

Full Length Research Paper**Realism in Vijay Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972)****Anamika Gupta**

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Journal No: 47359

**Article history**

Received: 08-08-2017

Revised: 12-08-2017

Accepted: 14-08-2017

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**Abstract**

This paper is an attempt to expose the use of realism in the play *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972) by Vijay Tendulkar. As society and politics have strongly been highlighted in Vijay Tendulkar's Plays, this play also highlights the harsh and bare realities of society, especially those of politics, administration and religion. As a social realist, he presents the black side of humanity in his plays. While dealing with the realistic portrayal of the contemporary socio-political senerio, Tendulkar underscores various social and political evils such as hypocrisy, casteism, prostitution, decline of moral and human values, patriarchy, power game, violence (sexual and political) corruption in politics and administration.

**Keywords:** Power, Violence, Power politics, Casteism, Patriarchy, Religion, Corruption, Hypocrisy, Moral degradation, Realism (Political, Social and Psychological).

Realism is a movement in art, which started in the mid nineteenth century in France, and later spread to the entire world. Realism entered literature at almost at the same time. Its real objective was to root out what is called romantic in literature and art, to insert what is real. In literature, writers use realism as a literary technique to describe story elements, such as setting, characters, themes, etc., without using elaborate imagery, or figurative language, such as similes and metaphors. Through realism, writers explain things without decorative language or sugar-coating the events. Realism is something opposite to romanticism and idealism.

Realism attempts to illustrate life without romantic subjectivity and idealization. It focuses on the actualities of life, and truthfully treats the commonplace characters of everyday life. The purpose of using realism is to emphasize the reality and morality that is usually relativistic and intrinsic for the people as well as the society. This sort of realism makes the readers face reality as it happens in the world, rather than in the make-believe world of fantasy.

Vijay Tendulkar is well known for his unswerving and forthright views and political critique as well. There is an ascetic documentary zing in Tendulkar that makes his plays hit the audience right in their guts and fortitude. His realism stems from his disconcerted ardor to be at the core of events to watch things happening at first hand. His occupation as an assistant editor in the Lok Satta, a Marathi newspaper, facilitated him to move around and made him perceive things at close quarters.

*Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972) is Vijay Tendulkar's tour de force incontrovertibly. It is a deadly combination of topicality and timelessness. It is a play about power politics, sex exploitation and political violence. Tendulkar, in this play, observes the operation of pietism, sexuality and deputation of politics as tools of power. It is a political satire based on a historical event and gyrates around the theme of how powerful people create their own ideologies according to their personal benefits, take advantages of them and after that thrust them aside once they become ineffective and pointless subsequently.

*Ghashiram Kotwal* is a historical play, but its story and concept cleave to timelessness notwithstanding it was written forty years back. In reference to the significance and relevance of this play in the present Indian society as it was in the Pune society in the eighteenth century, it can be said that *Ghashiram Kotwal* indicates a particular situation, which is neither quondam nor newfangled. It is beyond time and space. Hence, *Ghashiram* and *Nana* are also further than time and space.

*Ghashiram Kotwal* is a play about a North Indian Brahmin, *Ghashiram Savaldas* and Peshwa's Chief Minister *Nana Phadanavis*. *Ghashiram* is a poor Brahmin from Kanauj. He comes to poona in search of his fortune and livelihood with his wife and a young beautiful daughter. Although he has come to Poona having a dream of good fortune in his eyes, his hopes and expectations are shattered and resulted in his tough luck, tragedy and misfortune ultimately. He has to become a servant in *Gulabi's* house, who is one of the famous inamoratas and chatelaines in Poona. Moreover, another prominent character, *Nana Phadanavis*, the secretary of Peshwa's oftentimes visits *Gulabi*. Although, he is an aged man, he is lusty and lubricious and often tries to dance with *Gulabi*.

In the play, the description of *Nana* as "Silver-handled walking stick Garland of flowers on wrist. Dancer comes dancing from back of line" (369) portrays his lustful and libertine image very pertinently and the flowers on his wrist show that *Nana* is interested in illicit and salacious relationship with *Gulabi*. Vijay Tendulkar has dealt with all social issues that are generally some or the other way seen in Indian social life. He in this play tries to orchestrate historical raw material with some ecumenical and cosmopolitan political reality. His plays have mostly tried to deal with his contemporary social reality. Moreover, his writings

reflect his revulsion for exploitation prevailed in each section of society and reveal at the same time his passionate yen that all exploitation must end. This play owes its ebullience, joie de vivre, vibrancy, influence and power to its depiction and description of the contemporary socio-political reality. Vijay Tendulkar makes an effort to present all apparatuses of politics, for instance, treachery, perfidy, violence, immorality, sexuality and even religion with which power goes on.

A.Anitha Raj writes in her journal, "Vijay Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal*: A Denunciation of Fraudulent Politician, Policemen, and Prostitutes", "Vijay Tendulkar being a postmodern playwright became the radical political of Maharashtra, without restricting himself in scrutinizing the restrains of social realism...Malignance and moral pollution are two distinctive features which particularize politics from other profession. Tendulkar's description of politics and politicians are not features of Peshwa regime alone, but a general prodigy criminalization of politics is one of the blazing topics of argument and analysis today, but the network between politicians and criminals is quite ancient. The play *Ghashiram Kotwal* throws symbolic radiance on this deadly relationship between politicians, criminals, policemen and prostitutes who are employed in bombarding a terrible war against peace, morality and justice" (1-2)

Similarly, S.G. Bhanegaonkar in his "*Depiction of politics, power and prostitution in Ghashiram Kotwal*" aptly states, "*This play can be called as a condemnation of politicians, it is a challenging task carried out by 3p's in collaboration.*"(30). Moreover, while on one hand, this play is a study of power politics, it is also a common man's search for identity and ensuing disillusionment on the other hand. When we analyze this play, we'll find that Nana Phadnavis and his ruling mechanisms symbolize power politics and the rise and fall of Ghashiram Savaldas symbolize a common man's search for the identity in the world of power and authority. In this play, Vijay Tendulkar tries to depict a very true and realistic picture of the political and moral putrefaction and decadence due to indulgence in uncouth and vulgar sexuality.

*Ghashiram Kotwal* is about achieving power at any cost and regrettably the cost here is paid by the dignity of a woman's life. Ghashiram, the leading character of the play wants to get even with the people of Poona who had humiliated and insulted him. He has to be very powerful in order to do so. He accordingly settles on becoming a Kotwal and manipulating and brandishing power.

Vijay Tendulkar, in one of his interviews of the Press Trust of India (PTI) said that *Ghashiram Kotwal* was not a historical play; he had simply made use of some historical figures and incidents for ideating as well as projecting the contemporary caste-politics and power games.

Furthermore, he writes in his book *Vijay Tendulkar, "Introduction", Ghashiram Kotwal*, "History interests me insofar as it relates to my period and situation around me." He additionally points out, "This is not a historical play. It is a story in prose, verse, music and dance set in a historic era Ghashirams are creations of socio political force which know the barriers of time and place although based on a historical legend; I have no intention of commenting on the morals or lack of them, of the Peshwa, Nana Phadnavis or Ghashiram. The moral of the story, if there is any, may be looked for elsewhere." (IV)

What is more, Vani Devulapally writes in her book *Vijay Tendulkar: The Playwright Champion of Social Justice*,

"Tendulkar's play is built in the backdrop of the city of Poona. The city of Poona is known for diverse things. It was known as cultural city. There was dominance of Brahmins right through ages. The city was the birthplace of Rashtriya Swyam Sevak Sangh (RSS), the premier religious wing of old Jana Sangh and the present Bhartiya Janta Party. Although it was dominated by Brahmins, there was a difference between the city Brahmins and the Brahmins belonging to other places in India. Despite their claim for superiority of race, they were notorious for treachery, greed and falsehood. To satiate their appetite, they would stoop to any level of debasement. To gain an upper hand they would exploit any situation to their favour. Tendulkar wonderfully shows this fact when Ghashiram confronts Nana for the first time Nana lays his ankle on the back of Ghashiram while dancing with Gulabi. Ghashiram exploits this situation allowing Nana to rest his injured leg on his back. The resourcefulness of Ghashiram fetches him both the favour of Nana and anger of the city Brahmins who see in him a severe threat to their existence. So, they make his life miserable and try to banish him from their society. In fact the Brahmins feel a sense of insecurity as much as Ghashiram."(132)

Besides it, it can be noticed in this play very apparently that the power is only deputized in Ghashiram who does not become conscious of it and starts mistaking it for real power. He realizes his fault and the real power game of Nana at the instant when he comes to know about the instantaneous and merciless death of his daughter, Lalita Gauri whom he has once used as a pawn for gaining power without thinking anything about the dignity of a girl. He throws his moral as well as human values overboard in order to be powerful for avenging his contempt and humiliation given by the Brahmins of Poona. He finds himself so blind in the fire of vengeance that he can't even care about the life of his only daughter and goes extent of selling her to a lustful and concupiscent old man.

Furthermore, we notice that it is some or the other way, Nana's misdeeds that have been credited to Ghashiram's account. It then seems that power secrets itself at the back of agents and continues to thrive uncontested and unconcealed. After analyzing all the events of the play, it does seem that the real power rests with Nana Phadnavis but even he can be summoned by the Peshwa of Poona at any moment because the Peshwa itself is a symbol of power within the framework of feudal society. Hence, the power vested in Nana Phadnavis is fortified by the social set up. Here, the power is passed on Nana who further hands over it to Ghashiram by making him the Kotwal of Poona who then operates through the police force. We accordingly make out a whole chain of command of power positions. It seems in that case that an individual is in opposition to an individual.

What is more, the state itself functions in accordance with a certain ideology. The society is structured in such a way ensures that power is espoused and shored up by such hierarchies. The observation is focused on individuals who are fobbed off as scandalous and criminals. But the real criminal that is the social set-up continues unerring and unquestioned as individuals are pitied against individuals. Although, Ghashirams are formed and smashed, society keeps on being unscathed and safe and sound. And the playwright, in this play, subtly tries to make us think about it and scrutinizes this phenomenon very realistically.

This play seems to contend with a notion that power operates more overtly through violence, coercion and oppression. At an inconspicuous level, it gets going all the way through such social attitudes and stances that help in maintaining chains of command and putting out of sight the genuine source of power which is delegated in agents like Ghashiram who are also victims of the same power.

Likewise, religion and sexuality are also used and brought into play as the stratagems of power. While on one hand, the army and police are used by the state in order to uphold peace and control within the society, there are other subtler tactics and strategies that are also used on the other hand. By the same token when we scrutinize this concept in the context of this play, we come across various relevant instances and religion is one of the most befitting and pertinent examples of them.

The play commences with religious hymns and the dancing of the popular gods like lord Ganesha, goddess Laxmi and goddess Saraswati on stage. This situates the milieu against which the drama unfolds itself. In the Act one of the play, the Brahmins go to Bavannakhani to see the dance of Gulabi and say that they are going to temple for giving a sermon on Vishwamitra and Menaka. When we go through the text of the play, we will get the idea about the corrupt and prurient nature and intention of the Brahmins of Poona who do erroneous and malicious things under the aegis and shelter of religion and religious rituals. In the Act one of the play,

*“Sutradhar. Aho, gentlemen! Moneyed men! Mansioned men! Carriaged and horsed men! Where are you going?*

*The three (together) - To the temple.*

*Sutradhar. Wah! Wah! What's in the temple at this hour?*

*The three. Kirtan. Sermon.*

*Sutradhar. Sermon on what?*

*The three (together). Temptation. That's the plot. Vishwamitra and Menaka. Yes, that's it.*

*Sutradhar. What man is giving the sermon?*

*The three. Not a man, a woman (all three bite their tongues.)*

*Sutradhar. A woman? Since when have woman been doing kirtan?*

*The three (confused). Not a kirtan, a dance.*

*Sutradhar. A dance! Since when a dance need a topic?*

*The three. Not a topic, a lavani- a love song.*

*Sutradhar. Since when was the temptation of Vishwamitra by Menaka in lavani?*

*The three (confused). Not Vishwamitra and Menaka. Raghu and Myna, the love birds.*

*Sutradhar. And since when did they start singing love songs in the temple?*

The three. Not a temple! In Bavannakhani! You're a fine one! You got it out of us. That's enough. Let's go" (365-66)

In the aforementioned lines of the play, Tendulkar depicts very realistically the social realism of that time and at the same time the psychological realism of the people especially the Brahmins by the depiction of the confusing state of the Brahmins at the cross questioning of Sutradhar. They get bewildered at the questioning of Sutradhar because of the preoccupation of their minds in lustful and vulgar desires which all the time they try to hide.

They, in fact tries to justify some or the other ways, their debauchery by measuring Bavannakhani up to the holy Mathura. It is very ironically depicted by the playwright that the "Abhanga" or devotional song is often sung with the "Lavani" or the love song in the play. Over and beyond, scenes of violence, sexuality and cruelty are swapped with devotional songs.

It can be seen very apparently in the play when Nana tries to seduce Lalita Gauri just before the statue of the holy lord Ganapati Nana just tries to evacuate her fear saying in the Act one of the play:

*“Nana (voice of lust). Child, what do you want?*

*(She turned around and startled.)*

*All your dreams this Nana will fulfill (he puts his hand, on her shoulders. She pulls back.)*

*Oh Don't be shy. This is our house. This is a private hall. No one will see. No one in Poona today has the audacity to watch the great Nana Phadnavis!*

*Girl. He will see.*

*Nana. He will see? Who?*

*Girl (points to Ganapati). He.*

*Nana. That idol of holiness? That all holy Ganapati? The maker of Good? Look, he has two wives. One on this side, one on that side. If you sit on our lap, he won't say anything!" (377-78)*

In the above mentioned lines of the text of this play, the playwright very realistically depicts the decline and degradation of religions values of the society.

Moreover, it's attention-grabbing to note that Ghashiram Savaldas himself a Brahmins remonstrates his other brethren. The opportunity to make the score equal with the Brahmins of Poona comes up to itself in front of Ghashiram when the libidinous and raunchy Chief Minister of the Peshwa, Nana Phadanvis feels a longing for his young and beautiful daughter, Lalita Gauri. At that juncture, the real game of power sets in motion in which Gauri, an innocent young girl is made a pawn and sacrificed by her own father to the Nana's lustful and carnal desires. In return Ghashiram is appointed the Kotwal of Poona. This as a result doles out two purposes. Firstly, it gives Ghashiram the chance to take his reprisal and unleash a reign of fright and trepidation on the people of Poona and secondly, it allows Nana Phadanvis to have his cake and eat it too. If truth be told, it is Nana who has Gauri on one hand and his own misdemeanors and tyranny are obscured on the other hand by Ghashiram's spitefulness. Nana is receptive to these profits and closes the opportunity down. We can see the wicked and iniquitous intention of Nana Phadanvis when at the end of the ACT one of the play, he says,

"What'll happen is that our misdeeds will be credited to your account. We do it; our Kotwal pays for it. (He claps his hands.). The opportunity comes in the shape of Ghashiram. And that luscious peach is at hand to be devoured by Nana. Excellent! Yes, Ghashya, be Kotwal. This Nana blesses you..." (385)

In the above cited lines from the text of the play, it is evident that even at this stage, the deal is an unfair one and heads Nana wins and tails Ghashiram loses that is to say that the only one that benefits out of it is Nana Phadanvis. Through the above stated lines, the playwright also tries to represent very realistically a true and real spirit or picture of politics which has been prevailing for an uncertain time.

Moreover, Ghashiram gets Kotwalship with the sacrifice of his young loving daughter, Gauri. Many a time, Gauri is seduced as Nana is obsessed by her physical beauty. But with the passage of time, when Gauri is pregnant, she is murdered by Nana very mercilessly. The news of Gauri's instantaneous death makes Ghashiram mad, ferine and brutal. He repents his action, but unfortunately has gone too far to return.

As Arvind M. Nawale writes in his book entitled *Critical Essays on Indian English poetry and Drama: Texts and Context*, "...he, too, thinks, like Macbeth, "Returning is as tedious as go over." Thus, Vijay Tendulkar explores the sorry state of affairs as far as in Indian society is concerned. The idea projected is that women have to subsist or survive at the whims and caprices of their male counterparts. The situation of women characters in Vijay Tendulkar's plays seems not far different even in present times." (272)

Furthermore, *Ghashiram Kotwal* deals with many other social evils. And casteism is one of them. Arvind M. Nawale seems to excogitate upon the evils of caste-system when he writes "However, the very sense of being of a particular caste, i.e. Brahmin, highest in term of hierarchy motivates an ordinary man Ghashi whose humiliation that he was no longer Brahmin grew so deep that he went to extent of selling his own beloved daughter. Certainly this incident raises the caste issue or casteism as a motivation of the play.

Having disclosed the historical incident in the degenerated form, though not overtly, it is said that caste-polities of the political leaders and ascendancy of Brahmins in politics have been exposed and aimed at by Tendulkar in the most effective manner..." (184-85)

The problem in the play transpires when Ghashiram Savaldas, a Brahmin, due to poverty, is constrained to shift from Kanauj to Poona city with his wife and young daughter, Lalita Gauri in search of his good fortune. Here, we can make out to some extent that it's nothing but his poverty which compels him to join Gulabi, the famous concubine of Poona and to act as the adjunct of the prostitute. And unfortunately, due to this obligation, while on one hand, Ghashiram has to choose the profession of dance for his livelihood; his wife has to serve as a maid in the houses on the other hand. We come across again a social realism used by the playwright in the play which is poverty.

Once, Nana Phadanvis visits Gulabi, he wrenches his ankle during his erotic dance with Gulabi; Forgetting his caste, Ghashiram holds his injured foot of Nana in his hands and says subserviently-

*"In my hands has fallen- grace!  
All here envy me my place.  
This is a gift to last me all my days." (370)*

On this adulatory remark of Ghashiram, Nana feels pleased and impressed and offers him a necklace of pearls and leaves. Moreover, in the above mentioned lines from the text of the play, we can find a transparent glimpse of psychological realism when we go through the lines of the text; we notice how realistically the playwright relates the situation and the actions and reactions of humans being on such events. What is more, Vijay Tendulkar very realistically illustrates the typical human nature and behavior by representing the subservient actions of Ghashiram when he finds himself necessitated and obliged in his present miserable and unfortunate condition. Therefore, we also find very realistic humans nature in Nana also when he is pleased and flattered simply by Ghashiram's flattered activities and offered him his necklace. It can be seen in the following lines of the text of this play.

*"Nana (very pleased). Wah! Wah!  
What words! What ready wit!  
What sweetness in his speech!" (370)*

What's more, having rewarded by Nana for his service, Ghashiram feels a great joy and becomes very happy and hopeful for his future. But as it is said that hope and expectation are fool's income, likewise Ghashiram's hope and expectation convert into despair and hopelessness very soon when Gulabi, the prostitute of Poona snatches the necklace from his hand and expels him from her house.

Moreover, the real power game begins here when Peshwa organizes a great banquet in honour of Brahmins. The tired, disappointed and hungry Ghashiram also goes there and wants to join the feast. But he is not allowed to join the feast and forbidden by the soldiers strictly. What's more, he is not only beaten or humiliated but he is also put in prison on the charge of theft by the soldiers.

Furthermore, the soldiers go to the extent of throwing him out coldheartedly and order him to leave Poona on the pain of death as soon as he can. It's really very miserable scene in which the playwright tries to portray the heartlessness as well as corruption of society. He, therefore, feels helpless, mortified, incapacitated and tormented immensely. In addition, Ghashiram's *tête-à-tête* with Sutradhar, in this state of chagrin divulges the queasy, nauseous, corrupt and debauch face of society and system of that time which still remains in the present time. As Sutradhar sings:

“...Friend, the thief is dependent on the police.  
If not- they'll soften your bones.  
Sometimes they break your bones.  
Sometimes they crack your bones.  
Sometimes you lose your life.  
The thief earns what he thievs.  
It's easy income for the police.  
It's a partnership.  
The thief is a simple thief.  
The police are official thieves.  
If a thief wants to live  
To the police, he's got to give...” (375-376)

There is nothing new in the above mentioned lines because such corrupt activities and humiliations can also be seen in the present scenario which results in a severe outburst. It's nothing but an unalloyed truth about the modern society also. Ghashiram has also to face such vile and profane activities which turn out to be furious and tremendous outbursts that find expression in the following lines:

“...But I'll come back I'll come back to Poona. I'll show my strength. It will cost you! Your days are gone! I am a Kanauj Brahman, but I've become a shudra, a criminal, a useless animal. There is no one to stop me now, to mock me, to make me bend, to cheat me. Now I am a devil. You've made me an animal. I'll be a devil inside. I'll come back like a boar and I'll stay as a devil. It'll make pigs off all of you. I'll make this Poona a Kingdom of pigs. Then I'll be Ghashiram again, the son of Savaldas once more.” (376-77)

Moreover, the following lines of the play also give an ostensible glimpse of the corruption and evils prevailed all around in the society and system when Sutradhar speaks:

*“I'm a thief.  
You're a thief.  
Our only hope is  
The mercy of the Police  
Your theft  
is their bribe.  
If their mercy ends  
We end  
So we bend.”* (375)

Furthermore, the corruption is not limited within only the circle of administrative and political levels, but it prevails everywhere whether it is politics or administration or religion. Nothing is untouched and safe and sound from such evils and corruption. Many unpropitious and detrimental activities have been doing in the name of religion for an uncertain time and still subsist all around. And all these have been exposed in this play by the playwright very realistically. Into the bargain, the play commences with the chorus performing Ganapati Puja and the dances and songs of Hindu God Ganapati and goddesses Saraswati and Laxmi. In the play, Tendulkar presents the Brahmins from Shingeri, Tanjore, Rameshwar, Kumbhakonam, Benaras and Poona. It is quite considerable to point out that while on one hand, Brahmins of Poona were known for their scholarship and charity as well to other Brahmins of every corner of India during the Peshwa's time, they go to Bavannakhani, a red-light area at the evening time on the other hand. They don't even let anyone know where they're going. What of others, when somebody asks, they mention wrong places. But truth reveals when Sutradhar declares with the beat of the dholki drum:

*“Night comes.*

*Poona Brahmans go  
To Bavannakham  
They go  
To Bavannakhani  
They go to the cemetery.  
They go to the Kirtan  
They go to the temple- as they have done every day  
The Brahmans go to Bavannakhani” (366-67)*

Moreover, the scene is swinging perpetually from the singing of Abhanga, a devotional song to singing of Lavani, a love and erotic song. It can be seen very clearly in the lines of the play,

*“It’s like Mathura  
HO! Bavannakhani!  
HO! Bavannakhani!  
It’s like Mathura.*

The Brahman curtain is transformed into a group sitting in Gulabi’s hall in Bavannakhani. A dancer dances. The dance is erotic. Ghashiram is dancing with her. He is her foil. Sycophant. Ludicrous. All are involved in the erotic mood, attentive to her. They hum.” (367)

The above lines reflect the fluctuating mood of the Brahmans of Poona from devotional songs and dance of gods and goddesses to the libidinous and erotic desires of the Brahmans who pretend to go to the kirtan and temple but indeed, they go to the red light city, Bavannakhani which depict the corruption going on in the name of religion. And it is depicted very realistically by Vijay Tendulkar.

By the same token, in the lines, “It is like Mathura. Bavannakhani” (367), we find it very ironical that the Brahmans of Poona compare Mathura, a holy place with a red light city, Bavannakhani that reflects some or the other way the religious or spiritual degradation of the people of Poona. They make use of religion in order to hide their lustful desire and activities.

Similarly, it is written in a journal “Balancing Tradition and Modernity: A reading of Tendulkar’s *Ghashiram Kotwal*”, “The lyrics ironically bring together the images of institutionalized sexuality and institutionalized religiosity in an unholy combination-reiterated image of Bavannakhani, the red light district, turned into the pleasure garden of Krishna.

*Bavannakhani Mathura avatarli-  
Mathura descends on Bavannakhani. (ACT I, 18)*

Here again the playwright juxtaposes the Brahmans nocturnal visit to the courtesans’ quarters with Krishna sporting with the milkmaid in Mathura. Tendulkar even used the Lavani, or the love songs accompanied by the dance of Gulabi to create an erotic mood. The lavani, the beating of the Mridanga-drum and the entrance of the Nana in rhythm with the beats of the table is a classic creation where Tendulkar suggests the sexuality implicit in power.” (228)

In addition, “The blend of the abhanga- a devotional song and the lavani- the love song, by the Haridasa is also noteworthy. The mixer of the “abhargas” (devotional songs) with the “lavanis” (Love songs) actually highlights the moral corruption of the Brahmans as they try to hide their lust behind the respectability of religion. Moreover, the Abhanga also becomes a metaphor for the oppressor, who uses piety as a façade. (229)

In the same way, Samik Bandopadhyay also writes in his “Introduction to *Ghashiram Kotwal*” of Vijay Tendulkar’s *Katha*, “... A whole aura of hymns and religious ceremonial provide the ironic screen that is pierced through and through by the crudest exercise of power. A typical scene is the one in which Nana tried to seduce the girl praying before Ganpati, at the end of one of the ceremonies, and when the girl points to the God, saying “He will see”, he says mockingly, “That idol of holiness?” and the façade of ceremony collapses at once. Religion manifest in caste dominance and ceremony is a device of power in Ghashiram, but more as an abstraction of awe than as material force... Tendulkar suggests the sexuality implicit in power in the brilliant innuendo that caps the situation, “Our grandeur’s gone if she’s not had...” (125)

“Even as Ghashiram, fool that he is, thinks that the kotwali will mean power in his hands, Nana knows, “What’ll happen is that our misdeeds will be credited to your account.” Earlier, Tendulkar has shown religiosity and sexuality combing in the strategies of power. Now he shows sexuality and the strategy of deputation working hand in hand. Once again, Tendulkar has his quip to drive it home.” (126)

What is more, in the introduction part of the book *Vijay Tendulkar’s Ghashiram Kotwal: Critical Perspective*, Vinod Bala Sharma appositely writes about the duplicity of the Brahman community of the society when he pens, “The Sutradhar feigns ignorance of the destiny of the Brahman and questions him searchingly about the same. He teaches and ridicules the Bhatji Buwa, feigning respect. The conversation between the Sutradhar and the Brahman is farcical, the short rhyming sentences are delightfully crisp and frivolity is the essence of the scene. (21)

Hence, Tendulkar very realistically tries to give expression to one of the social realities of the society that has been existing since eons. Furthermore, Tendulkar's use of language is also very down-to-earth and remarkable at the same time which figures out the real character of Nana Phadnavis to some extent when Nana describes Lalita Gauri in a very lustful manner. It can be seen in the text of the play when Nana says: "... How beautifully formed! What a lovely figure! Did you see? Erect! Young! Tender! Ah! Ho! Ho! We've seen so many handled so many, but none like that one. None her equal. We wonder who she is." (379) The lascivious nature of Nana can again be assumed when Sutradhar, in the play, says, "For Nana no labour, just lust." (382) Likewise, the words "Lust knows no age, no shame." (382) seem to exemplify the psychological realism to some extent.

What is more, we again come across the villainous nature and political realism in the lines spoken by Nana for Ghashiram, "Go Ghashya, old Bastard. We made you. We made you kotwal. Raise hell if you wish. But you don't know the ways of this Nana. This time, there are two bullets in this gun. With the first one, we'll fell you luscious daughter. But with the second, we will make the city of Poona dance. Ghashya, child, you're a foreigner. I have put you on Poona's back. Why? As a countercheck to all those conspirators. You'll not be able to join them; they'll never trust you even if you do. Because you're a stranger, you're an outsider. We just raised a dog at our doorto the position of the kotwali..." (384)

As Vinod Bala Sharma writes about this sinister bargain, "This is distressingly threatening speech. Ghashiram does not know the ways of Nana. He has manipulated Ghashiram to be the harbinger of his own doom. Ghashiram's vulnerability as a foreigner is mentioned again. Nana's contempt for Ghashiram, his hatred for the man who has goaded him into a sinister bargain is boundless. Nana's far-sightedness is silhouetted against Ghashiram's short-sightedness. Nana is sinful, Ghashiram only inauspicious and frugal in his appraisal of evil." (31)

Besides it, in the lines, Ghashiram Kotwal says to eat with a lower caste person is a crime." (386-87) spoken by Sutradhar, Tendulkar very realistically tries to render the problem of casteism which is one of the rampant social evils of the society which still is one of the most smoldering issues of our society.

As A. Anitha Raj in her journal, "Vijay Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal* : A Denunciation of Fraudulent Politicians, Policemen, and Prostitutes", inscribes, "The play exposes and attacks the debauchery of the ruling class- the Brahmins of Pune, who consider them to be custodians of public morality. The play credited a furor in the community and it took a while before being accepted as an unhistorical play based on some facts of history. The play *Ghashiram Kotwal* predictably arouse strong protest against the caste-system and reactionary elements for their keen insight into the nature of social tension and its ability to translate his findings into dramatic and artistic equivalent." (1-2)

What is more, in his *Indian Drama Today: A study in the theme of cultural deformity*, Manchi Sarat Babu, it seems, deals with social as well as political realism, when he writes in the preface of the book, "In India, people are divided into various castes and classes which are hierarchized. This results in the inhuman exploitation and oppression of one by another, thereby causing social deformity. As people take hierarchies for granted, they give away their power and become powerless. So, they play power games to overcome their acquired powerlessness manifesting political deformity." (9)

Furthermore, Brati Biswas puts pen to paper in her article, *Caste, Class and Gender in Vijay Tendulkar's Ghashiram Kotwal*, "Poona is thus the symbolic location for all that Brahmanism has come to stand for: hypocrisy, power-mongering, scheming and brutality. Having lost its spiritual moorings, it dabbled in material pleasures and sensualit. These Brahmins frequent prostitutes, not temples; they prefer lavanis and erotic dances to kirtans, and turn the garden of Krishna at Mathura into Bavannakhani, the red light district of Poona..." (91)

All these have been depicted in the play by the playwright very realistically, which is suggested appositely by the Sutradhar,

"Night comes  
Poona Brahmins go  
To Bavannakhani.  
They go  
To Bavvanakhani.  
They go to the cemetery  
They go to the Kirtan  
They go to the temple- as they have done everyday...  
The street of Bavanna became for a while  
The garden of Krishna." (366-367)

Moreover, Brati Biswas also seems to throw some lights over another social evil and that is hypocritical patriarchal values that have been remaining in the society for eons. She, therefore, writes, "The sexual and moral corruption seeps from the men to their women. The Brahmin wives become promiscuous and take on Mathura lovers. It is interesting that this bit of subversive information is conveyed through mime and stage direction, whereas the Sutradhar's speech presents a more reassuring picture:

The Brahmins have lost themselves in Bavannakhani and the Brahmin women are at home; they stay at home; oh yes, they stay at home, The Brahmins have lost themselves in the cemetery, in kirtan; the Brahmin women are sentenced to a solitary confinement....

Sutradhar (beating the Mridanga-drum) - Here a Brahmin woman in solitary confinement; there a crowd waiting for a glimpse of Gulabi." (91-92)

From the abovementioned lines, we can get, to a large extent, a crystalline idea about the social reality of the society Vijay Tendulkar belongs to. Moreover, it is not a new and unexampled social evil but it has been prevailing in the society for an uncertain time and it still remains somewise. What is more, Vijay Tendulkar tries to mirror very realistically the hypocrisy and double standards of the patriarchal Brahminical society. As Brati Biswas adds in the same article, "The men are free to express their sexuality but need the assurance that the sexuality of their women is in control." (92)

Furthermore, we also find when we analyse the play that the playwright also tries to expose very realistically that men often use religion in order to keep women under their thumbs. The same idea resembles, to some extent, in the novels of Taslima Nasrin. When we go through her novels, we find that she also opines the same thing that men use religion and manipulate it in order to subjugate women. By the same token, Brati Biswas also pens in her article, "In their hands, religion too becomes a tool of segregation and oppression." (92)

It should also be taken into consideration that the patriarchy deals with women as mere sexual objects, commodities, and nothing more than all these things. It has been denying them freedom and an independent identity for an uncertain period. And it has been depicted undoubtedly in the play by Tendulkar very realistically. Here again the reference of Brati Biswas is quite mentionable when she writes, "Women do not hold centre stage in *Ghashiram Kotwal*. The three women who have a visible presence are Gulabi, the prostitute; Lalita Gauri, Ghashiram's young virgin daughter and later Nana's mistress; and the young Brahmin wife of Nana. They represent the different roles allocated to the weaker gender by the patriarchy." (93)

Likewise, in a journal, "Women as a victim of patriarchal society in Vijay Tendulkar's plays: *Silence! The Court is in Session, Kanyadan and Vultures*", Anju Bala talks about the image of women crushed under the forces of the patriarchal system when she writes, "In this society, women have no right to assert her identity. But a man usually enjoys this patriarchal control over woman and many times it leads to brutality." (39)

Moreover, highlighting the submissive state of women in our society, she mentions an appropriate statement of J.M. Waghmare in which he aptly comments, "Women have been standing at the crossroads of history for centuries with tears in their eyes and milk in their breasts." (41)

Similarly, Neela Bhalla writes in her article "*Ghashiram Kotwal: Text and Sub-text*", "In *Ghashiram Kotwal*, we can see the strong forces of social tradition which makes a young girl an easy prey to this patriarchy in the form of her father's ambition and a powerful man's lust." (135-136)

It is nothing but an irony in the case of Ghashiram who while on one hand, sells his own daughter in order to be powerful and puts restrictions on prostitution for maintaining morality on the other hand. Vijay Tendulkar depicts all these events or issues in the play very realistically. By selling his daughter for gaining power, Ghashiram, in fact, disrupts the purity of a father daughter relationship. He not only sacrifices the moral values but sacrifices the human values also for his ambition.

Over and beyond that, the well-known line "Revenge is a kind of wild justice" from one of Francis Bacon's essays "Of Revenge" is also quite relevant to the actions done by Ghashiram to a large extent. As Bacon's essays deal with practical wisdom, we unerringly can find it very true in the case of Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal*. Whatever he has done creates nothing, but injustice and tragedy of his own and his daughter as well. And all these, in fact, have been portrayed by Vijay Tendulkar realistically.

Similarly, in his book *Vijay Tendulkar's Ghashiram Kotwal: A Reader's Companion*, M. Sarat Babu talks about the patriarchal or male-biased culture of Hindu society when he remarks, "Women characters except Gulabi remain invisible and mute in the play. This sets the aura of patriarchal power. Ghashiram who is the victim of oppression fails to understand the powerlessness of women. He has no compassion for them. His love for his daughter is not real and it is actually his possessive impulse. He surrenders her to the lust of Nana for power without hesitation. He does not consult his wife in this regard. He suspects a housewife and her husband to be adulterous and arrests them. His passion to overcome his powerlessness makes him mindless and loveless. He shows no compassion for anybody and cannot understand simple logic as he loses his reason and his human nature. So he persecutes people as a power maniac. He fails to perceive the cunning moves of Nana as he is proud of his cleverness in getting power as *Kotwal* from him. Nana exercises his power in exploiting women sexually while Ghashiram uses it aggressively. They exemplify two kinds of violence- erotic and aggressive." (77)

Furthermore, Vani Devulapally also writes in her book *Vijay Tendulkar the Playwright: Champion of Social Justice*, "Ironically, Ghashiram sins more than sinned. He wants to drive sin out of Poona, but he commits himself a terrible sin by prostituting his own daughter. In this particular context, Smita Mishra pertinently observes: "Although Ghashiram prompted by a desire to chastise his tormentors, surrenders his heart's child to Nana, the devil for mere *Kotwalship*, he is fully aware of his sin and wishes to save Gauri once he is declared *Kotwal* of Poona." (62)

Moreover, we once again find us in an ironical situation when we have a look on a line in the text spoken by Ghashiram himself, "Morality must be protected." (392) What ironical here is that morality is going to be protected by the man who himself has violated it earlier by selling his young daughter in order to be powerful and ultimately, has done injustice with his own daughter.



This very act of Ghashiram resounds to some extent one of a famous proverb; A Pot in Calling the Kettle Black. Through all these events, Vijay Tendulkar tries to explore the psychological as well as social realism of the society.

What is more, Vani Devulapally seems to talk about the political realism what the playwright has tried to depict in the play when she writes, "The irony lies in Ghashiram's failure to understand the realistic situation in which he moves. He miserably fails to understand the inner designs of Nana and unknowingly gets into the trap laid by Nana. Ghashiram feels that he has succeeded in his clever plan, but tragically, he does not foresee the future trap into which he is entering. Nana has double advantage in appointing Ghashiram as the kotwal: one sexual and two, political. He can enjoy his daughter as well use him to control the Brahmins of Poona." (134-135)

Furthermore, Ghashiram who is befuddled by success with his kotwalship becomes an ogre. He misuses his power. While on one hand, the city of Poona gets rid of its vulgarity and lewdness under the strict weather eye of Ghashiram's kotwalship, but there arises some evil activities also on the other hand. There is nothing but the blazing fire of revenge in the heart of Ghashiram that makes him misuse power by making him a devil. Besides it, while on one hand, pecuniary resources have increased and criminal activities have decreased, the populace of Poona starts shuddering also at the name of Ghashiram on the other hand. After having been appointed at the post of kotwal, Ghashiram becomes a synonym of terror, trepidation, atrocity, unrest and tyranny for the people of Poona, which have been laid bare in the play very realistically by the playwright. The reason of being so much tyrannical is nothing but the burning soul of Ghashiram with revenge which is the dire consequences of the earlier humiliations done by the Brahmins of Poona to Ghashiram. Here, Antonio Gramsci's theory of Hegemony seems to be quite mentionable to some extent. As in his article, "Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony", Thomas R. Bates mentions, "According to Gramsci's theory, hegemony and dictatorship are mutually dependent phenomena." (354)

As M. Sarat Babu also writes, "Revenues have increased and crimes have decreased. But the city of Poona trembles at Ghashiram's name. Ghashiram feels satisfied with his effective use of power in the persecution the people of Poona who humiliated him when he was powerless." (69)

The feeling of satisfaction after becoming the kotwal of Poona is quite visible in the lines spoken by Ghashiram himself when he speaks, "I've got the kotwali and I've got Poona straightened out! All these hard, proud Brahmins are soft as cotton now. No one dares to look Ghashiram straight in the eye!" (398)

Moreover, in the lines, "Now, once I find a fitting husband for my daughter- that piece of my heart named Lalita Gauri- and get her married, then everything will be the way I want it..." (398) Tendulkar tries to depict the influence of being in power and vice-versa, which is a fine example of psychological realism here. However, the playwright here, seems to depict that a powerless person has to face a lot of problems and humiliations whether he does any mistake or not while a powerful person has not to face such kind of problems because there is no restriction for person having absolute power even though he has a criminal background. No one can raise voice against powerful people. The same idea may be seen in the words spoken by Ghashiram here.

It gets clear when we go through the text of the play, we find Nana very lustful and wire puller man but no one is there to raise voice against him because he is a powerful man. And this is the political reality that innocent and ignorant people are often questioned or tortured without having done any crime while the criminal and hypocrite people like Nana are always remained unquestioned. Moreover, as far as, power is concerned, when a man gets it, he starts manipulating and misusing it according to his personal profit. And in the play, we can see it very apparently that Ghashiram also starts misusing power when he becomes kotwal. He starts victimizing the Brahmins of Poona who have humiliated him earlier. He enacts law on them.

Hence, to sum up, Tendulkar courageously and very realistically expose the double standards and hypocrisies in the Indian social mindset is the genuine point to be noted. He used powerful expression to reveal the orthodox society. Tendulkar always whatever appealed to him and never bothered for blame or praise. His thinking about society and human life is reflected in his writings. He wrote about the defeated individuals, struggle against antagonistic circumstances. M. Sarat Babu appropriately comments in his book, "Tendulkar perceives the realities of the human society without any preconceived notion reacts to them as a sensitive and sensible human being and writes about them in his plays as a responsible writer." (25)

Vijay Tendulkar appropriates history to fabricate such a powerful play *Ghashiram Kotwal*. Questions raised in the play are as relevant to the Indian society today as they were to the Poona society in the eighteenth century. Tendulkar specifically affirms this in the writer's note to Vasant Deo's Hindi translation: "In my view *Ghashiram Kotwal* indicates a particular situation which is neither old nor new. It is beyond time and space." (19)

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