

Vijay Tendulkar's *Kamala*, A Gyno-Centric Play

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Abstract

In the play *Kamala*, Tendulkar explores the ruthlessness of the media and the position of women in society. The play exposes how man either degenerates woman or venerates her for his selfish motives depending upon the necessity of the situation. The protagonist of the play Jaisingh exploits Kamala's situation for achieving name and reputation and leaves her to her fate as soon as his purpose is served. The questions asked to Kamala in the press conference indicate that society is always interested in victimization of individuals who are helpless. None comes forth to help a woman who is presented in tattered clothes and who is even ignorant of the fact that she is being ruthlessly exposed physically in public-almost in her denuded form. Surprisingly enough, the same society that enjoys the exposure of Kamala goes against Jaisingh who become helpless towards the end of the play.

Keywords: Vijay Tendulkar, *Kamala*, gyno-centric. Victimization, Humanitarian, Exploitation.

The characters of Benare and Sarita are totally different from each other. Similarly, the environment that leaves them to arrive at their respective decisions is also distinct. Benare remains firm in her decision to give birth to the child in the hostile circumstances. While Sarita provides an emotional support to Jaisingh and saves him from a total mental collapse even after knowing his selfish hypocrisy. However, it appears that Sarita comes to this conclusion, not because she lacks any spirit of rebellion but because her husband badly needs her emotional support. The humanitarian attitude is clearly perceptible here in her behaviour.

“*Kamala* is a gyno-centric play in the sense that it is built on the metamorphosis of Sarita emerging from being a docile wife to an assertive, mature woman in the end.”

The play incorporates a bitter critique on the institution of marriage. Jaisingh has bought Kamala for Rs.250/- only, but had received Rs. 700/- as a dowry from Sarita's father years ago, in addition to why Sarita, quite rightly, bursts forth: Listen to the story of how he bought the slave Kamala and make use of her. The other slave he got free- not just free-the slave's father shelled out the money-a big sum" (46).

Kamala, a girl purchased from a rural flesh market, at the press-conference by Jaisingh, a young journalist, the playwright exposes self-centredness and narrow-mindedness of the modern, careerist, young generation. Jaisingh treats both Kamala and Sarita not as human beings but as objects of exhibition. The former brings him a promotion in his job and reputation in his professional career and the latter provides pleasure in conjugal life. Kamala's entry in her house reveals to Sarita her husband Jaisingh's egoistic, deceitful nature. In her married life, Sarita remains to Jaisingh, what Jain calls "lovely bonded labour" (17). She is bound to her husband in the wedlock, not temporarily like Kamala, but to slave for him permanently till the end of his or her days.

Through the character of Jaisingh, Tendulkar throws light on man's hunger for power. He fetches Kamala from a rural flesh market and presents her at the press conference not to bring any substantial change in Kamala's life but for his selfish motives. For him, Kamala is not a human being, but a marketable commodity that can bring him reputation in his professional career and promotion in his job. Thus, the real-life incident of the flesh market exhibits the violence practiced and enjoyed by the present-day generation, particularly the careerist young ones. Kamala's presentation at the press-conference in tattered worn-out clothes, and humiliating questions put to her reveal the fact that a modern youth is "ready to sacrifice human values in the name of humanity."

Through the relationship of Sarita and Jaisingh, the playwright suggests that, in the metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Delhi, etc., the husband-wife relationship is on the verge of breaking down. Jaisingh represents the typical Indian husband who has no time to spare for his wife. There are repeated hints in the play that the husband-wife relationship of Jaisingh and Sarita is similar to that of master-slave relationship. Jaisingh exploits Sarita as much as he dose Kamala but each in a different way. She, too, is an object that " provides him social companionship, domestic comfort, and physical enjoyment." Jaisingh's adventure of presenting Kamala at the press-conference in tattered clothes reveals to Sarita his hypocritical nature which makes her sadly aware of her own place and position as a wife in her husband's life.

The character of Sarita suggests that even a modern, educated woman is not so free as her male-counterpart in contemporary society, as she has to follow her husband's whims and caprices in and outside the household life. While depicting the mental journey of Sarita, Tendulkar exposes the naked reality that wives are exploited either as slaves or treated as stepping-stones to their men's achievements through the so-called sacred bond of marriage.

Biologically as well as culturally, human beings are divided into two classes: men and women. All over the world it is observed that in family system, man is considered the head of the family, governing and controlling all its affairs. Woman is entrusted with the household work. This leads to the formation of exploitative and oppressive society of men as against the exploited and oppressed society of women. Simone de Beauvoir rightly observes: "One is not born; but rather becomes a woman... It is civilization as whole that produces this creature_ .. which is described as feminine."

Using a real -life incident, Tendulkar highlights the position of women in the success - oriented, male dominated Indian society. The triangular relationship of Sarita - Jaisingh- Kamala exposes the oppressive modern society where house wives like Sarita are exploited inside their houses by their husbands, and men, too, are exploited outside their house by their masters or employers. Jaisingh is courageous and ready to face risks in providing the newspaper with sensational news. However, the harsh circumstances bring him proper realization towards the end of the play. but it is too late. The news that he is sacked breaks him mentally.

Jaisingh works very sincerely for his employer and Sarita for her husband. He used to take risks to expose ills and evils in society. Sarita, too, takes care of his needs at home as jotting down the telephonic messages, keeping delicious food and drinks ready for him. She does all these things promptly to keep her husband, pleased, and refreshed so that he may work efficiently.

Despite the fact that Sarita and Jaisingh are both devoted to their respective causes, there is a lot of difference in their spirit of devotion. Jaisingh works aspiring for money, fame, and reputation. Sarita works for her husband's pleasure and satisfaction without any personal self -interest or ulterior motive.

Jaisingh commits a crime of purchasing a human being, Kamala, from a rural flesh market. In spite of the warning of Kakasaheb: "You may be caught in a terrible jam some time" (10), he decides to present her at the press conference not with a view to exposing the inhuman flesh market but as a part of his professional commitment. For Jaisingh, Kamal is a key to his successful carrier and the bright, glorious future that lies ahead of him.

At the press conference, which is outwardly held to expose the sexual harassment of the helpless woman Kamala is exposed physically and psychologically. She is presented in tattered clothes and has to answer unpleasant queries such as: " If there is a free sex among you? What do you do with the illegitimate children? How many men have you slept with?"

Kamala's innocent question: " How much did he buy you for? (34) makes Sarita introspective. Both of them are "objects" of pleasure, money, and reputation. That is why. Jaisingh's arrogant remark - "It's I who take decision in this house and no one else." - makes her realize that he is the master and she the slave. Jaisingh is the best example of what an Indian husband is to his wife.

The play *Kamala* presents a critique of the male -dominated society; it indirectly illustrates another important aspect of society that women themselves are responsible for their exploitation. Sarita becomes conscious of the hypocritical nature of her husband. Still she provides him an emotional support, when he loses his job towards the end of the play. The character of Kamala Represents an educated, sophisticated slave in the household. Both of them lack the guts and the

courage to rebel against injustice. Therefore, they cannot help becoming scapegoats as if in the conspiracy of their male -counterparts. The characters Sarita and Kamala are, therefore, the mute witnesses of woman kind's endless suffering in the male-dominated society.

While portraying the women characters that play roles as important as men, Tendulkar shows them exploited, oppressed, and humiliated. Even education does not bring any substantial change in their miserable condition; instead, it produces the sophisticated slaves like Sarita.

References

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