CHAPTER – II
Press, Politics and Corruption

Tendulkar sympathizes with the have-nots, downtrodden, dispossessed, poor people and middle class society. He explicitly wrote about the certain evils present in society and political circles. He tries his best to make masses come to their senses by bringing them face-to-face to the harsh realities of social and political life and to an extent he succeeds in it. As a socially committed dramatist, Tendulkar registers his strong protest over the corruption and devaluation of Indian Press and political system. Press is supposed to be the champion of the people’s rights but has, therefore been rightly given the ha’loed distinction of being the fourth pillar of the Indian democracy.

The Press proprietors played a definitive role in Indian freedom struggle. “The examples set by these pioneers were adopted by the vernacular Press which committed itself to the lofty ideals of disseminating knowledge and information and serving as a medium of discussion and debate over issues of public interest” (Sangwan and Dahiya 127). The proprietors of press in pre-independence Indian era were men of high ethics who never deviated from their path for any petty gains. But in the post-independence era, Indian Press stands in the line of trade, commerce and industry the aim of which is to make profits. With the change of nationalistic fervour, Press is owned by big business houses and their aim is to become rich and richer. To perpetuate the selfish and narrow ends, Press begins to work on “increasing circulation, marshalling of large scale advertisements and offering facility of what has come to be termed ‘paid news’” (Sangwan and Dahiya 128). Tendulkar successfully makes mockery of these new generation journalists and Pressmen in his plays Kamala and Encounter in Umbugland. He presents contrast in the characters of two journalists –Kakasaheb and Jaisingh Jadhav. The old generation of journalists like Kakasaheb stood for idealistic and ethical role of Press and its freedom while Jaisingh stands for selfish, commercial and professional journalists who work on the whims and fancies of their bosses without caring for social concerns. As is rightly commented by S.S. Sangwan and S.P.S. Dahiya, “In Kamala, Tendulkar clinically diagnoses the malaise afflicting the mind and soul of the Indian Press. The moral and functional decay of the
Indian Press has been laid bare by him with the precision of a surgeon operating on a cancer-eaten patient” (128). The degradation of Press is illustrated through the character of Jai Singh who in order to achieve his ambition of promotion crosses the path of powerful people and loses his job. Kakasaheb analyses the professional and financial immorality of journalists like Jai Singh who flaunt their high-profile connections with politicians. He (Kakasaheb) discloses the lofty lifestyle of Jai Singh and the corruption of Press:

And if you can manage it—it’s not a bad form. There may be danger in it—but there’s profit too. For example, five years ago you were living in the shed outside a house in Karol Bagh. And today you’re in a bungalow in Neeti Bagh—even if it is a small one. You have servants, you have a car. You travel by plane all over the country. You stay in five-star hotels. You get invitations from foreign embassies. You have access to ministers and Chief Ministers—or even to the Prime Minister! What’s bad about that? The moral is: there’s no harm in this game—if you know how to play it right. (Kamala 23)

The Press conference which Jaisingh organises in Delhi to expose flesh trade ultimately depicts the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of the journalists who ask irrelevant questions to Kamala who was bought from human trafficking market at Luhardaga in Bihar. The journalists seek the answers of “important social questions” from Kamala as if Kamala has “come straight from the Delhi School of Economics to hold a Press Conference!” (Kamala 28)

Not only in Kamala but in Encounter in Umbugland also the nexus of politicians, criminals and Pressmen are depicted by the playwright. “The bane of the Indian Press is that it has been reduced to a mere instrument for personal gains by its proprietors for whom it is more of a business proposition and less of a service-inspired institution” (Sangwan and Dahiya 131). The unholy nexus between Press and Politicians is the main cause of corruption that afflicts the Indian people who are sitting at the bottom of social hierarchy. Tendulkar remarks through Kakasaheb that the pressmen “use all those methods of running around, tapping secret sources and so on … Every day new movements, new exploitations, new intrigues, exposures, and counter-exposures. Higher circulation, more advertising, more income” (Kamala 23) are the hallmarks of new generation Pressmen. Press and politicians neglect issues of public interest. Journalists write about “The High-Speed type! Something catches
fire—and there he runs! There is a riot somewhere else—and off he flies. If there’s an atrocity in the heavens or a ministry topples in the sky—why, there he is! Eye-witness report! Being on the spot—that’s what’s important! Never mind what you write” (Kamala 5). In this mad race to stand first in delivering news, they deliver, “High-speed Journalism! Let’s see who runs fastest—if it comes to that, write any old nonsense!” (Kamala 6) In Encounter in Umbugland, Press uncovers and sensationalises the issues of politics only to become power broker. It has nothing to do with the welfare of people. The queen Vijaya wants to mitigate the problems of tribals. The Press is never concerned about problems of people except its own benefits. It highlights the pomposity with which the government machinery is used for the personal functions of the dignitaries like Kings, Queens and the powerful ones. The play exposes the cruelty and lack of principles in the rulers and their subjects. P. Obula Reddy comments, “Tendulkar has superbly manipulated the mingling of politics, sex and religion exposing the hypocrisy and selfishness of man” (Reddy 83).

Encounter in Umbugland also exposes the ugly role of Press, though it is assumed to be the fourth pillar of democracy, it works in connivance with the government in spreading corruption to exploit the innocent and ignorant masses, which is evident in the following extract:

THE TWO [together]. Anyway! Anyway! Anyway!

A man is just a human being.

Long live the memory of the King!

[A less mournful chorus. The drumbeat grows more emphatic and continues thus. The five ministers quite unbowed, walk in a great hurry in the opposite direction, holding their sides].

THE TWO [turn by turn, in time to the quickened drumbeat].

The King was just an inspiration.

—All the rest was prevarication!

Self was his only consideration.

His love for the country, a mere fabrication!

He made puppets of Cabinet men.

He made a cake of the government!
Of democracy he made a noise.
Threw sixty years dust in our eyes! …
Anyway! A man is just a human being.
Long live the memory of the king. (*Encounter in Umbugland* 283)

They befool and misguide the masses through sensational news. They write “After Vichitravirya, Who?” (*Encounter in Umbugland* 284) After the death of Vichitravirya, each minister tries to become king but their plans fail because they have inherent fears of deceptions and cannot be united. They are so jealous of each other that they cannot endure the success of others. It is assumed in the field of power politics that success and treachery go hand in hand. As is in the play “One should take stock of the situation—give some advantages, and get some. Politics means sweetly-smiling enmity and the experience of sacrifice. A show of sacrifice is always profitable in politics” (*Encounter in Umbugland* 306). The play reveals how the King, Press and power join hands together to befool the masses. “The play also exposes the role of government and the press in making people ignorant. It shows how leaders make their people mindless and how mindless people allow their leaders to be hypocritical” (Mishra, *An Estimation* 120). Journalists have become advertisers of the government. They praise those who are in power. “They praise the king or queen and function as an advertising agency for the government on the one hand and highlight the sensational news to boost the circulation of their paper. This shows how the press misleads the people and dims their consciousness. The character of Vijaya brings to our mind Indira, the third Prime Minister of India” (Babu 50).

Corruption is another significant factor that affects the lives of masses. Tendulkar dramatizes corruption in various forms affecting and paralyzing all the social and political institutions. He in *Ghashiram Kotwal* and *Encounter in Umbugland* registers a vehement protest against the political corruption that affects masses through politics. Like politicians, masses also resort to underhand and corrupt means to realize their desired ends. As Ghashiram, in *Ghashiram Kotwal*, decides to buy power or scepter in the form of Kotwal, he finds out the ways of buying it. He barters his innocent daughter in order to avenge his humiliation at the hands of Nana, who represents the ruling class, to satisfy his ego and to get power. He announces:
I’ll come back. I’ll come back 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. (Ghashiram Kotwal 376-77)

Corruption operates in two ways, empowering both the receiver and the giver. It is more alike a win-win situation for both the parties. The other thing which adds feathers to it is flattery. Ghashiram cleverly makes most of all the occasions to turn tide in his favour. He doesn’t even hesitate to barter his daughter to fix Nana in the narrow pass. “Yes, the narrow pass of my only daughter” (Ghashiram Kotwal 384). Nana finds his own favour. As Shailaja B. Wadikar aptly remarks “in the field of power politics, nothing is real: appearances are deceptive; success and treachery go hand in hand” (Vijay 23). Thus, Ghashiram exploits the situation, giving some advantages to Nana, and getting some for himself. Usually politics means “sweetly smiling enmity and the experience of sacrifice. A show of sacrifice is always profitable in politics” (Ghashiram Kotwal 306).

In Encounter in Umbugland, Vijaya’s development from a headstrong, inexperienced princess to a prudent, intelligent ruler testifies to the fact that a ruler gradually learns all those tricks of the trade in the course of time. The playwright makes his readers conscious of the ugliness, corruption and treachery in politics and stimulates them to think over such things. In the play, the corrupt-minded ministers, tired of using all corrupt means to become the king, arrive at a consensus to make the princess Vijaya as their queen and to whom they can bend according to their whims and fancies. This is a parallel point in both the plays Ghashiram Kotwal and Encounter in Umbugland where power givers assume that they can freely use their will. These plays underscore the view that the powerful gets victory. Santosh Chakrabarti writes in Ghashiram Kotwal, “Nana’s hypocrisy is exposed in the sarcastically contrasted pictures of his cavalier, disrespectful attitude to the omniscient deity Ganesh in Act–I and devotedness to the gods in Act–II. Salivating
with lust after seeing Gauri in the temple of Ganapati he asks her to come to him” (16). On the other hand, the little girl Gauri, in the awakened situation, protests:

GIRL. He will see
NANA. He will see? Who?
GIRL (points at Ganapati). He
NANA. That idol of holiness? That all holy Ganapati? … If you sit on our lap, he won’t say anything! (Ghashiram Kotwal 378)

The excerpt reveals the view that immorality of the powerful plays an instrumental role in modifying all situations according to his/her needs and wishes. Sandhya Saxena supports it that:

In the course of his journey from humiliation to revenge Ghashiram falls into the mire of Nana Phadnavis’s malevolence which causes his eventual victimization and tragic doom. Ghashiram’s character outlives the period of Peshwa Empire and becomes a universal figure whose rise and growth as the powerful Kotwal is symbolic of the multifaceted growth of corruption in society. Ghashiram’s reprisal happens to be both the outcome and the cause of corruption in the city of Poona. (21)

These types of pranks play a role in Ghashiram Kotwal and Ghashiram plays successfully his designs. Basavaraj comments “Ghashiram wants to have a proper reward for his submission of his daughter. He wants to whet Nana’s sexual appetite by refusing to send her on the pretext of getting her married off. Nana feels monetarily frustrated and wants to offer anything demanded by Ghashiram. Ghashiram wants to put an end to all the wagging tongues in Pune” (qtd. in Srivastava and Srivastava 31). Corruption provides satisfaction to both the giver and the receiver. Satish Barbuddhe reveals that “Ghashiram knows the velocity of power. It is a gateway to prosperity. Nana’s obsession for delightful Gauri eventually makes Ghashiram Kotwal of Poona” (126). In a fix, Nana exclaims:

NANA. Go! Send her. I’ll make you Kotwal. When will you send her?
GHASHIRAM. After I have the order, signed and sealed, in my hand!
NANA. Bastard. You’ve got me in a narrow pass.
GHASHIRAM. Yes, the narrow pass of my only daughter. (Ghashiram Kotwal 384)

Nana readily agrees to the deal of Ghashiram, and, in turn, the latter gets power and treats the masses in an inhuman way. Initially, Nana gets infatuated with
the charms of Gauri but he is aware of the fact that this infatuation won’t last long because he has already tasted many women. Soon, he gets tired of Gauri and his lascivious nature compels him to begin his search again.

Ghashiram, a poor outsider, with different language and culture, seems arrogant to the so-called cultured Brahmans of Poona. Being vindictive Ghashiram exercises all powers against the Brahmans of Poona, knowing that poor people are hanged without any fault of theirs. On the other hand, Nana has spiritual hollowness and lustful nature which is visible on the religious occasions when he leers at the women and hunts them for the gratification of his sexual appetite, transcending all the bars of age, etc. It is conspicuously clear that both the King and the Kotwal are devoid of human and moral values. As M. H. Siddiqui analyses:

Nana Phadnavis as well as Ghashiram Kotwal both are corrupt in one way or the other. Both are Brahmans, but the only difference is of power. One is availing the power and the other is struggling for power. One is on the screen; the other is behind the screen. One is outwardly fatal for the society, the other is inwardly fatal for the society; one is ambitious, the other is over-ambitious. (78)

The powerful or the government uses state machinery for their own interests. Bureaucracy contributes to the red-tapism. Police help maintain status quo of corruption. As is depicted in the play:

Friend, the thief is dependent on the police.
If not—they’ll soften your bones.
Sometimes they break your bones.
Sometimes they crack your bones.
Sometimes you lose your life.
The thief earns what he thieves.
It’s easy income for the police. (Ghashiram Kotwal 375)

In this way, both are in search of their wish fulfillment though it can be in any way. As Neela Bhalla rightly comments:

The older injustices and hierarchies in Ghashiram Kotwal are class discrimination and subjugation of the weaker gender. Power is linked with decadence and sexuality. And though the ruling Brahmin community is identified with Nana, Ghashiram also a Brahmin, is excluded, excursed from this coterie because he is an outsider. The Punekar or the Poona Brahmans were the ruling clique. Ghashiram never succeeded in becoming a part of them. It must be understood that the Poona Brahmans are not defined by geographical
limits, as in the very beginning we learn that they come from all parts of India from Shringeri, Tanjore, Rameshwar, Kumbhakonam and Benaras. The mental humiliation and physical torture that they inflict on Ghashiram fester s in him a desire for revenge. He becomes the Kotwal but still remains an outsider. *(Ghashiram Kotwal: Essays 61-62)*

Ghashiram’s ambition of becoming a Kotwal is fulfilled but at heavy cost. He becomes Kotwal somewhat in same manner as Macbeth does in William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. He attains the kingship of Scotland by murdering the king. Ghashiram becomes Kotwal by bartering away his daughter. He passes stern laws in order to cleanse all the evils of the masses of Poona. “Ghashiram Kotwal says to kill a pig, to do an abortion, to be a pimp, to commit a misdemeanour, to steal, to live with one’s divorced wife, to remarry if one’s husband is alive, to hide one’s caste, to use counterfeit coins, to commit suicide, without a permit, is a sin” *(Ghashiram Kotwal 387)*. Ghashiram becomes a tormentor and the Brahmins of Poona rise in revolt against him. Smita Mishra observes that “a common man, seeking power, confronts the people who were already in power and undergoes an organic change” *(Ghashiram 55)*. Power makes Ghashiram callous. “He enforces the laws strictly and declares that the transgressor shall be punished severely. As a result, there is an enormous fall in the crime rate. Scared by his method of punishment, the Brahmins shudder at the mention of his name. He announces that nothing can be done without his notice” *(Mishra, Ghashiram 62)*. Here Tendulkar brings forth the fact that “the corruption that power brings about is projected through the sexual laxity of the Brahmin dominated society of Pune” *(Mishra, Ghashiram 67)*. The role of corruption and hypocrisy is equally present in *Encounter in Umbugland*.

In a democratic system, the ultimate power resides in citizens but here the role gets reversed. They depute their power to ministers and become helpless. Smita Mishra comments that “the very life of politics is falsehood and hypocrisy and that the political language is a completely dishonest one” *(Mishra, An Estimation 120)*. Not only the king but the ministers also become a symbol of corruption in pursuance of material gains. It is vividly presented in the play in the meetings of ministers. The way they behave and speak to each other reveals that they are absolutely unprincipled ones. As Vratyasom says, “Let us not open our mouths too wide about principles and
honesty. To observe these two virtues in politics is as inappropriate and stupid as celibacy after marriage. You and I are politicians and ministers; in blunt terms, … It means we are partners in a most profitable game of skullduggery” (Encounter in Umbugland 273).

Using the historical incident, Tendulkar digs at society for the creation of such people as Nana and Ghashiram. The playwright registers protest against the manners depicted by Brahmins. Ghashiram, a Brahmin, can go to any extent in breaking the barriers of morality. He becomes a servant in the house of a courtesan, Gulabi and barters his daughter to get power so that he can find out a good match for her. He says:

I’ve got the Kotwali and I’ve got Poona straightened out! All these hard, proud Brahmins are soft as cotton now. No one dares to look at Ghashiram straight in the eye! Now, once I find a fitting husband for my darling daughter—that piece of my heart named Lalita Gauri—and get her married, then everything will be the way I want it. I’ll make such a show of the wedding that no one’s tongue will dare utter one bad word about my daughter. (Ghashiram Kotwal 398).

On the other hand, Gauri is killed in the crude attempt of aborting her pregnancy by the orders of Nana; and Ghashiram becomes helpless like a tamed tiger in front of Nana. After learning about the death of his daughter, Ghashiram becomes furious and rushes to Nana, but the latter manages to satisfy the former.

In Encounter in Umbugland, Queen Vijaya plans to uplift the poor Kadambas by eradicating their poverty. This reminds one of “the twenty-point economic programme and the famous slogan ‘Garibi Hatao! (Eradicate poverty!)’ of Mrs Indira Gandhi. Vijaya puts her proposal for the upliftment of Kadambas before the cabinet. She patiently and tactically explains her plan to them. But they do not approve her proposal” (Babu 48). So, she decides to implement the plan on her own without the approval of the cabinet. The two big pen-bearers announce:

GRAVE EMERGENCY!
SERIOUS PREDICAMENT!
ENCOUNTER NOW BEGINS BETWEEN HER MAJESTY AND THE CABINET! (Encounter in Umbugland 327)
The queen has to take this harsh step in order to wash out corruption. She whole-heartedly wants to remove corruption and uplift the society, but this move is
not acceptable to her ministers. Vratyasom tells his associate ministers to get ready and fight for regaining their power.

We must get rid of this situation before it spreads. It wouldn’t be in our interests to let her stay on the throne after this. We must gather a mob! We must incite the people! We must loose upon her the tidal wave of an infuriated mob. That’s what’ll rock her! She’s still raw, she’s an inexperienced child. She is calling like a jackal; she hasn’t as yet seen the angry roaring tiger of the mob. Brave men tremble when they see this fourteenth wonder of the world rushing towards them, shouting till throats are hoarse, attacking with stones. *(Encounter in Umbugland 333-34)*

Anshul Chandra writes that the play “focuses on the power games that men engage in and the corruption, violence and sensuality in which they indulge in the process” (157). In the play, Tendulkar portrays realistic characters such as ministers who are involved in corrupt practices. N. S. Dharan points out “in Karkashirsha’s words Vratysom is involved in thirteen acts of official dishonesty” (80). Vratyasom announces his corrupt practice in the following words, “Let us not open our mouths too wide about principles and honesty” *(Encounter in Umbugland 273)*. The wielders of power perpetuate corruption and make all possible efforts to weaken the new forces emerging against them. As Vijay Mardhekar depicts:

Princess Vijaya’s initial awkwardness in her exalted position, her rehearsals of the speech she has to make before the council and the people at the time of the coronation—all this reminds Indian readers of the discomfort felt in the early period by Indira Gandhi whenever she had to speak in the Parliament. In fact, she was contemptuously dismissed by the opposition leaders as Gungi Gudiya (dumb doll). The ever fresh quality both of the play and the Indian political situation is such that this correspondence can always be updated (108).

Mobocracy is considered as one of the most efficient tools in democratic country like India. Mob is the tool in the hands of dissatisfied lot i.e. ministers or others who have share in power. There is confrontation between her majesty and her ministers in *Encounter in Umbugland*. As N. S. Dharan depicts:

Finding that she will not get the approval of her cabinet, queen Vijaya, unilaterally promulgates an order to implement her plan for the rehabilitation of the Kadambas. This act of hers infuriates the ministers who decide to incite the mob against the Queen. By means of the ministers’ conspiracy against Queen Vijaya, Tendulkar offers an insight into the dirty games that politicians play to capture power. (83)
Karkashirsha’s strangeness to the common people of his constituency shows the ministers’ indifference to the masses who vote them to power. The masses always support them through thick and thin and the ministers use them for their own ends. As Vratyasom says, “We must gather a mob! We must incite the people! We must loose upon her the tidal wave of an infuriated mob. That’s what’ll rock her…. We’ll make her submit!” (Encounter in Umbland 333-34)

The ministers use the masses for their profits and gains. The same type of manoeuvre is present in Ghashiram Kotwal. As N.S. Dharan writes, “It demonstrates how a historical event cast in folk theatre could be used to depict the evils perpetrated by a lecherous ruler who, not only shuts his eyes to but also indirectly aggravates the material and moral decadence that set in the society around him, and who creates an avenging monster just to cover up his amorous life” (101). When anyone seems unwanted, politicians use mob to remove him. As in the case in Ghashiram Kotwal, Nana allows mob to behead Ghashiram. “Use a thorn to take out a thorn. That’s great. The disease has been stopped. Anyway, he was of no use any more” (Ghashiram Kotwal 413). Once after getting the order, the mob recklessly beats him to death as is shown in the following lines:

They beat him.
They shaved his head.
They sindur-daubed his head.
They rode him around on a camel.
They tied him to the leg of an elephant.
The city of Poona watched it all. (Ghashiram Kotwal 414)

A beaten, disfigured and bloodied Ghashiram challenges the irate mob. “Hit me. Beat me. Beat me some more. Hit me!… I dare you. Hit me. Look—one of my hands is tied. And you’re scared! Come on, beat me. Crush me …” (Ghashiram Kotwal 415). When the angry and infuriated mob shouts at Ghashiram, he replies, “Ghashiram Savaldas! Ghashiram Savaldas! I danced on your chests but I wasted the life of my little daughter. I should be punished for the death of my daughter. Beat me…. Come on, come on …. Oh, that’s good. Very good” (Ghashiram Kotwal 415).

Nana Phadnavis arrives on the scene after the death of Ghashiram Kotwal. The crowd cheers him. He calms the crowd and announces, “The demon Ghasya 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 … We have commanded that there be festivities for three days to mark this happy occasion” (Ghashiram Kotwal 415-16). In Encounter in Umbugland the ministers incite the mob because the queen does not agree with the conditions of the ministers. The Queen Vijaya wants to be independent but the cabinet ministers engineer a rebellion against her. But she outwits them to their shock and surprise by “facing the angry mob boldly and promising them to punish the guilty ministers. The people now turn against the ministers. So, they are finally forced to seek her protection from the angry mob and escape wearing the clothes of woman” (Babu 13). Prannarayan comments on the qualities of ministers:

I see you upside, down, a formless, characterless, lifeless, existenceless gathering. The blind, deaf and dumb spectators of the whole encounter—who allow men to become politicians, politicians to become statesmen, statesmen to become cunning, and cunning men to become robots, mechanical men. You are a force that claps its hands, makes strong noises with its mouth, an amazing untiring force. (Encounter in Umbugland 356)

Ghashiram is reckless and becomes cruel to himself. He seems to have suicidal tendencies. He is in fight for survival and his own existence in a country like India. Mobocracy is the best possible tool of the politicians. People in India are poor and shelterless. They suffer from illiteracy, ill health and other forms of human deprivation. The rise in corruption in all spheres of life is palpably visible. It is generally argued that corruption is also one reason behind mobocracy. The corrupt political situation provoked an impulse in the heart of the playwright to write the role of mobocracy in his plays. All these things are favourable to the emergence of mob and their relevance in society. The powerless often join hands in order to gain or gather power.

Monarchy is a form of the government in which sovereignty is inherent in a single individual. This type of government was prevalent in ancient times. The traditions and hierarchies lead to the establishment of monarchy. Monarchies are of many types. The most flourishing monarchy is the hereditary monarchy in which the office is passed through inheritance within a family. As Shailaja B. Wadikar writes
that “All the intriguing efforts of the ministers to occupy the throne are proved in vain for the lack of unity. At last, they unanimously decide to make Vijaya the queen so that they may rule the country in her name” (Vijay 48). This type of game is prevalent in democratic India. Mostly monarchical elements or hereditary list of political representatives are found in abundance and supported by the citizens of India. “When the King of Umbugland suddenly dies, the five cabinet ministers fail to agree on who is to occupy the throne. So they make Vijaya, the Princess, occupy the throne and want to make a puppet of her” (Babu 12). King Vichitravirya tells his ministers about the reverence in the hearts of public for him. “We have become so much one with Umbugland in these past sixty years, and our people of Umbugland have so identified themselves with us, that the thought of one without the other is impossible ... We are not our own property, we are the nation’s” (Encounter in Umbugland 277).

The playwright registers protest against monarchy in his plays. On the other hand, this shows the pyramidal culture of democracy as well where the lower rungs look forward to the higher for gain of power or favour. This tendency increases corruption as well. It saves the lordship and monarchical culture of Indian democracy. Sycophants are shown as cultured good human beings and good citizens. This makes the situation of the poor and the powerless worst than anything else. After the death of king Vichitravirya the question arises who will be the next ruler. “After Vichitravirya, Who?” (Encounter in Umbugland 284) The playwright mocks at the Indian democratic position which is no less than monarchy. He mocks at democracy when the ruler or monarch of the country on whom lies the crown is not mature enough. Queen Vijaya seems more interested in her own games than concerned about the welfare of the state. Role-model worship is so high that it leads to the eventual change of system from democracy to monarchy. This is the tradition which is not easy to dilute. Tendulkar does not seem to have any solution for it but he protests against it whole heartedly. The role of Peshwa and Nana both act as monarchs and enjoy unlimited power. This is upheld in the Indian democracy where power is passed on hereditarily to other generations of the public representatives.
It is the power politics which interprets the structure of relations whether it is of individual to society or man to woman. The plays of Tendulkar are a mirror of the society that reflects the individual’s inner world and outer world. While projecting the social reality, he unveils two major tendencies of the Indian society: male dominance and feminine frailty. They do not have equal status with men. They are alienated and devoid of individual dignity. Their exploitation is done in numerous ways. In Indian society women enjoy a graceful position for centuries; even various goddesses are worshiped in Indian culture till today. The change in various conditions led to the oppression of women either by their female/male counterparts or by the society at large. The Indian women whether educated or uneducated have to bear exploitation, dominance, violence and sexual exploitation in power politics. Tendulkar satirizes society which shields the powerful, immoral and corrupt and punishes the helpless and the innocent.

Power hungry and power obsessed people shamelessly disregard the existence of women as human beings. The roles allotted to women in the patriarchal set up are purely domestic and patriarchal, and they are treated as –daughter, wife and mother. Right from the birth the girl child is subjected to the negative reinforcement of her vulnerability to rape and assault. Contradictions or exceptions are prevalent in society. A woman who has economic power has equal status in the society. Tendulkar presents the sexual exploitation of women in the game of power politics. This shows that women are subservient to their husbands irrespective of class, caste or creed. They are bold enough only behind the curtain. “The curtain split themselves to show parallel scenes –one showing the drooling brahmins in Gulabi’s dancing hall, and the other showing Brahmin wives dancing with Maratha men” (Dharan 102). Tendulkar shocks us with realistic portrayal of Maratha and Brahman men who symbolizes dominating ones as sensual or adulterers as they are busy with other women and their wives are equally indulged in sexual activities with other men in Ghashiram Kotwal.

The contrast is given by the playwright between a dominating lady who suppresses even the powerful males like ministers and bureaucrats and subservient women. In the play Encounter in Umbugland, Vijaya refuses to bow down and denied to be the pawn of ministers. The same types of mean tactics are played against her by
the males but she is already more powerful than them, that is why she is able to withstand all the intrigues and deceptions:

   She reverses the situation on her advisers and becomes successful in her plan of Kadamba tribe’s rehabilitation.

   The incident of the encounter in the play is reminiscent of the one in Indira Gandhi’s regime in 1971 and the characters resemble those who have been the ministers in Indira Gandhi’s cabinet. In the royalist regime of Umbugland, one can easily find the revolt resembling the one by the faction of the Indian National Congress called the Syndicate group represented by such ministers as Kamraj Nadar, S.K. Patil, Morarji Desai, Brahmanand Reddi, Y.B. Chavan, Nijalingappa, etc., to propose the candidature of Nilam Sanjeev Reddi for the post of the President of India in the teeth of their P.M.’s opposition. (Wadikar, Vijay 48-49)

   These power games are depicted in the plays of Tendulkar. He tries to present the case of independent women as well. He shows how independent women face great physical exhaustion and mental tension. Women are struggling for equality. Shailaja writes that resources help in overcoming inequality and women are gradually attaining power:

   In the political crisis, Vijaya succeeds against her rivals as she takes the situation under her control, brings the crisis to an end, and imposes her own will on her subjects instead of allowing herself to be dictated by others. She is rational, guided by reason and has the capacity to turn the tables on her rivals. So, ultimately, in the royalist regime of Umbugland, the individual succeeds against the group. (Vijay 50)

   Tendulkar hits hard where it hurts most. He exposes the power machinations of the politicians in an attempt to grab power. ‘Everything is possible in politics’ is a refrain of politicians which they sing without any kind of shame or reservation. Theirs is a valueless world which Tendulkar ridicules by using his satirical abilities. Rulers always keep loyalists close at hand in an attempt to prevent the enemies from playing prank against or turning the tables against them. In Ghashiram Kotwal, though Nana enjoys unlimited powers he wants to keep such a subordinate who cannot mix with his opponents. He finds in the person of Ghashiram a suitable candidate who can work for Nana towards his whims and fantasies. Nana chooses Ghashiram to perpetuate his narrow ends because the latter, as an outsider and, thus, is unlikely to join hands with the opponents. As Neela Bhalla rightly observes:
The older injustices and hierarchies in Ghashiram Kotwal are class discrimination and subjugation of the weaker gender. Power is linked with decadence and sexuality. And though the ruling Brahmin community is identified with Nana, Ghashiram, also a Brahmin, is excluded and excursed from this coterie because he is an outsider. The Punekar or the Poona Brahmins were the ruling clique. Ghashiram never succeeded in becoming a part of them. It must be understood that the Poona Brahmins are not defined by geographical limits, as in the very beginning, we learn that they come from all parts of India, from Shringeri, Tanjore, Rameshwar, Kumbhakonam and Benaras. The mental humiliation and physical torture that they inflict on Ghashiram festers in him a desire for revenge. He becomes the Kotwal but still remains an outsider. (*Ghashiram Kotwal: Essays 7*)

There are always various people who are in search of opportunities to attain power by hook or crook. They are like serpents beneath the rose. They wield so much power and prestige that their illegal affairs and unbecoming activities become negligent in the eyes of public. Such a powerful man never wants to see his colleagues or counterparts rise in their lives because he fears that they will create obstacles in the way of his upward journey. This view is faithfully exemplified through the character of Nana who is a representative of modern politicians.

The pitiable plight of Ghashiram Kotwal shows that political ambition without having a solid ground of real power is like a flower without fragrance or a ship without radar. The borrowed power has a very little existence in the world of power, pelf and politics. Ghashiram’s tragedy also reminds us that a man should not hurry in settling old scores with his opponents through a temporary and borrowed power. Ghashiram, being impulsive like others, tries to jump the ditch of fire ignited by Nana Phadnavis. So, “In the manipulation of power he seems to be a novice. He is unable to understand the manipulation and machination of Nana Phadnavis who seems to be quite versed in this art” (Siddiqui 81).

Tendulkar also holds to ridicule the public which feeds on such irrelevant questions as are given publicity by the Press. When Vichitravirya dies, the Press sensationalises his death and the resultant void in the country. The public forgets its miseries and laps up the sensational reports like a hungry dog. The above quoted facts reveal that all the manipulations are the cause of concern in politics. After the death of King Vichitravirya, the public is impatiently waiting who the next king will be. “The King is dead, the land’s undying .... After Vichitravirya, Who?” (*Encounter in
For Indians, such a question has deeper resonances. “After Nehru, Who?”—was an issue widely debated in India in the 1960s. The power struggle that ensues after the death of king replicates the tug-of-war, not after Nehru’s, but Shastriji’s death. The name of princess Vijaya as the compromise candidate refers to the choice of the bosses in the Congress Party for the name of Indira Gandhi as the compromise candidate. Similarly, the ministers in *Encounter in Umbugland*, choose the king’s daughter so that “they can rule by proxy. They want someone who would be no more than their rubber–stamp” (Mardhekar 107).

Like every novice, Queen Vijaya also faces problems. She appears a youthful girl who gets lessons through Prannarayan. She gets power in her hands and exercises her authority over her ministers and subordinates. This leads to the friction between queen and her ministers. Though at last ministers have to eat a humble pie yet there is always insecurity in the minds of Queen Vijaya as well. Hypocrisy and corruption are the main elements which enable insecurity or political instability. She learns the diplomatic ways – having one thing on the tip of the tongue and its opposite in the heart, which is a reminiscent of the villainy of Macbeth in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. Politics is well commented by Prannarayan “A man to the touch, but a woman in appearance …. Like a bat hanging from a branch, I get an upside-down but complete view of the world. And the funny thing is, that from this upside-down position, one sees the truth of the world the right way up! But let it go” (*Encounter in Umbugland* 317).

In *Ghashiram Kotwal*, Ghashiram is unable to see through the designs of Nana. He feels that he has achieved his ambition whereas Nana hunts two aims with an arrow: one sexual and the other political. Nana orders Ghashiram:

Go, Ghasya, old bastard. 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’ll make the city of Poona dance. Ghasya, child, you’re a foreigner. I’ve put you on Poona’s back. Why? As a counter check to all those conspirators. You’ll not be able to join them; they’ll never trust you even if you do. Because you’re a stranger, you’re an outsider. We just raised a dog at our door to the Kotwali! We are your sole support. Oh, you’re a bastard, Ghasya … our misdeeds will be credited to your account. We do it; our Kotwal pays for it. The opportunity comes in the shape of Ghashiram. And that luscious peach is
at hand to be devoured by Nana. Excellent! Yes Ghasya, be Kotwal. This Nana blesses you. (Ghashiram Kotwal 384-85)

It reveals that there is insecurity in the game of politics which is inherent and it is a universally accepted fact. Tendulkar digs at this aspect of politics in *Ghashiram Kotwal* and *Encounter in Umbugland*. Ghashiram in *Ghashiram Kotwal*, wields power like a tyrant. “Scared by his method of Punishment, the Brahmins shudder at the mention of his name … nothing can be done without his notice” (Mishra, *Ghashiram* 62). These things lead to unrest among the public and ultimately shake his throne. In *Encounter in Umbugland*, the ministers are busy in creating instability and they are busy in challenging the throne. As Vratyasom says:

It wouldn’t be in our interest to let her stay on the throne after this. We must gather a mob! We must incite the people! We must loose upon her the tidal wave of an infuriated mob. That’s what’ll rock her! She’s still raw, she’s an inexperienced child. She’s calling like a jackal; she has not yet seen the angry roaring tiger of the mob. Brave men tremble when they see this fourteenth wonder of the world rushing towards them, shouting till throats are hoarse, attacking with stones. (*Encounter in Umbugland* 333-34)

The root cause of the political instability lies in the way the ministers crave for power. All this alienates certain institutions and this is detrimental to the socio-political fabric. They use these institutions for selfish ends.

In *Ghashiram Kotwal*, there is a parallel between negative and positive forces. The creation or destruction of various forces by political bosses creates insecurity in the field of politics. The greed or craziness for power seems to be in the blood of all ministers. That’s why in *Encounter in Umbugland*, all ministers wish to rule the country, though there is no unity among them. All the ministers are corrupt as Vratyasom justifies, “Let us not open our mouth too wide about principles and honesty. To observe these two virtues in politics is as inappropriate and stupid as celibacy after marriage” (*Encounter in Umbugland* 273). There is ruckus everywhere and political instability is well presented through the newspapers. As the Pen-Bearers write:

SERIOUS CRISIS! SERIOUS CRISIS!

*Turn by Turn*

No decision.
The scales are equal.
Whom to give the power to?
Each one’s a rascal. (*Encounter in Umbugland* 291)

Atlast, the crisis is resolved and consensus is reached at princess Vijaya to occupy the throne by the ministers:

VRATYASOM. Pistakeshi! Found at last!
VIJAYA. Who?
VRATYASOM. Found our compromise!
VIJAYA [confused]. W-what?
VRATYASOM. Meet our new leader! [*Vijaya Shrinks.*] His Majesty’s heir! This one in front, five of us behind! She’ll be the rule, we’ll be the rulers! (*Encounter in Umbugland* 293)

The Queen Vijaya in the face of stiff opposition of ministers orders some changes according to her convenience like cutting of legs of the throne. It leads to conflict between the ministers and the queen. In the words of Pistakeshi, the royal decrees they suggest to her have recently tended to lie “untouched by the seal for months on end—owing to the ‘Pressure of work.’ If we give her a reminder, we are told that contact with the people is more important than royal decrees” (*Encounter in Umbugland* 312). The Pen Bearers who represent journalists give reports of the encounter “All eyes centre upon the Encounter! All eyes centre upon the Encounter!” (*Encounter in Umbugland* 327)

Through the conspiracy hatched by the ministers against the Queen, the playwright depicts political instability of the country. Vratyasom shouts, “Death to the Queen! Death to the Queen! Forward, all of you! Victory to the People! Victory to the Martyrs!” (*Encounter in Umbugland* 349) The Queen also plays her intrigues. She uses her power to oppress the ministers. The queen says:

‘We shall institute a public inquiry into the private property of our Ministers, who have today gone against the interests of the people’ … We shouted, ‘Down with the Cabinet’ … We shouted, ‘Down with the Plan—and the Ministers who made it’!… While the crowd were shouting your names, we promised to hand you over to them, and to meet them from time to time thereafter. And then we left to the sound of cheering. (*Encounter in Umbugland* 353-54)
It is envy, lust revenge and craze for power among the ministers that leads to political instability. Since the days of king Vichitravirya, the ministers neglected the progress of tribal people. It is the same caste-based politics which affects the Indian political Theatre. In 1972, the popular slogan “Garibi Hatao” (Remove Poverty) enables Mrs Indira Gandhi to come to power. The playwright tries his best to awake us and makes us aware.

In *Ghashiram Kotwal*, the playwright depicts the caste conflicts of the Indian society. The rich people belonging to a particular caste exploit their caste connections to usurp power. In the contemporary age, the poor are becoming poorer and the rich are becoming richer. The rich succeed in their efforts of becoming richer by using illegal means. The rise in corruption in all spheres of life is palpably visible. The really corrupt always remain safe though they are fully involved in corruption and abuse of power. It is generally argued that corruption prevails in every country and is a serious problem now. The playwright depicts a sociological background, the rigidity of caste system leading to excesses committed by the upper castes on the lower ones, their discreet humiliation and death. Girish Karnad comments:

The Peshwa and the Brahmin-Maratha conflict are the last two issues that are taken up here in this essay. Though, there is only one direct reference to the Peshwa towards the end of the play when Nana is summoned peremptorily by an angry Peshwa, after the death of the Brahmins in prison, there are many references indirectly to the Peshwa and the Peshwai. The grandeur and the pomp of the Peshwai is referred to repeatedly. In the very beginning the Brahmin culture of the Peshwai is mentioned, albeit satirically. (qtd. in Bhalla, *Ghashiram Kotwal*: Text 139)

There are certain types of frictions and conflicts between various castes. These castes play a major role in the Indian political theatre.

This power struggle was an on going process but is hardly mentioned in the play, except in the end with the mention of Sardar Phakade who was a Maratha leader and a great enemy of Nana Phadnavis. The only other time that the Marathas are mentioned is as lovers to the Brahmin wives. This quite clearly has a subversive intent to contrast the manly Maratha lovers with the Brahmin husbands who can throw up their turbans in vicarious excitement at the sight of the provocative movements of the courtesan but leave their wives dissatisfied, seeking fulfilment elsewhere. (Bhalla, *Ghashiram Kotwal*: Text 140)
Different castes have different motives and different cultures which become one of the reasons for their conflicts. They strive for superiority and in the mad race make others inferior. Mishra remarks that the play is “an attack on the moral downfall of the ruling class of Maharashtra who considered themselves custodians of public morality. It comments acerbically on political institutions of present day India where scores of Ghashirams are made and marred each time the political die is cast anew” (Ghashiram 68).

Ghashiram becomes vindictive because he is abused and humiliated by the Brahmins of Poona when he attends the function and goes to get Dakshina. He is accused of theft also. He warns them angrily when he is thrown out of the city. The anger of Ghashiram deeply impacts his psyche. He gets the prime motive of taking revenge on the Poonites. This insult brings a drastic change in him as he has super ego and this incident of humiliation bolts him out and shakes him to the roots. Nana Phadnavis as well as Ghashiram Kotwal both are corrupt in one way or the other. Both belong to the Brahmin community, the difference lies in the belongingness to region and access to power. The former enjoys vast powers while the latter is struggling to attain it. “One is on the screen, the other is behind the screen. One is outwardly fatal for the society, the other is inwardly fatal for the society; one is ambitious, the other is over ambitious” (Siddiqui 78).

In *Encounter in Umbugland*, the upper caste politicians are not in favour of tribals. Queen Vijaya uses the representatives of different castes and sections of society according to her convenience to foil revolt against her. The different strata of society are used by the politicians for their own welfare. The Indian constitution provides reservations to the backward and downtrodden. The playwright Vijay Tendulkar protests against the casteism and regionalism through his plays. He is unable to provide any solution to the public. He lets the audience free to analyse the effects of narrow mindedness about casteism and regionalism and to come out with viable solution.

Tendulkar portrays sexual aberration in *Ghashiram Kotwal* and *Encounter in Umbugland*. In *Ghashiram Kotwal*, the Brahman curtain is formed into a group setting in Gulabi’s hall in Bavannakhani. It is presented satirically as the immoral
Brahmans are shown as in sacrilegious manner. The Sutradhar comments on their immorality:

Night comes.
Poona Brahmans go
to Bavannakhani.
They go
to Bavannakhani.
They go to the cemetery.
They go to the Kirtan.
They to the temple—as they have done every day.
The Brahmans go to Bavannakhani. (*Ghashiram Kotwal* 366-67)

The Brahmans find pleasure in the arms of the courtesans. Not to be left behind, their wives too seek sexual pleasure in the arms of Maratha lovers when their husbands are away. This seems to be the age of promiscuity of Poona Brahmans and Maratha landowners. As Santosh Chakrabarti writes:

In the portrayal of the cult figure, Nana, Tendulkar resorts to the dramatic device of subversion, but in the case of Ghashiram, he adopts dramatic irony for good effect. He subverts the cult image of Nana by exploring the bestiality of his sex hunger. He speaks of the physical charms of Lalita Gauri (in the presence of Ghashiram, her father) as if she were an object of bestial satiation. (16)

Infatuated with Gauri, Nana expresses his erotic desire for her. “How beautifully formed! What a lovely figure! Did you see? Erect! Young! Tender! Ah! Ho ho! We’ve seen so many, handled so many, but none like that one.” (*Ghashiram Kotwal* 379).

The incident of Gulabi’s dances, Nana’s lustful pursuit of Gauri, the secret meetings of the Brahmin’s wives with Maratha lovers underlie “a strain of eroticism present in the play” (Wadikar, *Ghashiram* 60). Revealing the relationship between sex and power, Tendulkar explores the sexual exploitation of women in power politics in the play *Ghashiram Kotwal*. Nana cannot live without swapping of women. He keeps “such an endless lust for women that he always needs a beautiful girl and a new bride for the gratification of his sexual urges” (Mishra, *Ghashiram* 65). After becoming Kotwal, Ghashiram passes strict edicts to rein in the immoral Poona Brahmans. The effect is depicted on the public in the following lines, “Prostitutes’ Lane was desolate. The chasing of women was halted. Pimps turned into beggars. Counterfeit coins were
worthless” (*Ghashiram Kotwal* 388). The playwright presents socio-political reality through his plays. Tendulkar states that his creative writing—including the plays and films he has written, have mostly dealt or tried to deal with his contemporary social reality. “As a social being I am against all exploitation and I passionately feel that all exploitation must end” (Bandyopadhyay xliii). Lustful politicians are mocked in *Ghashiram Kotwal* in the form of Nana. Tendulkar registers protest against the sexual exploitation of women in *Ghashiram Kotwal*. There are endless examples in contemporary times against whom the playwright protests.

*Ghashiram Kotwal* digs at power politics that leads to social anarchy. Through the story of Ghashiram, Tendulkar illustrates the rise and growth in public life of the demons that are created by political leaders to realize their selfish ends. The play depicts the role of chance in power politics which plays a decisive role in the growth and development of a person. The callous treatment meted out to Ghashiram by the Brahmins of Poona transforms the novice into a revengeful, sadistic person. His appointment as Kotwal worsens the situation. The power game makes him lose his innocent daughter and himself at the altar of death. “Gauri becomes a scapegoat. Her ignominious death at the hands of a midwife and the terrible death of Ghashiram at the hands of the Brahmins evoke frustration in the audience minds” (Wadikar, *Vijay* 84). Wadikar observes that the play explores “the sexual, political, social and economic exploitation of women. The father Ghashiram exploits his own innocent daughter for the fulfillment of his personal ambition” (*Vijay* 84).

In the criminalization of politics, the moves of politicians are beyond the understanding of common man. *Encounter in Umbagland* reflects “the political encounter of the Syndicate group of the Indian National congress with Indira Gandhi in 1971. It also illustrates the rules of the game of politics, which are difficult for simple, straight forward people to accept” (Wadikar, *Vijay* 85) them. Thus the game helps the politicians to gather strength for their own benefits. The young men and women expresses their frustration and anger by rejecting the conventional or traditional values and norms. The cruelty of politicians is a kind of perverted humanity that inflicts miseries on others. “They offer the world a set of social attitudes that are anti-establishment, anti-cultural and even anti-humanitarian in the
existential sense as opposed to the established, cultural and humanitarian values. However, the world fails to recognize their struggle for existence, their bravery, and their sense of humanity” (Wadikar, Vijay 90).

The brutal murder of Ghashiram at the behest of Nana is the quality of all politics and politicians. Murder of anyone for them is like spitting. Both the characters are symbolic in their own respects. Ghashiram is a symbol of the powerless who pursues their goal unquestioningly. Nana is the symbol of the powerful who uses helpless people and destroys them whenever they perceive a threat from them. The humiliated, helpless and marginalized people are hardly left with any choice. They find themselves in a fix and under the garb of circumstances they embrace the cult of criminalization. The politicians need such type of people to perpetuate their narrow ends.

Both the plays focus on the corruption, cruelty and inhuman strategies “embedded in the power games where women and religion are also exploited” (Reddy 80). This is a true statement because both the things play important role in crime. As fanaticism caters to the criminals, Nana is a typical politician of the present day who can exploit not only people and politics but also religion for his political stability. The playwright finds in him an incarnation of evil and cruelty. The society in general is also morally degenerated like the Brahmans of Poona and their wives. As S.G. Bhanegaonkar writes:

The unscrupulous combination of criminal politicians, corrupt bureaucrats and shameless prostitutes can destroy all possibilities of social order and harmony … criminalization of politics is one of the hottest topics of debates and discussions today, but the nexus between politicians and criminals is quite ancient. Vijay Tendulkar’s Ghashiram Kotwal throws some significant light on this deadly relationship between politicians, policemen, and prostitutes who are all engaged in launching a terrible war against peace, morality and justice …. The traditional image of politicians all over the world is that of cunning, artful, corrupt money minded devil and a lusty womanizer. (99)

Tendulkar fulminates against the corruption in political and social spheres. The foregoing analysis of Ghashiram Kotwal and Encounter in Umbugland clearly reveals Tendulkar’s values as a human being and as a playwright. His plays are, in fact, the documents which expose all that is corroding Indian nation as a whole.
Politicians have become the most reviled people and through these plays, Tendulkar registers, his strong protest against corruption and criminalization of the Indian political system.
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