

VIJAY TENDUALKAR'S *GHASHIRAM KOTWAL*: AS A REVENGE TRAGEDY

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Abstract:

Attempt has been made to study the play "Ghashiram Kotwal" as a revenge tragedy. After the two humiliations which Ghashiram has to undergo in the city of Poona, he chose to take revenge for these humiliations. In the tussle of revenge and power game from a victim, Ghashiram became a victimizer. He laid a trap, and in the end he finds himself trapped. Because of this impulse of revenge Ghashiram lost everything, his self-respect, his daughter, his position as Kotwal. And finally he lost his life and met a tragic end. The choice which Ghashiram made turns out to be a very tragic choice.

Key Words: *Revenge, impulse, humiliation, situation, choice, trope, fortune, tragic.*

Generally revenge tragedy refers to the act of doing something harmful in a retaliation of a perceived done to a person or a group. Its action is typically centered upon a leading character's attempt to avenge the murder of loved one, or an act of, humiliation Often this involves the use of complex intrigues, counter-intrigues or disguises and usually some exploration of the morality of revenge. The famous revenge tragedies are: Shakespear's *Hamlet*, Marlow's *The Jew of Malta*, John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, and Cyrill Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy*.

This is basic knowledge and kind of common-sense which Ghashiram lacks. Ghashiram is a central character in the play *Ghashiram Kotwal*, which was written by India's most influential playwright Vijay Tendulkar in the year 1973. In this play Ghashiram encounters this revengeful situation, he becomes the prey of the situation and takes the wrong decision of taking revenge in very brutal manner. Ghashiram Savaldas was a brahmin belongs to a place called Kanauj. Ghashiram came to the city of Poona in search of better fortune. He came to the city along with his wife and young daughter. The arrival of Ghashiram to the city of Poona, with his wife and daughter, is comparable with the entry of Michael Henchard of Thomas Hardy's novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Wherein we see in the very beginning of the first chapter of the novel, the central character Michael Henchard arrives accompanied by his wife Susan and their daughter Elizabeth Jane to the city of Casterbridge in search of a good fortune Both Michael Henchard and Ghashiram gets the tragic end However in the city of Poona Ghashiram was exposed to terrible situations and challenging environment. At first Ghashiram is seen at Gulabi's place, a local dancer, whose dance is popular and everyone likes it so as Nana Phadnavis the Peshwa's chief minister. Ghashiram use to dance with Gulabi, help Gulabi perform her domestic duties. At Gulabi's place Nana Phadnavis was impressed by Ghashiram's helpful gesture and he rewarded Ghashiram with a necklace but Gulabi demands necklace back and Ghashiram refusal to give Gulab provides tension in the text. It is the point where Gulabi got enraged and calls for two-three men, these men beat Ghashiram very badly and thrown him outside. This is the first instance was Ghashiram faced utter humiliation.

The second instance in which of Ghashiram experiences humiliation was when he was accused of being thief. There was a royal ceremony in which all the brahmins of the city of Poona were honored with the royal gifts. Ghashiram as being a brahman was also participated in this ceremony. But as Ghashiram was an outsider the local Brahmins made a trap and charged innocent Ghashiram with theft. The guards came and without any proof of Ghashiram being a thief, they beat him badly. What is more shocking for

Ghashiram is that after beating him, they banished him from the city of Poona. It is these two instances of humiliations which inflamed in Ghashiram the spirit of revenge. Ghashiram falls as prey to the situation and takes the vow:

Ghashiram: But I'll come back. I'll come to Poona. I'll show my strength. It will cost you! Your good 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. I'll make pigs of all of you. I'll make this Poona a kingdom of pigs. Then I'll be Ghashiram again, the son of Savaldas once more” (Samik Bandyopadyay, 376).

The impulse and desire to take revenge was so strong that, that Ghashiram becomes the slave of his passion. In this aggressive passion his is ready do anything, he is ready to go to the very low level. He was completely blind folded by his passion, and it became a kind of matter of self-respect for him to take revenge. Ghashiram bent on in taking revenge to the point that he decided to use his daughter Lalit Gouri to obtain power. After coming to know Nanasahib's weakness that he was a womanizer, Ghashiram made a plan to catch hold Nana, Ghashiram offers his daughter to Nana in exchange of the Kotwali of the city of Poona.

Ghashiram: It will not do, Majesty. This is too much. The waters have come up to my chin. Better that we stop before the water rises over my head. Otherwise I will be humiliated all over Poona. What will people say about me? About you, Majesty? Your Majesty goes around in a palanquin. Ghashiram walks on the streets among the people. That won't do. I cannot do anymore. Now that's all I was carried away by my love of your Majesty. If the Peshwa hears about this my hundred years will be over. Whatever has happened has happened flowed into the Ganga. My daughter will not come again to your Highness house. Now I will get her married. Now I will search a bridegroom Nana: But-a few more days after that, we ourselves will see that she is married to one of our men (GK-382).

To this Gashiram did not agree, as his eyes are all set on getting the kotwal position of the city of Poona. Grashiram goes on to stretch Nana as much as possible, and at point Ghashriram even reminds Nanapadavis, there is who Peshwa, who will be watching Nanas activities, as a result if at all Nana wishes to get Lalit Gouri without Ghashiram's permission then Nana might have to face the consequences, as Ghashiram will be taking this matter to Peshwa. At this point Nana is exhausted and he asks that Ghashiram takes only what he needs to do to get Gouri. Now come to know that Ghashiram was not bothered, actually he his least bothered about his daughter Gouri or society, all he wanted was to get 'Katwali' of the city of Poona Ghashiram says: “sir, there is a way people will not talk my daughter will not be humiliated openly in Poona if you make a dear arrangement. All right Sir, to shut people's mouths, makes me the Kotwal of Poona” (GK-383).

Ghashiram thought he was successful in trapping Nana in his trap, but actually Ghashiram has trapped himself. The cunning Nana has his own plan, first to enjoy Ghashiram's young daughter Gouri, and the second was to finish off his enemies by using Ghashiram and silencing the voices which rise against him. With initial hick-ups Nana finally agrees to make Ghashiram the Kotwal of the city of Poona and give Ghashiram the order copy of it. But in making Ghashiram the Kotwal of the city of Poona the wicked Nana Phadnavis has his own evil design says Nana:

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 your luscious daughter. But with the second we will make the city of Poona dance. Ghashya, child, you're a foreigner. I have put on Poona's back. Why? As a counter check to all those conspirators.

You will not be able to join them; they will never trust you even if you do. Because you are a stranger, you are an outsider. We just raised a dog at our door to the position of the Kotwali!. We are your sole support. Oh, you're a bastard, Gashya your manner will be more arrogant than that of the Chitpavan Brahmans. You will manage the deference nicely, what what you, II create a court-and half! No worry about 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 Ghashriram. And that luscious. Peach is at hand to be devoured by Nana Excellent! Yes, Ghashya, be Kotawal. This Nana blesses you” (Samik Bandyopadyay 384-385).

Nana's traps which he laid to catch hold both Lalit Gouri daughter of Ghashriram and Ghashriram himself. The intention behind Nana making Ghashriram the Kotwal of the city of Poona was actually a well hatched plan that is to shoot two birds with one bullet. First by making Ghashriram the Kotwal of the city of Poona he will get Ghashriram's daughter Lalit Gouri and secondly through Ghashriram he will be getting rid of his all the enemies. This enables him suppress the voices which are raised against him. Main treachery of Nana rests in the fact that he is not involved directly in any matter but rather he will be using Ghashirm's shoulder to wipe-out his adversaries. It is all along win-win situation for Nana because all the trouble and criticism will be credited into Ghashriram's account.

Ghashriram who was blinded in his quest he was unable to see through this Nana's treachery. For Gharshiram motives are driven only by power matters and nothing else. He was determined to become kotwal of the city of Poona as a result he hardly differentiates between what was good and what was bad for him. By this Ghashriram was on his way of is self-destruction. Nana knew the fact that Gharshiram was an outsider and that the local people of Poona would never going to accept Ghashriram as their master even if Ghashriram is ready accept these people as his own. Eventually in the passion of getting his revenge Ghashriram unknowingly becomes the puppet of Nana's hands.

After getting the Kotwali of the city of Poona, Ghashriram has become a blood-thirsty monster. Ghashriram was so blind by his desire for revenge that he could hardly differentiate between right and wrong.

Suradhar: Ghashriram Kotwal started making the round of Poona at night, after the eleven o' clock cannon started ruling in person.

Accosted anyone he me in the streets. Whipped people. Arrested people Demanded peoples permits Imprisoned people. Sued people (Samik-387)

Sutradhar: “Days go by night go by

Others: His style has changed for the worse.

Sutradhar: The way a wounded Tiger becomes addicted to blood.

So the Kotwal has come to love the smell.

Other: The Kotwal has acquired a Penchant for human blood.

Sutradhar : Satisfaction he will never find, but nothing else delights his mind.

Others: Nothing else delights the mind.

Sutradhar: The Kotwal for the slightest reason beats and kills in any season.

Sutradhar: The mouths of Poona people were dry with fear (Samik 407).

He used to give major punishments even for the smallest offences; people were beaten, humiliated and thrown into jails. As pointed out in the quotation of David Daiches, Ghashriram Savaldas had become the Kotwal (chief of police) Ghashriram and now the victim has become the victimizer, it is nothing but an re-enactment of his past experiences.. Ghashriram continued his cruelty, as earlier he had been accused of theft, and banished from the city of Poona. Now similarly Ghashriram had captured a group of foreign brahmans, accused them with a false charge of stealing fruits from the garden. The Brahmans were locked

in suffocating jail rooms, in which twenty-two prisoner's had died due to suffocation.

After this event people of the city of Poona became furious, Peshwa sent a message to Nana Phadanavis, and the order of Ghashiram's death was issued. The angry and furious mob stoned Ghashiram to death. Due to his desire for revenge Ghashiram became the utter loser, he has lost his self-respect, by providing his young daughter to Nana, what is more saddening is that he found his daughter Gouri dead, she has died while giving birth to Nana's child. Ghashiram had lost his most precious thing Daughter, he lost his position of Kotwal of the city of Poona, and he finally lost his life.

Nana: 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 Gashya Kotwal, who plagued all of us, has met his death. Everything has happened according to the wishes of the gods. The mercy of the gods is with us always. (He nudges the corps of Ghashiram with his walking stick) Let the corpse of sinful Ghashya rot. Let the wolves and dogs have it. Let the worms have it. Whoever attempts to take away this corpse will be punished. Whoever mourns for him will be hanged. All living relatives of Ghashya Savaldas will be found bound and expelled from the city. We have ordered that from this day forward not a word not a stone relating to the sinner shall survive. We have commanded that there be festivities for three days to mark this happy occasion (GK-415-416).

The above dialogue by Nana after the death sums it up about Ghashiram's tragic end. The hippocratic Nana has taken full advantage of Ghashiram's death by projecting Ghashiram as a threat and an enemy of people of the city of Poona and Nana portrayed himself as protector and savior of Poona. Here Nana as cunning politician creates a devilish image of Ghashiram and by announcing major punishments to those who comes forward for Ghashiram's burial. Nana further wants to exploit this situation. On the other hand it is more tragic situation for close ones of Ghashiram. Because they won't be allowed to offer their condolences. Ghashiram's tragedy continuous even after his death in that he was denied proper burial.

So in his search for revenge and power Ghashiram lost everything he had. He was blind in his ambition that he destroyed others including himself, he was caught in the midst of his own trap. So the ambition of revenge took toll, he was so much involved in revenge game that unknowingly he destroyed himself. As Bacon says "This is certain, that a man that studieth revenge keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well" (Bacon's Essays 10). So the Ghashiram's choice of taking revenge turns out to be a wrong and tragic choice. If Ghashiram had decided not to take any revenge, and tried his fortune somewhere else, the results would have been safe and different. And he could have got success and a better life.

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