

Predicaments and Status of Sarita as a Protagonist Depicted in Vijay Tendulkar's *Kamala*

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ABSTRACT

Vijay Tendulkar has created a niche in the development of Indian literature. His plays are embodiments of the sufferings of women, especially in the middle class. His works are usually based on realistic events taking place in Indian society. He has been a keen observer of the plight of women characters and their depictions in drama. *Kamla* is considered one of the finest plays written by Vijay Tendulkar. The women characters represented in the play have experienced enormous suffering and exploitation because of patriarchy. Sarita the protagonist is a slave in the house of Mr. Jai Singh Jadhav. Sarita has lost her own identity and personality after her marriage to a journalist. She doesn't have any freedom in the house due to her dominating husband. This research paper aims at the exploration of the predicaments of Sarita in the drama and her emancipation in the drama.

KEYWORDS

Predicament; Suffering; Identity; Patriarchy; Emancipation.

Introduction:

Vijay Tendulkar's famous play '*Kamala*', is a social drama that tells the tale of a journalist who purchases a woman from the rural flesh trade, and goes on to expose the nexus of the police and the politicians. Based on a true incident the show has a number of twists and turns. Sarita experiences a predicament as an emotional perturbation caused by something that has happened to her, evolving from an acute loss, trauma, or acute or chronic illness of unpleasant occurrence. *Kamla*'s play was labelled a "realistic way", in a "ridiculous manner". Predicament means – 'an unpleasant or confusing situation that is difficult to get out of or solve.' *Kamla*'s play renders women's existence as resonating with the principles of existentialist philosophy, absurdist

drama, a cluster of various experimentalist trends, a new avant-garde which aimed to subvert the traditional categories of theatre to reflect the feeling of distress, distrust, and disorientation arising. This idea was a reaction to the "collapse of moral, religious, political, and social structures". Following are the two-word wars of the Twentieth Century we judge in this play are:

- 1) Predicament
- 2) Elusiveness

The present paper aims to critically study the status of modern women at modern times through the very realistic and naturalistic portrayal of both women and men by the Indian playwright Vijay Tendulkar. The purpose of this paper is to show the realities of life of women in modern India at its grassroots

level. Jaisingh Jadhav is talking with his colleague about the publicity. He also takes Kamala to the press conference where she is humiliated and unable to answer any questions. Indeed, Kamala is not permitted to take a bath in Jadhav's house. He also intends to send Kamala Naritniketen. When Kaka sahib and Sarita objected to the inhuman exhibition of Kamala at the conference, Jadhav roughly replied - "I did not hold this press conference for my own benefit. It was to drag this criminal sale of human beings into the light of the day". (CPT, 31). Like Kamala, Sarita is also a puppet in Jhadhav's hands. She politely follows her husband's orders without questioning. She is an educated Indian woman who is oppressed after marriage by her so-called husband. When she opposed his decision to take Kamala to an orphanage, Jaisingh says- "It is I who takes decisions in this house, and no one else. Do you understand"? (CPT, 42). At this, Kaka Sahib says that Kamala is just a puppet in Jadhav's games of chess and Sarita replies - "Not just Kamala, Kakasaheb. Not just Kamala, Kakasaheb. Me too.....me too". (CPT, 43). As a responsible housewife, Sarita always tries to satisfy her matrimonial responsibilities. She is childless and feels lonely in such a big house as she is without love and respect there. She finds herself a slave an object to fulfil all her sexual and social desires and comforts. She says:

I am going to present a man who in the year 1982, still keeps a slave, right in Delhi; Jaisingh Jadhav. I am going to say: that this man is a great advocate of freedom. And he brings home a slave and exploits her. He doesn't consider a slave a human being - just a useful object. One you can use and throw away. He gets people to call him a sworn enemy of tyranny. But he tyrannizes his own slave as much as he likes, and doesn't think

anything of it - nothing at all. (CPT 46).

Thus, we find that all three female characters of the play, *Kamala* are the victims of male domination and violence.

Patriarchy as a leading power force in society stops women from being liberal and living their lives freely. Kamala, Sarita and Kamalabai all the three characters want to live their life on their own terms, though bound in the chain of relationships and responsibilities. Kamala has to please her master Jaisingh Jadhav, whereas Sarita has to fulfil her duties as a wife. In return they both are dominated by their master. 'N.S. Dharan explains in Tendulkar's generally, women are at the centre. It is around women that most of the action revolves. The roles Tendulkar's female protagonists play eclipse those played by the men figuring in them. It is Leela Benare in '*Silence!*' and Sarita in *Kamala* who play the leading roles in these plays which present a world apparently dominated by male chauvinists. The dramatic action in these gains in intensity mainly because of the presence of these women figuring in them, both Leela Benare and Sarita are educated and efficient and refuse to be cowed down by men. (28)

The play offers Tendulkar enough scope to scoff at the kind of trendy journalism practised by Jadhav, and also strike a contrast between the journalism in the Vernacular, and that in English. 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-centred 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. *Kamala* is a satire on the trendy

journalism shown in it. Jadhav is indifferent to the humanness. He is capable of sacrificing human values, in the name of humanity itself. The husband-wife relationship between Sarita and Jaisingh is typical of the sort existing in the cities like Delhi, where executive husbands do not find adequate time for their wives who have to content themselves by being mere social beings. At the centre of the play is a self-seeking journalist, Jaisingh Jadhav, associated with an English daily published by an unscrupulous press baron, Sheth Singhanian. He is an agile, adventurous journalist. He takes risks, exposes scandals and feeds the sophisticated paper with sensational news. His work boosts the circulation of the paper, and the owner increases his salary, Jadhav happily moves to a small bungalow in a fashionable locality around New Delhi. Sarita, his wife, is well-educated and hails from a village called Phaltan. Kakasaheb, Sarita's uncle, is currently in Delhi to procure his quota of newsprint with Jadhav's help, Kakasaheb runs a newspaper in the vernacular. He lives a simple life on Gandhian principles.

Jaisingh treats the woman he has purchased from the flesh market as an object that can buy him a reputation in his professional life and a promotion in his job. He is one of those modern individuals, who pursue their goal unquestioningly, with a single-track mind. Jadhav is never bothered by what will happen to Kamala after exhibiting her at the 'Press Conference'. Kamala's entry in the household reveals to Sarita the selfish hypocrisy of her husband and the insignificance of her own existence in Jaisingh's life. On realising that she holds no value in her husband's busy and materialistic lifestyle, she takes a re-birth. And finally, a new Sarita emerges. She discards her submissive attitude and decides to convene a Press Conference where she would expose to the whole

world the real Jaisingh Jadhav. She is resolute in putting her partner as a great supporter of freedom. She would tell how he bought the slave Kamala and used her for his selfish ends. Sarita, who was asleep to her reality, was awakened by Kamala. She has come face to face with her domestic slavery.

In the play, Tendulkar makes a rude remark at the modern concept of journalism, which stresses on sensationalism. For this, he uses Kakasaheb, a journalist of the old school, who runs a small paper with his own resources. Kakasaheb provides the true ideals of journalism. And in contrast to these, Jadhav's concept of newspaper reporting is shown in a critical light. To quote Kakasaheb's words:

I'm a back number- a remnant of times past. A dead journalist-who's just about staying alive! Now it is your husband's type of journalism day.

The High-Speed type! Something catches fire- and there he runs! There is unrest anywhere else-and off he flies. (Tendulkar 97)

That Kakasaheb corrects a paper published in language, while Jadhav's standard is English also helps to emphasise the restricted nature of journalism experienced by him.

Tendulkar has tried to drive home the fact that it is the dailies in vernacular alone that reach the masses. And that none can affect any meaningful social or political change in India through English dailies, as they reach only a very small section of the Indian population. Through Sarita, who is in her own way as exploited, as Kamala, Tendulkar exposes the chauvinism intrinsic in the modern Indian male who believes that he is liberal minded. In modern India women are allowed to study so that they become sophisticated slaves.

The plight of Hindu women is peculiar. A Hindu woman is honoured to

bear progeny for her husband and as a partner to him in performing religious rites. But, she is feared and loathed as a whore. She cannot thus even think of sex, as she feels completely exhausted by the end of the day. Moreover, as Jandhyala points out: "With woman's sexuality so closely bound with marriage, and her role as wife and mother, there was no possibility of considering her sexual needs, and desires." Thus, women are sexually oppressed. It is reflected in the concept of chastity, a patriarchal value. It is one of the most powerful yet invisible cultural fetters that have enslaved women for ages. The principal action in *Kamala* revolves around a woman protagonist. Sarita in the play stands for the central consciousness in the respective work of art, so the play can be called women-centred. In such a play, the feminine ideology which pities women in direct encounters with chauvinistic male opposes, finds its complete expression. The character of Sarita consists of a great variety and depth in comparison to her male counterparts. She reacts against social injustices and the subservient position of women in the institution of marriage. In the end, the rebirth of Sarita, who is now independent, stronger with confidence, and who looks forward to the day, when she will break away from the shackles of her repression, illustrates that Tendulkar, however not a self-acknowledged feminist, takes care of his women typescript with sympathetic and consideration. So, we see that Sarita is emerging as a capable woman who challenges men. Here Tendulkar commands our admiration as he has attempted to delineate women, who in spite of their supposed inferior status in Indian society, rebel against all odds. There is considerable satire and sarcasm aimed at the very core of dualism and inhumanity of the male chauvinists in the Indian middle-class society. When the highly domineering and egotistical

Jaisingh is outcast by society and loses his job in his bid to expose the racket of women trade, it is no one else but his ill-treated wife Sarita, who provides him the required physical and mental support for coping up from the situation. The play also offers Tendulkar enough scope to launch his diatribe against the presumptuous and reckless news reporters working for English dailies. It lays a strong stress on ethics. Gender and power are inevitably linked together in a society that witnesses a constant battle for aggrandisement. The gender division in a game is marked by the response to power.

The male pursues it, and the female submits to it. Because, in a patriarchal society power lies in the hands of men, the females are marginalised and trivialised. The role of gender in the power game is obvious in *Kamala*, which focuses directly on the position of women in a patriarchal society. Here, Tendulkar has underlined both the dark ambiguity of the cardboard figures of power, the patriarchal society holds in high esteem and the continuing of very real dangers of this never-ending struggle for supremacy in the society in which gender has always played a pivotal role, be it *Kamala*, the tribal woman, or Sarita, Jaisingh's well-educated and cultured house wife, a useful object in his life. The story of the play very well narrates how the well-known young journalists like Jaisingh seek to use *Kamala*, the victim of the immoral flesh trade in a democratic notion to achieve instant success and reputation in his professional life. Through Sarita's realisation, Tendulkar has unfolded the bleak truth that a woman in a male dominated society functions just as a mere pawn. The playwright has made obvious the unacceptable fact that from ages a woman has always been destined to be an object to be used and thrown away by man.

Kamala is a two-act play, is flesh trade, and how well-known young journalists like Jaisingh Jadhav seek to capitalise 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. Thematically, Tendulkar's plays have

ranged the alienation of the modern individual. The questions of gender discrimination, sexual norms, violence, stability in society, man-woman relationships, institution of marriage, social issues, power and morality have been featured prominently in this play.

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