UNIT : 12

GHASHIRAM KOTWAL : I
- Vijay Tendulkar

:: STRUCTURE ::

12.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall study background of Indian Theatre and Marathi Theatre. The reason for studying Marathi Theatre is to understand the drama *Ghashiram Kotwal* in a better way. Moreover, we shall have a brief introduction about the author, background of the drama and its plot structure. In addition to this we shall also have a look at socio-political conditions that has largely influenced Indian theatre and its development. With the study of this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the Indian Drama and its trends;
- understand the Marathi Theatre and its development;
- learn about the background of the author and his play.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Ghashiram Kotwal (First published in 1973) is one of the most popular Marathi Drama written by Vijay Tendulkar. *Ghashiram Kotwal* has been translated into Hindi and English by Vasant Dev (1974) and Jayant Karve and Eleanor Zelliot an American Professor (1984) respectively. In order to understand the play *Ghashiram Kotwal* we need to understand the background of the drama. *Ghashiram Kotwal* belongs to Indian theatre in general and Marathi theatre in particular. Moreover, India is a nation with diverse cultures and languages and may be that is the reason why we need to study some of the specific features of Maharashtrian culture. After learning the background of the play you will surely develop the interest in the play and find *Ghashiram Kotwal* interesting.

As you know that all the literary genres are different and written for varied reasons. Unlike all the other genres, drama is meant to be performed or enacted. The audience plays an active role while witnessing the play. Moreover, they also respond the play differently. In many situations when you do not watch plays performed, you read focusing on usual aspects of the play including themes, dialogues, plot and action. The power of your imagination while reading the play becomes very important.

Further, you may find it difficult to relate the dialogues and context of the drama when you read it in English language as it was originally written in Marathi language. However, the translated version has its own charm and an independent one though rooted in the source text.

Here, in this unit we shall learn about almost all the criteria of the play and will definitely enjoy your reading experience.

12.2 INDIAN THEATRE

Indian drama tradition is very ancient. It has its roots in Sanskrit drama of ancient India. It has influenced not only Modern Indian drama but also local folk dramas. In addition to this Western theatre too has influenced Indian theatre.

Sanskrit Drama's growth is very ancient and as part of this tradition we too have Bharat Muni's *Natyashastra,* the great treatise of Ancient Indian Tradition. *Natyashastra* in its greatness and relevance can be compared with Aristotle's *Poetics*. Classic Sanskrit Drama does not present tragic end, very much opposite to Aristotle's emphasize on tragic end. The root of this presentation of content is based on Hindu philosophical ideology that views the world as a 'maya' or 'illusion'. Further, death is not the final end or an event to lament but death is to celebrated as it releases soul and merges to supreme form i.e. God.

The western world, unaware of the greatness of Sanskrit theatre, learnt about the great Kalidasa around late 18^{th} century i.e. in the year 1789 when William Jones translated *Shakuntala* into English. The west found *Shakuntala* so influencing that the German writer Goethe (1749 - 1832)

used the prologue of *Shakuntala* for his play *Faust*. A part from Kalidasa, around 9th century three other kings including Shudraka, Harsha and Visakhadatta wrote plays and contributed to the Sanskrit Drama tradition. Mrichkattakam, Mudraraksasa, and *Ratnavai* are three major plays by Shudraka, Visakhadatta and Harsha respectively. Further, Bhasa has written 134 plays and *Swapana-Vasavadatta* is considered as his masterpiece.

As part of Indian Theatre, Bharata Muni's *Natyashastra* is regarded as a comprehensive book that discusses all aspects of dramaturgy. *Natyashastra* not only focuses on aspects of production but also on direction, make-up, costumes, jewellery, movements of eyes, neck and body postures. Playwright, director and actors are considered very important in drama.

In Sanskrit drama, some of the major kinds of *Abhinaya* are:

Angika i.e. representation of action physically by moving hands, fingers, lips, neck and feet.

Vacika i.e. expressing through speech, song, intonation to arouse different moods and sentiments among the audience.

Abarya i.e. appropriate use of costumes and make-up, and

Sattvika i.e. when actors feel the role and emotion that he or she is to convey to the audience. This is one of the most important kinds of Abhinaya.

Moreover, Indian drama has been divided into 10 different types out of which two namely *Nataka* and *Prakarana* are very important. *Nataka* is a heroic drama taken from history or mythology where heroes, gods and kings are featured as protagonists. And *Prakarana* is social drama that deals with lives of common people's life.

In addition to this, Folk theatre is also an integral part of Indian drama tradition. They usually have mythological stories as their base. Some popular regional forms of folk theatre are as below:
Nautanki (Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra)
Jatra (Bengal)
Bhavia (Gujarat and parts of Western India)
Tamasha (Maharashtra)
Terukoothu (Tamil Nadu)
Yakshagana (Karnataka)
Kuchipudi (Andhra)
Ramlila (Uttar Pradesh and pan India)
Krishnalila (Uttar Pradesh and pan India)

- **Check Your Progress 1**

1. Write a brief note on Sanskrit Drama tradition.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Some of the major kinds of *Abhinaya.*

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Name some of the major folk theatres.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

12.3 MARATHI THEATRE

Marathi Theatre can be considered around Six decades old. However, its tradition begins with Vishnudas Bhave's play *Sitaswayamvar* published in the year 1843. Vishnudas Bhave contributed to Marathi Theatre for 60 years and wrote 50 plays wherein *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are two major ones. Some of the sentiments of national freedom movement were also conveyed through plays as their core themes. Khadilkar's *Keechakavadha* (1906) is one of such plays. *Keechakavadha* is an event from *Mahabharata*. Keechaka was the brother in law of king Virata and he was killed by Bhima. Here the face of Bhima is compared with Lokmanya Tilak and Keechaka as Lord Curzon. His second important play is *Bhau Bandaki.* As part of this play the character of Anandibai has been featured who causes Peshwa to be murdered. She is also a popular character in many other folk tales of Maharashtra.

Some of the other Marathi playwrights and their works are:

Gadhari's *Akach Pyala*

Warerkar's *Bhoomi Kanya Sita, Satte Che Gulam, Sonya Cha Kalas*

P L Deshpande's *Sunder Mee Honar*

Sai Paranjpe, Mahesh Elkunchwar, C T Khandekar and Vijay Tendulkar are some of the major playwrights as successors to the Marathi theatre's maestros.

12.4 ABOUT THE AUTHOR: VIJAY TENDULKAR

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the renowned playwrights of the Marathi theatre. He was born on January 6,1928 in Mumbai (Maharashtra). He had his education in Kolhapur, Pune and Bombay. Though he had meager formal education, he had really his education in real life. The real life experiences, observations and Impression enriched his personality and vision of life. He poured these experiences and observations into his writing. Tendulkar's father Dhondopant was an enthusiastic writer, director and actor of amateur plays. He used to take young Tendulkar to the rehearsals of his plays. The younger Tendulkar was greatly amazed to see the actor's performance especially the woman's role being played by the male actor. His brother, Ragunath used to act too. Like his father, he was interested in literature. It was from here Tendulkar's education to become a great playwright began.

Tendulkar was brought up in a domestic atmosphere where his mother used to tell him stories about Mahatma Gandhi and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. This instilled the spirit of nationalism in the mind of Tendulkar. He was associated with The Quit India Movement of 1942. All these things had an abiding influence on his career as a playwright later on in his life.

Moreover he was also influenced by the great writers who very often visited his house. No doubt, Tendulkar grew up in a kind of literary atmosphere. Thus the literary environment at home prompted young Tendulkar to take up writing. Tendulkar wrote his first story at the tender age of six.

Tendulkar had two role models who influenced him while he was at Pune. Both were well-known names in Marathi literature. They were Dinkar Balkrishna Mokashi, a fine writer and Vishnu Vinayak Bokil, Tendulkar's Marathi teacher at school and a successful writer. Thus these writers rendered dominant influence on the personality of Tendulkar. During his school days, Tendulkar used to bunk the school and spent time watching Western plays and also at the city library where he read a lot and felt inspired to write plays himself. At the age of eleven he wrote, directed and acted in his first play *Amchyavar Kon Prem Karnar* (Who Will Love us?).

He started his career as a freelance writer. He worked as sub-editor on the daily *Navbharat* and *Maratha*, then as executive editor of the magazines, *Vasudha* and *Deepavali*. He spent a few years as public relation officer for the *Chowgule* Group of Industries before being appointed assistant editor of the daily *Loksatta* in 1968. He was the Chairman of the General Council, SahityaAkademi, New Delhi from 1978 to 1982 and of Sangeet Natak Akademi from 1977 to 1981. In 1979 he was made the Vice-President, National School of Drama. His association with the theatre was also long and profound. He rendered his services in different capacities like writer, producer and director etc. He was also associated with All

India Radio and Doordarshan. His varied professional experience put him in touch with people of all classes.

He has been felicitated with many awards and honours including the Maharashtra State Government Award (1956, 1969 and 1972), Sangeet Natak Akademy Award (1971), The Filmfare Award (1980 and 1983), Padmabhushan (1984), Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay Prize (1970), National Award for the best Hindi film Manthan (1977), Saraswati Samman (1993), The Kalidas Samman (1999), The Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar (1999), The Jansthan Award (1999), and recognition for life time literary achievement the Katha Chaudamani Award in 2001.

As the most noted writer has to his credit 30 full length plays such as *Grihasiha* (1955), *Shrimant* (1955), *Manus Navache Bet* (1956), *Madhalya Bhinti* (1958), Chimniche Ghar Menache (1960), *MiJinklo Mi Haralo* (1963), *Kavlyanchi Shala* (1963), *Sari Ga Sari* (1964), *Ek Hotti Mulagi* (1967), *Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe* (1968), *Ashi Pakhare Yeti* (1970), *Gidhade* (1971), *Sakharam Binder* (1972), *Gharte Amuche Chhan* (1973), *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1973), *Dwamdipacha Mukabala* (1973-74), *Bhalyakaka* (1974), *Bhau Murarrao* (1975), *Bebi* (1975), *Pahije Jatiche* (1977), *Kamala* (1982), *Mitrachi Goshta* (1982), *Kanyadan* (1983), *Vithala*{1985), *Chiranjeev Saubhagya Kanshini*, *Safer* (1991), *Niyatiehya Bailala Ho* (1992) and *Kutre* (2003) etc.

He has also to his credit 23 one-act-plays, six collections of children's plays, five anthologies of short-stories, five volumes of Literary essays and social criticism and two novels. He has also written eleven movies in Hindi and eight movies in Marathi and T.V. series too. In 2004, he has written a single-act-play His fifth Woman - his first play in the English language - as a sequel to his earlier exploration of the plight of women in *Sakharam Binder* which was first performed at the 'VijayTendulkar Festival' in New York in October 2004.

- **Check Your Progress 2**

1. Brief note on Marathi Theatre.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Name some of the major Marathi playwrights and their works.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Write a brief note on Tendulkar and his contribution to Marathi Theatre.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

12.5 GHASHIRAM KOTWAL: BACKGROUND

Ghashiram Kotwal was first written in Marathi in 1972 and published by Nishat Books in 1973. Its English translation was rendered by Jayant Karve and Eeanor Zelliot in the year 1984. It was then translated into Hindi by Vasantdev in 2007. The play has been translated in more than a dozen languages of India. It was presented on 16 December 1972 at Bharat Natya Mandir, Pune.

After nineteen performances of the play by the Progressive Dramatic Association of Pune, it was suddenly banned by the president of the Association. The resentment against the play came not only from the Brahmins of Maharashtra but also from the President of the Dramatic Association itself. The play was branded as anti-Brahman. The play, it was, alleged, had put to ridicule the Brahmins of Pune and their cult hero Nana Phadnavis, who was not so as per the oral and written history. There was a fear of revolt among the audience. As a result, most of the actors resigned from the Association and formed a new performance group called Theatre Academy (27th March 1973). The production was revived in 1974 and since then, the Academy has presented the play in France, Germany, U.K. Netherlands, and Italy. Jabbar Patel's production of the play for Progressive Drama Association in Pune is considered a classic in Modern Indian Theatre.

The play owes its popularity less for its thematic and literary contents and more for its theatrical experiment which has immortalized the play for use of folk and traditional mediums which sits so perfectly well with the modern theatrical structure of the play. Produced by People’s progressive Theatre, Pune and directed by Zabbar Patel, the play has ever been a success in all its vernacular, Hindi and English versions. The kind of theatrical experiment Tendulkar has suggested in his script was executed by Zabbar Patel and subsequently by hundreds of theatre directors all over the country and even beyond its borders. The shifting and waiving human curtain which shows its presence in all the scenes and constituents of which also act as dramatic personae is the highest achievements of Tendulkar and his directors. The style has universally been used by many directors of regional theatre because it is the best idiom to hybridize the Indian and the Western theatre. The style of the songs has been carefully selected so as to make the play authentic and aesthetic both. In the very opening of the play the impressive chorus of the players resounds in the auditorium and apart from making the interesting revelations about the

historical and mythical ambiance of the play also builds instant empathy with the audience. The same kind of theatrical experiment was made in Kannad theatre a decade before by Girish Karnad while staging his own play *Hayvadana*.

12.6 GHASHIRAM KOTWAL: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Tendulkar used Ghashiram incident as a political satire on a politico-historical situation in which existed at the time of Nana Phadnavis (1741–1800). It is just an essence of the history to convey the thought that men in power give rise to ideologies to serve their purposes, and later destroy them when they become useless.

Maya Pandit in her article "Deliberate Dismantling of an Icon" (2000, p.16-23) says that Ghashiram was "an official of Nana Phadnavis , the Peshwa's deputy in Pune , during 1768—1800". Tendulkar has put less focus on Ghashiram and more on Nana Phadanvis who was a Brahmin ruler enjoying "political power and cultural hegemony". The Peshwa rule ended with the entry of the British. The Brahmins, already smarting from the pain of Colonial rule, felt further humiliated by the negative image presented in the play.

Maya Pandit explains in detail the history of the shadow battle between the dethroned Brahmins and the Britishers. The Britishers deliberately raised a propaganda against all Indian rulers painting them as "weak, immoral, degenerate and and incapable of just government". At the same time they projected themselves as "benign, restraining, guiding, and in other words, as saviours." This image about themselves was gradually accepted by the Brahmins of Puna which finds its expression in Maroba Kanhoba's book Ghashiram Kotwal (1863) from which Tendulkar derived his plot and characters. The image of Brahmins was further downgraded by Mahatma Phule in his book Brahmanache Kasab by saying, 'They bathe, put chandan mark on their forehead, with a cap on their head. And they seat a whore on their lap"(Maya, p., 18). Ramchandra Narayana Lal, a minor writer in the nineteenth century, wrote that Ghasiram Kotwal would procure women for Nana's lustful ventures. This negative publishing of the Brahmins was encountered by cultural revivalism by the high caste Brahmins like Lokmanya Tilak who sought the revival of the image of Indian rulers in general and Brahmin image in particular, through cultural and literary movements. The historical facts spoke otherwise: Nana had nine wives and two mistresses, as confessed in his own autobiography. His eighth wife was only fourteen when she died one day after his death. His last wife Jiubai had not even attained puberty at the time of his death.

12.7 GHASHIRAM KOTWAL: AN OVERVIEW

Ghashiram Kotwal was written in 1972, and is one of the longest running plays in the history of Indian Theatre. The play is introduced by a swaying human curtain of Pune Brahmins who convey the lawless and

corrupt state of their city. Ghashiram Kotwal is the story of a Brahmin from Kannauj, who comes to Pune during the 18th century reign of Peshwa. Nana Fadnavis, the chief of Pune visits a Lavani dancer, and while dancing with her accidentally pulls a leg muscle. Ghashiram offers Nana Fadnavis his back to rest his injured foot on, and receives a necklace from him as a gift. The necklace, though, is taken away by the Brahmins of Puna, who denigrate Ghashiram in public. Ghashiram swears revenge on the Brahmins of Pune, and uses his beautiful daughter to catch the roving eye of Nana Fadnavis. Lustful Nana asks him to let him have the girl, and Ghasiram asks to be made Kotwal (Police chief) of the city in return. After becoming Kotwal, Ghashiram unleashes his revenge on the Brahmins of Pune.

Ghashiram's daughter gets pregnant and dies during childbirth. Nana orders her buried without Ghashiram's knowledge. Ghashiram's tyranny goes out of hand, and when a group of people thrust in a small jailroom dies of suffocation, People of Pune plead to Peshwa to intervene. Peshwa summons Nana, and in his true chameleon-like fashion, Nana orders the merciless public execution of Ghasiram, the root of all-evil. Hence, Ghashiram, an embodiment of crude revenge is eliminated, and Pune is reinstated to how it was before. No changes occur in the political scenario, yet a false sense of justice prevails among the people of Pune, and Nana only strengthens his reputation.

- **Check Your Progress 3**

1. Write background of the play *Ghashiram Kotwal.*

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Overview of the play *Ghashiram Kotwal.*

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

12.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have gone through the following points:

- Brief introduction of the play
- Tradition of Indian Theatre
- Tradition of Marathi Theatre
- Life and work of Vijay Tendulkar
- Historical background of the play
- Overview of the play

12.9 BOOKS SUGGESTED

- *Collected Plays in Translation: Kamala, Silence! the Court Is in Session, Sakharam Binder, the Vultures, Encounter in Umbugland, Ghashiram Kotwal, a Friend's Story, Kanyadaan.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 2003.
- Prabhakar Machewe, *Four Decades of Indian Literature* (New Delhi, Chetana Publication. 1976)
  - Tendulkar, Vijay. *Ghashiram Kotwal*.Calcutta: Seagull, 1986.
  - Tendulkar, Vijay. *Ghashiram Kotwal*: A Reader's Companion. M. Sarat Babu, Asia Book Club, 2003.

MCQs

1. Ghashiram Kotwal was first published in the year _____.
a. 1975 b. 1973 c. 1977 d. 1971

2. As part of Indian Theatre, Bharata Muni's Natyashastra is regarded as a comprehensive book that discusses all aspects of dramaturgy.
a. True b. False

3. In the year 1789 when William Jones translated Natyashashtra into English.
a. True b. False

4. The 'VijayTendulkar Festival' was held in New York in October_____.
a. 2001 b. 2003 c. 2004 d. 2006

5. Which of the following is not a play by Vijay Tendulkar?
a. Grihasiha b. Kutre c. Kamala d. Hayvadana

2.11 Key

1. Ghashiram Kotwal was first published in the year _____.
b. 1973

2. As part of Indian Theatre, Bharata Muni's Natyashastra is regarded as a comprehensive book that discusses all aspects of dramaturgy.
a. True

3. In the year 1789 when William Jones translated Natyashashtra into English.
b. False

4. The 'VijayTendulkar Festival' was held in New York in October_____.
c. 2004

5. Which of the following is not a play by Vijay Tendulkar?
d. Hayvadana