



## WOMEN AS VICTIM IN NUPTIAL RELATIONSHIP IN *KAMALA*

**PRIYA E.**

Assistant Professor of English,  
Nallamuthu Gounder Mahalingam College,  
Pollachi. (TN) INDIA

### ABSTRACT

*This paper attempt to study the brief biography of Vijay Tendulkar and his way of portraying female characters in his plays. Vijay Tendulkar is the most prolific and controversial dramatist among the Post-Independence Indian playwrights. Thematically Tendulkar's plays have ranged from the exploration of man-woman relationship to reinterpretations of social, historical, and political episodes. His plays concentrates on different aspects of the human character and complexity of human relationship. He fascinated by the violent exploited-exploiter, husband-wife, brother-sister, lover-beloved relationship.*

### INTRODUCTION

Vijay Tendulkar is a versatile dramatist. He is a well known Indian playwright whose plays are read in India and abroad through its translated versions. In each of his plays he has touched different storm raising issues and has portrayed realistically the multifaceted problems of our Indian society. Though he has never acknowledged himself as a feminist writer his works are feministic in approach and all his female characters are treated with good understanding and compassion. He has attacked all the social institutions and establishments, such as, family, marriage, working place and so on. Many of his plays, Silence! The Court is in Session, Kanyadan, The Vultures, Kamala, etc..., have female protagonists. They have play an important role in the plays by supporting or opposing the set socio-cultural norms. They are the representatives of the oppressed women in the Patriarchy. They have sometimes try to

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fight this losing battle. The male-dominated society which is around them, don't allow them to lead their life happily in their own way. It tries to dominate them and trap in its clutches of the moral values.

Vijay Tendulkar, in 'A Testament', in Indian Literature no. 147, January-February 1992, rates his position as a social being as well as a writer:

"As a social being I am against all exploitation and I passionately feel that all exploitation must end. As a writer I feel fascinated by the violent exploited-exploiter relationship and obsessively delve deep into it instead of taking a position against it. That takes of to a point where I feel that this relationship is eternal, a fact of life however cruel, and will never end."

In his plays, especially, in *Kamala*, Tendulkar represents his women characters revealing all the shades of womanhood. They are realistic and multi-faceted. This play highlight the critical condition of women in society and their mixed reactions towards the complexities put forth by their family and society. They are dominated by their male-partner or master. They are marginalized on all the levels-family, society and workplace. They are used only as a commodity or plate and are fully exploited. The voice of rebellion, if it ever comes, is suppressed. They are based on the reality which he found around himself, in his society.

*Kamala* clearly pictures the status of Indian women revealing how marriage as a sacred institution enslaves women. Vijay Tendulkar was a journalist and he came across many things which were concerned with outstanding issues in journalism. Tendulkar's play *Kamala* was inspired by a real life incident published in *The Indian Express*. A person called Ashwin Sarin, actually bought a girl from a rural flesh market and presented at a press conference. Using this incident as a launching pad, Tendulkar has raised a certain value system of modern, success oriented generation who are ready to sacrifice human values in the name of humanity itself. The central character of the play is a self-seeking journalist, Jaisingh Jadhav, who treats the woman he has purchased from the flesh market as an object that can procure from him a promotion in his job and a reputation in his professional life. Jaisingh buys *Kamala*, an adivasi woman, at the flesh market of Luhardaga beyond Ranchi for two hundred and fifty rupees. Jai Singh's enthusiasm is directed towards sheer sensationalism.

Jai Singh discards *Kamala* in an orphanage for woman and washes off his hand for his safety, after she ceases to be an advantage to him. Jaisingh Jadhav exploits not only *Kamala* but also his wife, Sarita. It is through Sarita, Tendulkar exposes the chauvinism intrinsic in the modern male who believes himself to be liberal minded. Jai Singh through his treatment of *Kamala*, makes Sarita realize that she is also a slave, a lovely bonded labourer to him. She observes how he refuses a bath to *Kamala* and takes her in clumsy clothes to the press-



conference for his professional profit. Jai Singh uses both the woman Kamala and Sarita as pawns in the game of chess. Jai Singh the persecutor persecutes his victims- Kamala, Sarita and Kamala Bai. His role shifts to that of the victim and he is persecuted by his proprietor, the persecutor.

Kamala according to Catherine Thankamma, “reveals that in the patriarchal set up marriage is not only a mean of regulating sexual and reproductive behavior but also a means of upholding male dominance” (Thankamma 82). A woman is considered useless if she is not able to conceive a child. For instance, when Sarita tells Kamala that she does not have children, Kamala comments:

It was an expensive bargain, memsahib.... the master bought you, he bought me too. He spent a lot of money.....we’ll keep the master happy.....I’ll do the hard work and I’ll bring forth the children....you....put on lovely clothes and make merry with the master....fifteen days I’ll sleep with him. (Tendulkar 35)

The inhuman flesh market of Luhardaga exposes the violence in the society where the human being is sold as animals and their price or value is based on the physical appearance. Jai Singh presents Kamala in press-conference but for Jai Singh she is key to his successful career and the bright, glorious future that lies ahead of him.

Kamala’s presentation in a press-conference in tattered clothes is another incident of violence. Outwardly the press-conference is held to expose the sexual harassment of the helpless women in fact Kamala is exposed physically and psychologically. She is also asked unpleasant questions regarding free sex. In the press-conference, Kamala feels embarrassed, while Jai Singh and his journalist friends are flushed with wine and enjoying themselves. The people present in the press-conference are less interested in solving the problems like prostitution and flesh market and thinking of the remedies of these problems, they think of their own upliftment, rather than the upliftment of the suppressed class. Jaisingh Jadhav exploits Sarita physically as well as psychologically. Until Sarita becomes conscious of the hypocritical nature of her husband she enjoys slavery in the guise of wife. Jaisingh Jadhav is oppressed by his boss. The victim does not know that she is victimized by his boss as he is discarded from his job by his boss. Thus Tendulkar has presented a chain of victimization in the play *Kamala*.

In the play *Kamala* sex also plays an important role. Jaisingh Jadhav marries Sarita because she is an object that provides him domestic comfort, social companionship and avoids sharing the bed with him. Jaisingh is furious and he calls her a bitch. Kamala who was bought by



Jaisingh buys her because she is dirt cheap. By paying money any one can buy a woman like Kamala and over- power her not only physically but sexually also.

N.S.Dharan writes about *Kamala*:

One may even venture to suggest that the theme of Tendulkar's *Kamala* is flesh trade and how well known journalists like Jai Singh Jadav seek to capitalize on it in order to further succeed in their careers without caring, in the least, for the victim of this nefarious trade in a democratic country like India. The play offers Vijay Tendulkar enough scoff at the kind of trendy journalism practically Jadav and also to dwell on the characteristics on the Indian middle class women perpetrated by selfish, malicious secretive and hypocritical male chauvinists. (55)

In *Kamala*, Tendulkar uses satire in order to scoff at the hypocritical mind set of the urban middle class and the rampant corruption of the politicians, the cut-throat competition among the journalists, and the tenuous relationship that exist between a husband and his wife. Satire thus, operates at two levels in the play, namely, in the relation of a typical middle class milieu and also in the social institution of 'politics', 'marriage' and 'journalism'. In the hands of the playwright both Sarita and Kakasaheb become an instrument for satirizing the institution of 'marriage'.

As a man who was connected with journalism, an incident regarding flesh market made Tendulkar to write the play *Kamala*. The threats on telephone indicate the risk in the field of journalism. Jai Singh Jadav uses *Kamala* as a step to his success. After his purpose is over, he throws *Kamala* in to an asylum. Jaisingh is dismissed from the job. Sarita is obedient and loyal to her husband and Jai Singh is loyal in his job. Injustice is done to Jai Singh by his master where as he does injustice to Sarita and *Kamala*. The realization of slavery is the main purpose of all the actions.

As the play takes place in Delhi but in Marathi family there is a mixture of three languages that is Marathi, Hindi and English. Tendulkar's plays are unconventional and he penetrated the dark corners, the repression, the brutality, rejection and alienation of characters. According to him to break the traditional frame work of the Marathi theatre was essential and to do some experiment with the theatre was necessary.

On the whole, Tendulkar's play *Kamala* deals with the victimization of women. The main thing which Tendulkar throws light on are the ghastly flesh market, the cut throat competition that goes on in a success oriented contemporary generation and the egoistic hypocrisy of young journalists. It portrays the exploitation of women by the success oriented men for whom women are mere stepping stones for their achievements.



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