power at his disposal to stifle Ghashiram's voice. He issues the command to his troops: Don't let that Ghashya enter these chambers again. Do

you understand? Add more watchmen. Increase our bodyguards. Go. (Tendulkar 74)

Ghashiram is taken aback by this. The command that Nana gives to his soldiers is, "Remove Gauri's corpse and throw it in the river." (Tendulkar 77) Ghashiram is able to regain his powers, despite the fact that he has lost his young daughter. Ghashiram is the target of a plot arranged by his opponent Sardar Phakade.

Nana and Phakade kins hand together. One Brahmin community from another location has been locked up on the suspicion that they stole mangoes from Ghashiram's garden without his consent. However, twenty-two men pass away as a result of suffocation, and Phakade reports this information to the Peshwa. Ghashiram is completely oblivious to the fact that people are being crammed into a small space against their will. After this, Nana orders Ghashiram to be killed. It depicts how powerless they really are. Tendulkar makes the point that power is subject to the irrational control of the masses of people who are illiterate. The Sutradhar describes the final act of the citizens, saying that they assaulted him:

SUTRADHAR. They beat him.

They shaved his head.

They *sindur* – daubed his head.

They rode him around on a camel.

They tied him to the leg of an elephant.

The city of Poona watched it all. (Tendulkar 85)

To honour this joyous occasion, Nana has planned a celebration that will last for three days. Tendulkar encourages his audience to reflect on the mechanisms of power through his remarks. It shows that feelings and humanity are lost when the wrong person is given power. "Let the corpse of sinful Ghashya rot. Let the wolves and dogs have it. Let the worms have it." (Tendulkar 87) This is the order given by Nana for Ghashiram's funeral.

Ghashiram does not feel any repentance for the cruel treatment he meted out to the cities of Poona, but he does hold himself responsible for the passing of his daughter and sees his current suffering as the price he must pay for her death. This depicts that shrewd politicians use people like pawns or players in their games. Nana takes advantage of the most helpless members of the society. Ghashiram is treated by Nana as a pawn in the game, and after each use, he is discarded.

In the play *Ghashiram Kotwal*, the character Sutradhar paints an accurate picture of the moral bankruptcy that characterizes those who hold position and power. This play sheds light on the truth and reveals the concealed aspects of power. Even though it is based on history, the play shows that Tendulkar has always been one step ahead of his contemporaries. Politicians routinely engage in practices that are both common and routine, such as power politics.

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