

Marginalization of Women in Media in Vijay Tendulkar's Play Kamala: A Study

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Abstract

Women constitute half of the world's population. They have acquired political citizenship in almost all countries. However, their concerns and status are sidelined within the social, economic, and political structures. Vijay Tendulkar's play *Kamala* powerfully disseminates a treatise against sensational journalism in empathizing with the sufferings of a woman. The play (*Kamala*) brings out dominant and sexist behavior of educated and elite men in both the private and public realms. *Kamala* is an illiterate woman. A journalist buys her in a flesh market. The journalist cross-examines her in an inhuman manner right in public to start off his professional life as a journalist. Saritha is the wife of the journalist. She serves him with love and care so that he could become a successful professional journalist. However, her husband ill-treats her like a slave. The paper highlights predominant characters in order to focus on how the modern Indian woman continues to come out from the traditional stronghold and question the existing system.

Keywords: Sensational Journalism, Flesh Market, Hegemony, Interrogation, and Capitalistic Media

Family is said to be the main stay of civilization. The joint action of men and women is the foundation of a nation. Undoubtedly, no nation can survive without the help of women. Family system governs any society and its institutions. Naturalism advocates that both men and women equally contribute to the sustainability of nature. The study of Biology unveils the fact that both genders involve in the procreation of the children. The essence of Theology is that God established the institution of family with equal rights and responsibilities. The study of Sociology reveals the fact that both men and women form a civic society and conduct functionality of the State. The subject of Economics highlights the fact that both men and women labor, produce, distribute, and consume. According to psychological studies, both men and women have equal psychological needs, bonds, and channelization of emotions. According to *Criminology*, either of the genders has the inclination towards crime, disloyalty, and cruelty. Unfortunately, although the family has inevitably been the site for challenges, changes, and compromises, in the process of validating the roles of women, the patriarchal ideology has taken a historical and eternal biased stand against women. Several discourses like religion, history, psychology, philosophy, politics, epistemology, media, legal system, industry, commerce and trade, art and

literature have taken unfair position against women and contributed their share in subordinating women.

Almost all the religions of the world hold women as evil and imperfect. They expect women to be docile, submissive, gentle, nurturing, and patient (Michele, 2016:676). Kanta observes that men dominate in writing history and do not give place for women to represent their lives (Kanta, 2001:187). Sigmund Freud opined that 'woman is bundle of emotions,' and relatively prone to hysteria (Freud, 1989:196). Aristotle in his "Politics" commented that "The female is as it were a deformed male" (Aristotle, 2009:297). Plato disqualified women for politics stating that they are 'immanent' contrary to men who are 'transcendent' (2007:43). Baruc Spinoza opines that women influence men to make insensible political conclusions (2004:56). Frederick Nietzsche suspected women's scholarship by saying that "When a woman turns to scholarship there is usually something wrong with her sexual apparatus" (2007:143). The 'Father of Modern Renaissance art' **Pablo Picasso commented that** "There are only two types of women - goddesses and doormats" (1967:223). Voltaire projected women as a sentimental fool by saying that "All the reasoning of men are not worth one sentiment of women" (2010:223). In literature, **Henry Miller says** "There are only three things to be done with a

woman. You can love her, suffer for her, or turn her into literature"(2015:15)

Vijay Tendulkar's play "Kamala" is certainly a powerful treatise against sensational journalism where reporting can be distorted by the personal attitudes of journalists even though they claim to be proud of their objective. Sarita is an educated woman who realizes her position because of an innocent question asked by a scared, illiterate village woman Kamala, "How much did the owner pay for you?" One can easily understand that both of them travel in the same boat of suffering. Tendulkar uses the play to portray suffering of the Indian middle-class women perpetrated by selfish, malicious, secretor, and hypocritical male chauvinists. One of the favorite themes of Tendulkar is a man-woman relationship which is artistically presented through characters in the play (for example: a complex relationship between Jadhav and his wife Sarita). **Kamala** is a gyno-centric play which is built on the metamorphosis of Sarita emerging from being a docile wife to an asserted and mature woman at the end.

Jaisingh Jadhav buys Kamala for two hundred and fifty rupees from a village in Bihar. He makes every arrangement to present her at an exhibit to prove that the flesh – trade is rampant even in the remote villages. However, Kamala does not know that Jadhav is going to present her at the 'press conference'. On the other hand, she thinks that Jadhav has bought her to keep her in his house forever as his mistress. Jadhav raises his voice for the cause of women of the other states. However, he neglects sufferings of women, corruption, and gambling that continue to prevail in his district.

Sarita is shocked to hear from Jadhav that he has bought Kamala for two hundred and fifty rupees in the Luchardaga Bazaar in Bihar. He observes Sarita's reaction and says "They sell human beings at this bazaar... they have an open auction for women of all kinds of ages...." (14). He further says "Men who want to bid handle the women to inspect them... How they feel in the breast, in their waist, in their thighs and..." [14]. Sarita asks him to stop talking. The play "Kamala" highlights an important theme of buying and selling women in the flesh market.

Kamala is so ignorant and illiterate that she does not even know that she is in Delhi and not in Bombay. The deceptive and misleading mentality of Jadhav becomes

vivid when he says that he is going to take her to a place

where 'big feasts' take place and that the people there "will want to meet her [20]." In spite of Kamala's rejection to go with her rags, Jadhav's command "You will 'have' to come, Kamala", [20] tells more about his unethical nature of trendy journalism. Sarita tells Kakasaheb that she is going to convene a press conference at which she intends to reveal the deplorable conditions at home. Besides being wondered how Sarita gets sudden illumination, one has to understand that it is a genuine cry of women on par with men. She is not inferior to men in prioritizing her morals to makeup, character to cash, and even heart to art in the arena of media.

At the press conference, Jadhav exhibits his find, Kamala, an ignorant and illiterate village woman, as proof of the existence of flesh – trade in villages in Bihar. Jadhav exposes Kamala to the public and allows them to ask innumerable questions, for the sake of his name and fame. He did it at the cost of her individuality. As a responsible journalist, he has forgotten that there is a prohibition on disclosing the identity of such a victim.

Like Kamala, Sarita also functions as a mere pawn in Jadhav's game of chess. She represents the sophisticated women. They do not realize that their education makes them educated slaves. Sarita takes care of her brilliant husband. She keeps delicious food and intoxicating drinks for him. When Kakasaheb asks her why she wants the name of the caller to whom he has just been talking, Sarita replies: 'I have to write down each phone call [3]." Sarita says, 'If I say they did not tell me their names he (Jadhav) gets angry with me for not asking [3]." Education seems to impoverish her rather than give awareness.

Sarita's position demonstrates a typical picture of Indian women and how women have been shaped, conditioned, and marginalized by patriarchy. The play highlights the gender stereotyping which is forced upon them. Various roles like domestic – daughter, wife, and mother are allotted to women in the patriarchal structure. As a part of the gendered differences that are emphasized from childhood, the girl is taught to believe in the importance of 'family values'. They are presumed to be her responsibility and not meant for men. Kamala accepts her subordinate position in the house. Kakasaheb dominates her social status. Pringle and Watson observe that by controlling the distribution men confine women to a lower position.

The ideology of security and luxury cloisters her within her four walls. She is completely side-lined from the male world that dominated her in all areas. She is deprived of the knowledge of crimes committed against women by her husband 'lord' or 'god'. She is suppressed under the title of 'educated wife'. Trapped within the complexities of a transitional society with a 'modern face but traditional soul' the position of Sarita remains powerless.

Jadhav turns out to be cruel not only to Kamala but also to his own wife Sarita. He treats Kamala as an object that helps him win instant fame as a journalist. He seems to be a typical Indian husband who doesn't spend time with his wife. He doesn't assure her of his affection for her. Despite democratic set up of Indian society, women are oppressed and exploited more than men as Indian society remains culturally patriarchal. Sarita is shocked how Kamala has been treated at the 'Press Conference'. She asks "So while they were asking her those terrible questions, and making fun of her – you just sat and watched, did you?" (30) The way she reacts shows that only women can understand the problems of other women. Even in journalism, women tend to be more interested in their readers, concerned about the background and the context of stories, enquiring about experiences than end results.

Kamala is taken to the press conference against her will. Kamala is kept for sale in the flesh market. Jai Singh receives many compliments in the morning and feels very happy. The police are after him to take Kamala in to their custody. He hastens to take her to 'Nari Niketan' an orphanage. Sarita opposes this and requests him to allow Kamala to stay with them in their house. Vehemently, the dormant male chauvinist in him wakes up and says: "It's I who take decisions in this house, and no one else." However, Sarita becomes aware of her actual condition only when she converses with Kamala, who asks her what price Jadhav has paid for her. To quote from one of the most intense, ironic episodes in the play: **KAMALA**: "How much did he buy you?" [34].

Kamala's question opens Sarita's eyes. Suddenly, for the first time, she finds no difference between herself and Kamala. She coolly tells Kamala that Jadhav bought her for seven hundred rupees. Though Kamala is ignorant and illiterate, she sympathizes with Sarita over her barrenness.

She says, "If you pay seven hundred and there are no children..." [34] Sarita asks her: "How many children do you have, Kamala?" Kamala replies: "I will have as many as you want," [34]

Kamala, thus, expresses her readiness to bear Jadhav's children to make the house a joyful place to live in. She then proposes that she will do all the housework while Sarita will look after accounts and such 'sophisticated' things. She adds that each of them will share their master's bed half a month each. Sarita agrees to this. She realizes that she is also a slave like Kamala. For the doubt that Sarita's sudden recognition of her own enslaved condition with Kamala's question seems to be illogical.

Sarita tells Kakasaheb that she is going to convene a press conference at which she intends to reveal the truth. Kakasaheb asks her, "What on earth happened between you two"? (46) Sarita replies 'Marriage' [46]. Kamala can be viewed as a satire on the husband-wife relationship that has come under increasing threat in metropolitan cities like Mumbai.

Kamala is an indictment of the business oriented and capitalistic societies where men like Jai Singh are victims or stepping stones in a capitalist's success. The play also darts some glancing barbs on power mongering politicians who amass wealth and build skyscrapers in metropolitan centers like Delhi. Tendulkar is fully aware of the problems that are involved in trendy journalism. Tendulkar does not tend to portray Jaisingh as a modern hero of bringing out hidden things of the dark world of the politics rather he shows Jaisingh as a kind of villain who mingles with politicians in order to carry out their evil plans against democratic order.

The closing scene of the play gives a universal call to the modern women to establish gender harmony. It is in the hands of illuminated women like Sarita who can make or break the cosmic goblet of men and women relationships. The abrupt ending of the play cleverly throws a challenge to modern woman to fight against male dominated society.

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