

# Victim to Victimizer: A Panoramic Visit of Contemporary Society with Ghashiram Kotwal

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**Abstract – The purpose of the paper is to demonstrate how realistically Tendulkar in Ghashiram Kotwal has shown the whole process from the victim to the victimizer through the protagonist of the play, Ghashiram. He is first victimized and then he himself becomes a brutal victimizer. How oppressions done by a powerful on a powerless person leave such an intense impact on mind and soul of a person that there remains no option other than becoming an oppressor himself. The paper attempts to visit this process of victim to victimizer with Ghashiram in order to throw light on the lives of those abundant people in society who are serious criminals or victimizers and the reason behind it is nothing other than atrocities done by powerful people on innocent ones.**

**Key Words: Victim, Victimizer, Ego, Super Ego, Freud, Social Learning Theory.**

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“True realism consists in revealing the surprising things which habit keeps covered and prevents us from seeing” (Cocteau, notable-quotes.com). Literature makes it possible for readers to see reality of contemporary society. Vijay Tendulkar is one of those writers who pen down reality and *Ghashiram Kotwal* is one of those plays by him which present a panoramic picture of society. Tendulkar has written so panoramically about violence that it shades can be seen in most of his plays including *Ghashiram Kotwal*. Tendulkar depicts expressions of violence through various aspects in the play. He depicts transformation of a victim into a cruel victimizer who exploits and oppresses innocent people with no reason but for his own satisfaction. It is depicted through the character of Ghashiram Savaldas, the protagonist of the play.

The first act of the play deals with the journey of Ghashiram which starts from his being a servant of a prostitute, named Gulabi, to his becoming the Kotwal of Poona. It also deals with humiliation of Ghashiram. He is exploited physically, mentally and verbally several times in the first act. The first act also depicts the exploitation of Ghashiram's innocent daughter, Gauri. She is exploited first by her own father Ghashiram who stakes her just for the sake of his personal motif and later she is sexually exploited by Nana Phadnavis, the Chief Minister of Peshwa, who she is sold to. Nana Phadnavis is portrayed as a satyriasis in the play.

Various expressions of oppression and exploitation are described through the characters such as Ghashiram Kotwal, Nana Phadnavis, Gulabi and Gauri. Expressions such as physical, verbal,

psychological, sexual and stalking stun the mind of the readers. Ghashiram's character is portrayed as an inhuman natured person who has no concern for other thing but for power. He even shows no concern for her young daughter whom he sells to become a powerful person and get a position of Kotwal. Later, when he succeeds and becomes the Kotwal of Poona, he exploits the innocent Brahmin of the state. This shows his ego and exploitative attitude towards the people of Poona. He knows very well the pattern of violence in human nature, as he himself is humiliated by Gulabi and her servants.

The Brahman women are presented as victims of patriarchal society. Nana exploits Gauri sexually and makes her pregnant without performing the marriage rituals. Gulabi who is a dancer and prostitute also experiences the taste of humiliation by the Brahmans and the rich section of Poona. Not only Gulabi but the Brahman wives are also oppressed and deprived of freedom/rights by their cruel husbands who escape from their duty which they are bound to. They enjoy Gulabi's vulgar dance keeping their wives alone at home. This shows the authoritative attitude of male section who keeps the women inside the four walls.

Ghashiram is first oppressed by Gulabi who makes him wash her utensils and other household chores and then he faces more brutal expression of violence when he gets humiliated and beaten by the servants of Gulabi for the necklace offered to him by Nana. Gulabi snatches the necklace and charges him with theft. The thugs of Gulabi beat him and humiliate him mentally. Gulabi, who is

oppressed too by the rich of the state due to her poverty, plays an oppressor's role here. She oppresses the person whom she saves once by providing job at her home. This is the first encounter of physical and mental violence which Ghashiram experiences in Poona city. Ghashiram's sufferings do not stop here. He feels tired and hungry, so he enters in a feast arranged by Peshwa for Brahmans of Poona. Unfortunately, he is let not go inside by the soldiers just for not being a Brahman of Poona. At the same time a Brahman yells for his money being stolen by a thief, but unluckily Ghashiram is charged with that stealing and gets beaten brutally again. Although Nana knows the fact that Ghashiram is not a thief and someone else have done it, yet does not react on Ghashiram's battering. He says, "The thief is someone else. I saw it. He was behind you at the ceremony and ran away with your money. Poor fellow!" (18).

Ghashiram is humiliated again and again by the Brahmans as well as by police and this humiliation makes him a furious fellow. He is insulted and oppressed for no fault. He feels frustrated due to the loss of his reputation. Now he feels unable to tolerate poverty as well as humiliation which he gets there. He gets angry and takes a vow to take revenge. He says in aggression:

I'll come back to Poona. I'll show my strength. I'll cost you! Your good days are gone! I'm 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 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. (21)

In aggression Ghashiram uses abusive verbal expression of violence for the victimizer who he is exploited by. Ghashiram's frustration of being humiliated leads him to use verbal language and provokes him to become a powerful person by hook or by crook. He has lost his sense of humanity by getting tortured on regular bases. The incident of Ghashiram who comes from one place to other and is beaten and tortured without committing mistakes, make the reader remind the 2008 attack of Maharashtra *Navnirman Sena* (MNS) on the North Indians. North Indian aspirants appearing for the Railway Recruitment Board entrance exam for the Western region got beaten by MNS workers while sleeping in the railway station in Mumbai. Around 50 to 60 people were injured due to battering. Although it was an all-India recruitment candidates from all over India were eligible for that exam, yet they were against the north Indians to be recruited in Maharashtra. MNS general secretary was also in the favour of recruitment of the people within a state. The same Ghashiram faces in Poona when he comes there in search of bread and butter. He is not

only deprived of the gifts which are given to the Brahman in the feast, but also of the food that is much needed for him. This humiliating incident changes the whole life of Ghashiram Savaldas. Now he has changed from an innocent Brahman to a great plotter.

He makes secret plans to trap Nana in his conspiracy to get power so that he can take revenge for his brutal humiliation. He feels happy when he finds Nana staring at her daughter with lust of sexual urge. Nana ogles Gauri at Ganesha temple and pays no heed to the *Kirtan* going in temple. Ghashiram gets angry at Nana's lecherousness for his daughter but he suppresses his anger because now he knows the weakness of Nana. Ghashiram is ready to take advantage of his weakness. Ghashiram, in the guise of a servant, shows his modesty and promises Nana to bring back the girl for him tomorrow or day after tomorrow. Next day he brings the girl, his daughter Gauri, and leaves her with Nana to serve him. The use of his own daughter to get power shows his hunger for power. When he comes to know that Nana is trapped into his conspiracy, he becomes happy and laughs loudly on his success without knowing the fact what he has lost. His double dealing attitude is also depicted when he enjoys his succeeding in his intrigue while other side, he mourns for being a selfish father of a girl whom he serves to Nana to get sexually assaulted just for his personal benefit. Here Freud's Ego theory can be implemented which tells that a person who knows morality, does the immoral act to achieve his personal goals. He kills morality to fulfil his needs. The same is narrated in the character of Ghashiram who forgets his feeling of super ego and his love for his only daughter and uses her as a thing. It shows his egoistic and selfish nature, who has no respect for human being. In Super Ego a person knows the value of morality as well as the result of evil deeds. Thus, a person having super ego feelings prefers morality instead of personal evil needs. But Ghashiram gives preference to power than daughter and leaves her alone to get exploited at the hands of lecherous Nana. He shows his double standard when he says:

Now he's in my hands ...oh, my daughter ... the beast (then yells at the audience.) oh, you people. Look! I've given my beloved daughter into the jaws of that wolf! Look. Look at this father. Putting the child of his heart up for sale. Look at my innocent daughter – a whore. That old overripe bastard! Look at him, eating her like a peach ... spit on me. Stone me. Look, Look, but I'll not quit. I'll make this Poona a kingdom of pigs. (26)

Here playwright also lays stress on Gauri's marginalized position. She is portrayed as a silent character who keeps submissive attitude towards her oppressed condition. She is forced to become Nana's mistress due to this her ambition of love

and living is broken into pieces and later abandoned after being used as a thing to play.

Now Ghashiram plays his own trump card and starts blackmailing Nana emotionally to take the position of Kotwal. Nana is blind after the lust of sex for Gauri. He is ready to give anything to pursue his lust. Ghashiram's emotional blackmail stuns Nana. He uses his emotional tricks as he says:

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? ... Think about the mother of the girl ... There is a way. People will not talk, my daughter will not be humiliated openly in Poona ... Shut people's mouths, make me the Kotwal of Poona. (27)

After achieving the title of Kotwal of Poona, Ghashiram impose his own rules on the people and he starts torturing them without any reason. He uses his power to frighten them. He accosts everyone whom he meets in the streets at night and tortures, beats, humiliates them mentally and arrests them without committing any crime. The only thing he wants from the people is to show the permit, permit for everything, whether they are doing right action or wrong, they must possess the permit. It seems that before Ghashiram's reign Poona city was full of crime and people did not need any permit for their evil deeds. But now the permit rule has been started, a permit is needed for everything, for whoring, for moving at midnight, etc. Another instance of physical violence after Ghashiram's battering, is experienced when Ghashiram takes his revenge on people. When Brahmans gather in the garden to receive their gifts from Nana, one of them shouts that he has been robbed by a thief. Ghashiram is already there to get the profit of this opportunity. He orders the soldiers to catch the thief, but whom they catch is not actually a thief but an innocent Brahman. But who bothers about it as Ghashiram is mad after his powerful position, he has lost his humanity, he does not care whether the person, whom they caught, is a thief or an innocent Brahman; he arrests him and abuses him. Although, soldiers deny of getting any evidence of stealing with that Brahman, yet Ghashiram shows his stubborn nature. Brahman cries in front of Ghashiram and tries to assure him that he has not stolen anything. But Ghashiram forces him to confess and beats him and gives him brutal treatment. Sutradhar explains the incident in a musical form:

The nails of the Brahman's right hand are pulled out. The fingers are washed with lemon juice and soap. All the lines and signs of his hand are noted. His hands are wrapped in a bag and the bag is sealed. The ordeal is prepared. (40)

Ghashiram orders to call ironsmith and to heat a steel ball. He also calls a soldier to bring water from

a Mahar's house and pressurizes the Brahman to take an oath. Being an innocent Brahman, he takes the oath, but Ghashiram does not believe and starts him beating. The hot steel ball is brought and frightens the Brahman to confess or to catch the hot steel. Ghashiram proves himself to be a sadistic person. He tortures the Brahman mentally again and again and frightens him with that hot ball. He asks, "Confess, Brahman. Did you steal or not? .... Brahman. No .... Ghashiram. No? Then take the ball in your hands. Take the test. .... Brahman (in fear of his life) .... I confess that I stole" (42).

Ghashiram is a victim of power game of politics, Gauri is a victim of sexual assault by lusty Nana and used as a thing by her father for personal greed. Gulabi is also a victimized character by rich and powerful people due to her poverty while other female characters of the play are victims of domestic violence and presented as passive or silent characters. This shows the patriarchal system in society and its effect on women who are suppressed just for being women.

Although Ghashiram is a victim, yet unable to understand the oppressed condition of women. He tortures them instead of paying attention to their miserable condition. Even his love for his daughter does not seem as powerful as his ambition for power. He uses his daughter to get power and surrenders her to Nana to be assaulted. On the other side, Ghashiram's wife also lives an oppressed life as well as a victim of this patriarchal system. She is totally neglected by her husband who even does not consult with her about his dealing with Nana and staking of her daughter. His strong desire to become a powerful person makes him a mindless creature. He arrests a housewife and her husband suspecting them as an illicit husband wife. So he humiliated common people with no reason but for self-satisfaction.

Ghashiram, an oppressed person, has changed into an oppressor, but Nana is more powerful and oppresses him again and humiliates him mentally by issuing an order to shave his head, to run him on a camel, to tie him to elephant's leg and finally to die at the hands of the mob. Tendulkar indicates that not only Indian society, but the whole world is indulge in the act of violence, however he considers violence a basic need of human being but man has taken it in the wrong way. A man does not use it to protect himself or his rights, but to abase other. Tendulkar's description of violence in various expressions also includes verbal expression. He provides significant words to his characters which are used very cleverly to oppress other. They use vulgar language as a tool to abase victim.

As it is described in Social Learning Theory of Bandura that a person reacts in a way which he faces in his family or society. Ghashiram's violent behaviour proves this theory what he learns from

the society or atmosphere around him implements it on the people around him. He is humiliated for false charge of stealing money and similarly he humiliates innocent for stealing fruits. But the treatment that he gives is more dreadful than he gets. At the end of the play when he is beaten by the mob, he expresses his frustration through his anger towards people who beats him. He beats himself and regrets for selling his own daughter to Nana for his self satisfaction. Tendulkar manifests the fact that a powerless victim has to yield in front of powerful oppressors. The people around him enjoy others' oppression and do not support the victim. Those who resist themselves to rebel against oppressors are afraid of powerful people and at last become the victims due to not realizing their hidden power. The play precisely vindicates what Marilyn Schneider states in *Vengeance of the Victim: History and Symbol in Giorgio Bassani's Fiction*, "...victim and victimizer inevitably exchange places, which is to say that they are one and same" (212)

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