

Vijay Tendulkar's *Ghasiram Kotwal*

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Ghashiram Kotwal

- ▶ *Ghashiram Kotwal* is a historical play, and the dates goes back to the rule of Nana Peshwa
- ▶ Violence and Sexual instinct play an important role for the construction of theme and content.
- ▶ Ghasiram, the Kotwal, is embodiment of violence whereas Nana Phadnavis represents sexual urge.
- ▶ Gauri, the daughter of Kotwal, stands for the cruelty against women by men to achieve their target. She is silent victim of violence.



Vijay Tendulkar

- ▶ Vijay Tendulkar is one of the most controversial Indian dramatist.
- ▶ His controversial drama includes *Silence! The Court is Session* and *Sakharam Binder* but, *Ghashiram Kotwal* is considered by many his most controversial play.
- ▶ According to Tendulkar, “Ghashirams are creations of socio-political forces which know no barriers of time and place.”



Structure

- ▶ Two-act play
- ▶ Song, dance and music are integral part of the plot construction
- ▶ Story revolves around Ghasiram Savaldas's rise and fall to the position of Kotwal of Poona and then his death through mob after a plot being hatched by Nana Phadnavis.
- ▶ Acquiring power remains the main thrust play, whereas, who challenged the authorities deserves nothing more than death.
- ▶ Various folk forms like Dashavatar, Khel, Tamasha, Kirtan and Bharud are employed by dramatist to make it more appealing to the regional audience.
- ▶ Moral corruption is depicted when Kotwal exchanges his daughter , Gauri, to Nana for the post of Kotwal.
- ▶ In the end, Nana order a mob lynching of Ghasiram without any hesitation:
 - ▶ “Use a thorn to take out a thorn. That's great. The disease has stopped. Anyway, he was no use anymore.”



History

- ▶ The play is based on history, yet it is also related to the contemporary political scene, especially the rise of Shiv Sena, a political party in Maharashtra.
- ▶ Its background is the late eighteenth century history of Maharashtra.
- ▶ It narrates the history of Balaji Janardan Bhanu (12 February 1742 – 13 March 1800) who became chief administrator (Nana Phadnavis)., through heredity,
- ▶ He was hardly fourteen, when his father left him this post after his death.
- ▶ He was without any children despite his nine marriages.
- ▶ He engaged in a conspiracy against Raghunath, the Peshwa, soon after the defeat of Third Battle of Panipat between the Maratha Empire and Ahmad Shah Abdali. This conspiracy was hatched because of the sudden death of Madhavrao, the then Peshwa
- ▶ He, as result of his conspiracy, lost powers but, later on in 1778, he regained and continues till his death.
- ▶ Due to his mental strategies, he is often termed the Marathi Machiavelli of the late eighteenth century.



Banned

- ▶ The play is one of the successful play yet it is banned as it is sometimes termed “anti-Bahmin” play.
- ▶ Some are of view that it distorted the role Nana, who is a cult hero in Maharashtra.
- ▶ However, the play is neither anti-Brahmin nor distorted any history or have intention to do so.



Why To Read

- ▶ The play defines how politicians can use public for their profit and can do impossible things like to remove the person who threatened their domination, or power structure.
- ▶ They can easily use public in the name of God: Phadanvis first experimented this with Ghasiram and then with the mass, or to say Mob.
- ▶ The post-death scene of Ghasiram shows that leaders can manipulate anyone, as Nana told mob that
 - ▶ “Ladies and gentlemen. Citizens of Poona. A threat to the great city of Poona has been ended today. (The crowd cheers) A disease has been controlled. The demon Ghashya Kotwal, who plagued all of us, has met his death. Everything has happened according to the wishes of the gods. The mercy of gods is with us always.”
- ▶ He easily uses metaphors of Gods for his benefits:
 - ▶ “Do a special pooja. Pray to the Gods. Make a deal with the Gods. Promise them anything.”



What is Special

- ▶ It is a play where history shakes hands with the literature only to expose the corrupt politics of the modern era—all with the reference of some 250 years old history.
- ▶ This play is written when Maharashtra was witnessing the rise of Shiv Sena in its political domain.
- ▶ Sometimes it is studied as a political satire other times as a historical drama.
- ▶ It depicted how a man in power, or to say authority, gives rise to a particular man to flourish its ideology and thereafter killed him when his services are useless—or he challenged his authority or power.

