

# Portrayal of Women in Vijay Tendulkar's Kamla

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**Abstract**—Vijay Tendulkar's 'Kamla' is realistic play in which the condition of woman in traditional Indian society is portrayed in a peculiar ways. Kamla, a victim of flesh business and Sarita, wife of Jaisingh Jadhav, the both female characters feels that they are slaves in their own way. One character is illiterate while the other one is well educated, but both of them gets exploited in the play and cannot rebel against the patriarchal society. The play glimpses over the harsh reality of women in Indian society. The role of women are devalued or underestimated in all walks of life in the male-controlled society. The playwright focuses on the projection of female characters. The play can be seen from feminist's perspective.

**Keywords**— Female, Exploitation, Patriarchy, Gender, Subordinate, Slaves

## I. INTRODUCTION

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the most famous playwright in India. He has been highly appreciated as a dramatist over five decades in particularly in Maharashtra. The plays of Vijay Tendulkar translated into several languages. His works like, Kanyadan, Sakham Binder, Ghashiram Kotwal, are milestones in the history of play. Tendulkar's plays were more matured than his contemporary authors and were way ahead of its time. Hence, it became some controversial too particularly for that traditional society. Even his next play 'Kamla' is not so different than his other works.

Kamla is written in 1981 and almost decade after his play Sakham Binder. Kamla the play is a realistic drama. By this play Tendulkar shows the irony of young generation who works humanity but for their purpose rather than for people. It also portrays the patrician society who values the gender more than the quality of person and treats woman as a slaves and which is taken granted by this society. Tendulkar also exposes, the career centric Jaisingh Jadhav, one of main the main characters in play, which can relate to most of men of even modern society as well. [1]

Kamala by Vijay Tendulkar is a naturalistic play. It focuses on the changed role of women in society. It was inspired by a real life incident—the Indian Express exposure by Ashwin Sarin, who actually bought a girl from a rural flesh market and presented her at a press conference. But using this incident as a launching pad, Tendulkar raises certain cardinal questions regarding the value system of a modern success oriented generation who is ready to sacrifice human values in the name of humanity itself. The playwright exposes the innate self-deception of this standpoint. It is the story of an unfortunate woman sold away in the flesh market and a so-called happy housewife married to a daring journalist, both having a revelation of finding themselves on the common platform of sexual slavery in this male dominated world. Kamla is true in its nature. The play is II act play. The characters of this play portray the traditional but which can be compared with modern

Indian personalities. Jaisingh Jadhav, a career orientated man, who doesn't think anything else except his profession, Sarita Jadhav, wife of Jaisingh Jadhav, who gets treated as a slave. Kamla who is victim of flesh market, Jaisingh brought her in 250RS. Kamlabai, a maid, loyal towards family. And last character is Kakasaheb 'Uncle of Sarita' works for newspaper and he is very traditional in his thoughts. [1]

Ashwin Sarin, a journalist, investigated into flesh trade in Madhya Pradesh and purchased a woman 'Kamala' for Rs. 2,300 to establish the trafficking of women, in Shivpuri village. The Journalist then wrote a series of articles exposing the prostitution trade and involvement of political big wigs and police in it on 17th, 20th & 30th April 1981 and 2nd May 1981. Mr. Vijay Tendulkar scripted a play by name 'Kamala' based totally on the Indian Express exposure and staged the play for 150 times in 32 cities and in 7 languages. Journalist Ashwin Sarin and Indian Express newspaper complained that Vijay Tendulkar infringed their copyright. The Bombay High Court held that there could not be any copyright in an event that has actually taken place.

The play expresses Tendulkar's grasp of the harsh realities in our social fabric. In the words of Tendulkar, "Kamala for me is not just a character, she is a living person, and she just doesn't remain on my papers". The play exposes a flesh trade scoop and its aftermath. It deals with the issue of buying and selling of tribal women. The theme of Kamala a two-act play, is flesh trade, and how well-known young journalists like Jaisingh Jadhav seek to capitalize on it in order to further succeed in their careers without caring, in the least, for the victims of this immoral trade in a democratic society like India. The play offers Tendulkar enough scope to scoff at the kind of trendy journalism practiced by Jadhav, and also to strike a contrast between the journalism in the Vernacular and that in English [2]. Tendulkar uses the play also to dwell on the characteristic suffering of the Indian middle class woman made to suffer by selfish, malicious and hypocritical male chauvinists. The man-woman relationship is also deftly touched upon in the complex relationship between Jadhav and his wife, Sarita. Kamala is a female-centered play in the sense that it is built on the metamorphosis of Sarita emerging from being a docile wife to an assertive, mature and strong woman in the end [3].

## II. PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE CHARACTERS

This article concern the exploitation of women is well as women's victimization by male-dominated society. Sarita's speech in the play, Kamala focuses on the evolutionary process of Tendulkar's women. The women characters in Tendulkar's dramas suffer a lot as the victims of the hegemonic power structure. The female body is the object of male sexual fantasy and desire, is theatrically presented by Tendulkar. All women characters in his plays are the marginalized objects in

interlocking system of sexual politics and power politics. [4] Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak's study of the unhappy lot of subaltern people in *Can Subaltern Speak?* has great similarity with Vijay Tendulkar's female characters. Michel Foucault views that women in our society fall into an extremely complex system of relations and this system is based on 'highly intricate mosaic' (power/knowledge) of man-woman relationship [5].

#### A. Kamala

In the play 'Kamla', Tendulkar portrayed the woman in a quite realistic way. The character of Kamla, the victim of flesh business, who sold to Jaisingh Jadhav is shown as a practical and she has accepted the truth of life and trying to adjust her life. She is fond of her master although she knew he is not going to marry her and unaware of the reality of that he is just going to use her for his own professional profit. She also see Sarita, wife of Jaisingh as an another slave whom her master bought and trying to live with her.

*Kamla: can I ask you something? You won't be angry?*

*Sarita: no. Go on*

*Kamla: How much did he buy you for?*

*[Sarita is confused at first]*

*Sarita: what?*

*Kamla: I said how much did he buy you for?*

*Sarita: [recovering]. Me? Look here, Kamala. [Changes her mind, and sits down beside her] For seven hundred.*

*Kamla: My god! Seven hundred?*

*Sarita: why? Was it too little?*

*Kamala: [pauses]. it was an expensive bargain, memsahib. If you pay seven hundred, and there are no children ...*

*[Sarita assumes a sad expression]*

Then he has to pay for clothes, and for food. He must be very unhappy really . [Kamla, 34]

Here the simple side of the Kamala can be seen .The relationship between Jaisingh and Sarita is of master and slave and from Kamal's view if women can't give child to their master then they are worthless. Kamla has influence of patriarchal thinking on her personality. Through the play until her exist the character of Kamla is shown as a simple, Patriarchal thinking women who is fond of her master while unaware of his intention.

#### B. Sarita

In play 'Kamla' Vijay Tendulkar did fabulous job to show the role of women in patriarchal society through the character of Sarita. Sarita is wife of a successful journalist Jaisingh Jadhav. She is a well-educated lady but it doesn't any difference to Jaisingh who treats her as inferior and does not give her any chance to take a decision on any subject or matter.

*Jaisingh: [handling the bundle to kamala, says to Sarita] its I who takes Decisions in this house, and no one else. Do you understand? Chalo Kamala. [to Sarita] I will be back tonight – if there are any Phone calls, say I've gone straight to the office, and write them down. [Kamla 42]*

From that scene it proves that Jaisingh doesn't value the opinion Sarita. It is also questionable that whether he gives Sarita as status of his wife. For Jaisingh Sarita is only needed for satisfying his physical, mental, social needs, and for household works. He doesn't treat her as human being rather he treat her as his personal slave. Jaisingh exploits her in every way. But due to Sarita is married to Jaisingh in patriarchal society she has to bear that torture of Jaisingh because in patriarchal society the females are considered as inferior to males and they have to listen to their husband, or father [6,7].

The portrayal of the patriarchal society in the play is very much common in particularly in Indian cultural. The wife or women have to listen to male, even the male is considered as a characterless, or without any great achievements. It's the sad reality which has been depicted through the play and through the character of Sarita Tendulkar trying to show the feminist perspective in Indian society.

*Kamla: Can I ask you something? You won't be angry?*

*Sarita: No. go on*

*Kamla: how much did he buy you for? [Kamla, 34]*

At this moment Sarita starts to realize that her life and Kamla's life is not so different. she has been bought by Jaisingh and Sarita herself is sold by Her father gave her to Jaisingh with giving lots of dowry.

From above conversation with Kamla she understands that she is living like a slave. Tendulkar in realistic way make audience to realize that even a married woman can exploited like a victim of flesh business. When this torched gets unbearable then rebel will happen. Her frustration and pain about this slavery can be seen in following conversion.

*Sarita: listen to the story of how he bought the slave Kamala and made use of her. The other slave he got free- not just free – the slave's father shelled out the money – a big money. Ask him what he did with it. [ Kamla 46]*

In this conversation Sarita is in deep pain, but now she wanted to become free this slavery and had a great determination in her eyes. Sarita is well educated, married to a successful person, but ultimately gets treated as a slave because she is a woman in patriarchal society. Through the Play the Character of Sarita shows the harsh place of Indian women in Indian patriarchal society. Women are always considered to be an inferior, unintelligent and rather subordinate to the males. Even after marriage the husband treats the women as object which is there to satisfy him. Thorough the play Tendulkar shows the Mirror of reality to Patriarchal society and as well to the audience who is mostly influenced by Patriarchal Society [8, 9].

### III. CONCLUSION

In the concluding lines, it can be said that women's slavery, exploitation in patriarchal society. The Exploitation of women can be described to the 21st century's women too. in the play 'Kamla' through the characters of Kamala and Sarita playwright Tendulkar shows harsh reality of exploitation and slavery of women in traditional Indian patriarchal society which can relate to the modern Indian society as well.

Finally, whether women like Kamala who was bought by Jaisingh, a journalist, from a bazaar in Bihar at merely two

hundred and fifty rupees still exists or not is debatable but what exists, as a poignant reality is that till today women in India are exploited, oppressed and dominated by men in varied forms. Be it physical, mental or psychological violence, the psyche of Indian male largely, yet considers women as slaves whose chief duty is to serve him and lead a life as per his whims and fancies.

At last the patriarchal thoughts are very harmful for society and, it responsibility of people of that society to have gender equality in every aspect of life, because woman and man are both dependent on each other.

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