

## **GHASHIRAM KOTWAL: A COMMENT ON INDIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM**

**Dr. Rupal Patel**

Shree M.P.&B.A.Patel (Detrojwala) Umiya  
Arts &Commerce College for Girls,  
Sola, Ahmedabad  
(M) - 91 9879874882

E-mail: [rupalben.patel@yahoo.com](mailto:rupalben.patel@yahoo.com)  
[rupalashok@gmail.com](mailto:rupalashok@gmail.com)

It is said that the literature of a country is the store house of the cultural and sociological and political aspects of its people. But literature all along has been turned to the point of view of the male element. Woman is often 'marginalized', 'repressed' and 'silenced' in literary work.

The present paper deals with in what way Tendulkar represents an exploration of a woman's inner life. His most of the plays including *Ghashiram Kotwal* explore a woman's psyche. He writes about silent sobbing women-generally mothers, aunts, sisters, daughters, sister-in-laws, wives and a whole lot of females. Women have always been defined in terms of marriage, procreation and kinship. Virginia Woolf while defining women's place in the globally prevalent patriarchal set up, voices the sentiments of millions of her sisters. She bemoans the unenviable position of women in these words:

Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover. She is all but absent from history (Woolf,66).

In politics of power, the role of a female is very limited only to endure suffering, acceptance and surrender. Right from the beginning, the position of Indian women has been in a very precarious condition. They are deprived of the rights from the parental property. Women have second position in the family and society. In the patriarchal culture, the only weapons of women are obedience, silence and suffering. If any woman works or goes against the rules created by male, they are severally punished.

*Ghashiram Kotwal* is a story of a study of power at various levels. The power in it is evident in religiosity, sexuality and politics of depiction. And the victims of this power politics are generally women.

The most important female character in the play is Lalita Gauri who is young, pretty and innocent. She is a sixteen year old girl and comes in the city of Poona with her parents but ends up falling a victim of Nana's lust. Gauri becomes a sacrificial goat in the struggle for power.

She is spotted first in private hall of Nana where the people of Poona city have gathered to listen to Haridasa and offer prayers to Lord Ganapati. At this place, Gauri finds Nana seated on a higher pedestal gazing at women folk. Nana sees her for the first time. He is mad for her and runs after her. She is however able to make good her escape. He describes her as beautifully formed, a lovely figure. Nana's description of Gauri is full of sexual overtones and assaulting:

Oh, can we? Can we find her? 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 (Tendulkar,379).

Womanizing, unfortunately, is the most popular pastime of some powerful politicians and people in higher rank like Nana. After the first encounter, the powerful Nana becomes a helpless creature before Ghashiram. Nana is so much possessed with Gauri that he thinks that he cannot live without her. Ghashiram harasses the mighty Nana and forces to yield him. Nana begs Ghashiram to allow her to remain with him a couple of days more. Gauri's charms bewitches him to such an extent that Nana says that his grandeur is gone if she is not had. Like a lecher, he translates his action into words:

If she is not found, no one will keep his head! Our grandeur's gone if she is not had. We tell you if she is found, then this Nine Court Nana will conquer Hindustan! What a bosom! Buds just blossoming... We'll squeeze them like this! (Tendulkar,380).

Nana views sex as a part of power. He associates it with his majesty and greatness. He makes it a prestige point to have the girl otherwise his majesty and respect would be gone. Drink and sex comes as a relief for him. He threatens that nobody will keep his head if he does not get what he wants. Gauri is forced to be the mistress of that man who is already married many times. She accepts what her father decides for her. At last, Gauri is exchanged for the Kotwali. She compromises with her honour. She is sacrificed at the altar of personal desire, ambition and revenge. Innocent, young and nubile as she is described initially, she possessed all that is required to be exploited

Once exchanged for the Kotwali, she remains hot favourite of Nana only for sometime. She seems to enjoy power outwardly. But once Nana's fancy for her is over, she is discarded. She loses her charm, honour and respect. At last, she loses her life at the critical moment when her father was looking for a groom for her. At every juncture, Nana unfeelingly orders for the corpse to be thrown in river not for any holy reason or for cremation purpose but for the body not to be found. She dies a shameful death. Thus, she meets a terrible and pathetic end. Use of Gauri is most unscrupulous, senseless and obnoxious to gain power by both Ghashiram and Nana. Gauri's death maddens her father. He is mad with rage and despair. He rocks the city of Poona with his ire, which he spills over the death of Gauri. Ghashiram becomes a tyrant and over reacts to his insults and carries the feelings of revenge too far. This is his personal problem and helpless Gauri has to pay price for him. It is the stained and crippled morality and male dominance that **Ghashiram Kotwal** seeks to expose.

Throughout the play, Gauri is voiceless, disempowered and victimized. She silently bears the dictatorship of her father. Like most women of India, she is not involved even in the serious matter like marriage which belongs to her personal life only. She is thrashed in hell for the selfish purpose. In fact, Gauri is a representative of all those unlucky women

who endure all these hardships in their life. She is the symbol of exploitation of female sexuality to represent the loss and destruction in their struggle for power.

The pathetic Gauri represents the flip side of Indian women especially for their exploitation in almost all walks of life, more particularly in power and politics. Women have been used as an instrument to acquire power, the key position or success. The astonishing part in this play is that her own father sells her own innocent and immature daughter for power, politics and revenge.

The most scathing attack comes on Nana who was the middle aged chancellor of the Peshwa. He is rebuked and severely criticized for his extreme unscrupulousness and lustful attitude. He would not even spare the girls fit to be his daughter or grand daughter. It is really satirical that Ghashiram gives away his daughter to Nana to satisfy his base instincts and procures from him Kotwali. Nana's hair is gray and teeth have begun to disappear from his mouth but his lust persists.

Nana does not have any respect for women and so very soon after the death of Gauri, Nana proceeds to bring home another woman. This is his seventh marriage. A person like Nana's grandeur was measured in the number of wives or mistresses he kept. Nana is going to marry a girl who has just turned fourteen but he has to keep the information secret. But the Sutradhar excellently and ironically represents Nana's lust and lechery in the following words:

**Sutradhar : (Sings to rhythm of hand drum)**

*My Nana's wedding!*

*The bride's a young one!*

*My Nana's wedding!*

*A tender blossoming bride.*

*A slender willowy bride.*

*A shy lily-white bride.*

*A just-this-year ripened bride.*

*My Nana's wedding!...*

*Let's go to the wedding.*

*Let's go to the wedding...*

*Sakhubai*

*Salubai*

*Kalubai*

*Saibai*

*Let's go to the wedding.*

*The Peshwa's chief minister.*

*Still young enough to marry!*

*His moustaches's turned gray,*

*But not all his teeth are gone (Tendulkar,401).*

Even Gulabi, the whore is a victim of the patriarchal society which means those who have power. She is a great erotic dancer who knows how to make fast bucks in Poona. The whole city flocks to her for treacherous pampering and fondling. She enjoys special favours of Nana as he visits her brothel quite frequently and she is summoned on all royal ceremonies. The Brahmins of Poona are so much attracted and charmed by her lavani that they place secondary importance to their wives and households. They flock to her house by dusk and make revellery through the night. They jump, shout and throw the turban in the air and become a bawdy and unmanageable crowd.

She is no better though she wields some power. She is financially well off, but she too has to dance for the customers and Nana. She cannot think to earn her livelihood without satisfying the sexual desire of her customers. Thus, she too is exploited by men. She does not have respectable position in society. She is a puppet on the hands of men because she has to dance on the wish of Nana.

Nana's wives are mute spectators to the sexual rendezvous of their husband. They are many in number but powerless and so he keeps on adding each year. Though his wives are numerous, they cannot prevent him from getting married again and again.

Even Maratha women have been sketched in passive colours. They are the mute spectators to the different activities of the play but as it is the silence speaks the unspeakable. They bear the agony of their husband's absence for long intervals especially through the nights when they visit Gulabi's house. When all Maratha Sardars leave their wives at home and visit Bavannankhani-a red light area, the Maratha wives spend their nights in isolation and confinement of the four walls of the house. Sometimes they also have to suffer the lustful advances of Nana. No woman is secure and safe. So it is a story of use and abuse of women.

So, I want to say that in India, gender based inheritance laws and practices are found. Women are deprived of their economic, social, political and cultural rights. Violence against women and violation of human rights of women are rampant and this is typically and effectively pictured in **Ghashiram Kotwal**. So, it is the portrayal of the falling standards of Indian political system and degradation of society.

### **Works Cited**

- ✎ Iyengar, K .R. Srinivasa. Indian Writing In English. New Delhi: Sterling,1996
- ✎ Kumar, Satish. A Survey Of Indian English Drama. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1993.
- ✎ Tendulkar, Vijay. Collected Plays in Translation . New Delhi: OUP,2003.
- ✎ Woolf, Virginia. A Room of One's Own. London: Hogarth Press, 1929.