

WOMEN'S ROLE IN PERPETUATING PATRIARCHY: PEERING THROUGH VIJAY TENDULKAR'S GHASHIRAM KOTWAL

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Abstract:

Marathi playwright Vijay Tendulkar has employed strong political and societal upheavals in his works. *Ghashiram Kotwal* is his one of the most read and critiqued play where he exposes once Indian political scenario along with the societal subjugation regarding cast, creed and class. But 'power' is something that makes one so greedy that he/she can go any extent to earn it or snatch it. One such theme is displayed Tendulkar in *Ghashiram Kotwal*. And he uses women as an aid to gain that desired 'power'. In the play women are discriminated, exploited and used as a tool to against personal gain. Tendulkar, in a way actually in *Ghashiram Kotwal* highlights the predicament of the Indian society where women are considered as a commodity by both men and women. Even women indulge themselves to pursue patriarchy in order to dim other women. This paper, thus tries to highlight the role of women in perpetuating patriarchy peering the society portrayed by Tendulkar in his play *Ghashiram Kotwal*.

Keywords: Patriarchal Subjugation, Game of Power, Women position in Society, Politics of Power, Societal Exploitation.

Discussion:

Women play an equal and important role along with men to create the human society. Though they are worshiped as goddesses in Indian Hindu Society yet in practical life they are exploited, discriminated and subjugated. Even it is seen in the society that the demarcation of a girl child has been started since the formation of the baby in the womb of her mother. And the mother who is a female becomes bias towards her own girl child. Perhaps she might not want a girl child because of the predicament of women throughout her life. Besides, in a way women are helping male oriented society for their patriarchal success. Women have been treated as an object of entertainment and sex by the male structure of the society. Such a degraded world of male dominated society is presented by Vijay Tendulkar in his play *GhashiramKotwal*.

It is very interesting to know why Tendulkar has given names to only few characters in the play and why the others are not given a name. Since women are considered as inferior to men and that they do not possess voice, perhaps therefore Tendulkar never allow himself for a second thought to give names to the women characters. There are only three women character in the play Lalita Gauri, Gulabi and the mid-wife Chandra, who have a name and a sort of identity. Others are unnamed and introduced as Brahman's wife. Each one of the women appears as a puppet under male dominant society. Though women are marginalized and oppressed by men but there are few women who play a vital role, assist men, to oppress the other fellow women. One can cite example of Chandra, who helped Nana and other Brahman's to hide their adultery in front of the society. Tendulkar in this way explicitly portrays the treatment of women in *Ghashiram Kotwal*.

The play *Ghashiram Kotwal*, one can notice, begins with a prayer of Lord Ganesha, Goddess Saraswati and Lakshmi. But during the course of the action of the play it is reveal that women are in practical life are simply considered as object and they not shown any respect. The conversation between the Sutradhar and the Brahmins expose the truth that the later are going to Bavannakhani to fulfill their lust. Perhaps, to meet Gulabi, the courtesan, in order to satisfy their amorous desires. Tendulkar portrays the character Gulabi as a typical harlot who fight for the prize that Nana gave to Ghashiram, the necklace. She even goes to invites thugs to humiliate GhashiramSavaldas. It seems in a one wayGulabi shown her low morality and on another way influences the patriarchal system. And there is another woman, Chandra, who is the mid-wife, help lascivious men to hide their sin. Both Gulabi and Chandra are in a way involve themselves to help patriarchy and leads it to its success and to exploit and subjugate the fellow women. This is the gender stratification in the society.

The women who played role in the play *Ghashiram Kotwal* are given very few dialogues. Lalita Gouri, the central character of the play too has few words to speak. It seems that by not giving voice to the women characters Tendulkar is criticizing how women are neglected in society. All the women are silent in the play. In this context Peter Stallybrass in his essay "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclose" describes how frequently "linguistic fullness" and "sexual looseness" associate each other. He says, "silence the cross mouth, is made a sign of chastity. And silence and chastity are, in turn, homologous to women's enclosure within the house" (127). Significantly, Tendulkar in *Ghashiram Kotwal*, provides name and identity to Gouri, Gulabi and Chandra but other female characters neither have identity nor even a name.

Lalita Gouri is that character through which playwright exposes the naked reality of the patriarchal society. She is closely associated with the action of the play. All the actions impinge Gouri's sexuality and her desirability. The scene when Nana first sees Gouri is one where religion and sexuality are got together. Gouri praying to Ganapati and when Nana propositions her, she turns away,

saying “he will see” (22). Nana mocks her saying, “that idol of holiness?” (23) The facade of ceremony collapsed. Nana uses his religion for his own ends. He tells Gouri “...Look, he has two wives. One on this side, one on that side. If you sit on our lap, he won’t say anything” (23). Gouri naively shift her faith to her trust in patriarchal power and try to protect herself. She says, “You are like my father” (23). The irony in this statement is perhaps intended, a minutes later it is precisely her father who sales in a way her to Nana so that he could become the kotwal of Poona. When Ghashiram promise Nana that he will ‘deliver’ Gouri to him, his language is reflective of his ideology of worship and commodification:

“Nana: . . . We had it in our hands- then the prey fled.

Servant: You’ll get her back.

Nana: How- after this!

Servant: If the hunter is ready, the prey will be found.

Nana: But not that one!

Servant: Even she will be found: that very one will be found.

Nana: 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 many, handled so many, but not like that one. We wonder who she is.” (24)

Their licentious talk does not shake Ghashiram’s resolve to use Gouri’s sexuality for his own end. It is Ghashiram, the father who is responsible for sexuality humiliation of his daughter in the hands of Nana. It seems female body has been used as a commodity for men to use is the property for man to use it to gain the end. Nana’s language reduces Gouri’s body to object, “What a bosom! Buds just blossoming . . . We’ll squeeze like this!” (24). Even Ghashiram does the same, “Look at him, eating her like a peach. . .” (26)

Gouri then disappeared from the action a full of ten days before it is reported to audience, who have not been allowed to register her absence. Just before discovering that Nana is marrying his seventh wife, Ghashiram has been thinking of her daughter’s marriage. He use the same language as that she is his property and he has ownership upon her. “. . . Now once I find a fitting husband for my darling daughter – that piece of my heart named Lalita Gouri – and get her married, then everything will be the way I want it” (44).

Nana’s seventh bride was even brought with land and money and replace Gouri. Afterward Ghashiram discovers that Gouri is actually dead and has already been buried. And Chandra helps Nana to hide his crime. Later on Sutradhar reveal that Gouri was pregnant at the time of her death. But Gouri’s predicament is viewed through that of Ghashiram. The culprit Nana is left freely. Neela Bhalla, in this context, says, in her essay “Ghashiram Kotwal Text and Subtext”, “[Nana] callously discarded Lalita Gouri, when he has had enough of her, sparing no thought for her death, and merrily goes on to seventh marriage before her body has turned cold” (165). Gouri has been sacrificed by Ghashiram to avenge his own humiliation but it is seen that there is no sympathy to Gouri in the play. Perhaps, Tendulkar wants to show Ghashiram as pity rather than Gouri.

Bhalla, furthermore says, in her essay that the treatment of Gouri is “ambiguous”. The dilemma that Gouri had passed through is the reflection of what exactly the mechanism of patriarchy do so. It is that strong force of structure which makes a young girl a prey “in the form of her destiny”. Bhalla states, “consciousness rising was an important part of the technique of Radical Feminism, which one way to make women visible was to give them a voice, to argue their experience of humiliation, marginalization and victimization. Then why has Gouri has denied a voice?” In this context, she (Bhalla), brings the discourse that Spivak raised a question, “can subaltern speak?” One need to ask here, “Does the subaltern want to speak?” Gouri has just only one very short dialogue in the play when she appears as “shy and different”, a little awed by Nana’s presence. Then she appears only in stage directions, once during Radha- Krishan dance, where she is seductive and sensuous, leading Nana on; and the second time during the Rangpachami dance, young vital and happy. Her happiness, merry making dances seems that she is happy as if she has nothing to speak for herself. It also might be a conformation to the point that she just follows the “image” created by men, of “how a mistress should behave”.

Conclusion:

As it would be unfair and simplistic to assume that women are a homogenous group, and are oppressed and discriminated against in exactly the same way by an equally homogenous group of tyrannical men. There are important and major difference between Gulabi and Gouri. It is important that the operation of the society that constructs Gulabi who participate in male patriarchy and Gouri is discriminated against and used by patriarchy. Chandra also assists Nana in all illegitimate birth and abortions. It establishes the truth that though women are part of patriarchal society and they have more or less contribution to its success. It is through the female characters that Tendulkar exposes the vice and weakness of society.

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