

Gender Bias in Vijay Tendulkar's Kamala

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Introduction

Vijay Tendulkar's Kamala demands and deserves a special applause from every respect and particularly from the thematic point of view. The play is an ideal proof of Tendulkar's dramatic art in a sense that there is a nice blending and at the same time the balance of all thematic point in it. Point, counter point, all the thematic concerns are juxtaposed and compared. For example : Sarita against Kamala, journalism of Kakasaheb against that of Jaisingh and finally as a journalist against Jaisingh as a man. In Kamala, Tendulkar makes use of satire in order to scoff not only at the hypocrisy of the urban upper middle classes but also at the rampant corruption among the journalists and the tenuous relationship that exists between a husband and wife.

In the play Kamala, Tendulkar exposes several thematic concerns. At the first glance, 'Degradation of women in India' seems to be the theme of this play. But intense reading brings to the surface some more interpretations. Another viewer may consider 'instant journalism' as the main focus of the play. Here he deals with the current issues and points out the 'drawbacks of investigative journalism'.

The play Kamala is the story of an unfortunate woman Kamala, sold away in the flesh market and being a victim of sexual slavery in this male-dominated world. The play deals with the issues of buying and selling of tribal women. Tendulkar uses the play to dwell on the characteristic suffering of the Indian middle class woman made to suffer by selfish, malicious and hypothetical male chauvinists.

The play presents a self-seeking journalist, Jaisingh Jadav who treats the women purchased from the flesh market as an object that can buy him a promotion in his job and reputation in his professional life. by exposing the tribal woman in the press, he desires only publicity. he does not have any sympathy for the woman Kamala. Jadav never thinks what will happen to Kamala after this exposure. Through the exposure of kamala in the press conference Jaisingh wants to prove the degradation of moral values in modern world but he does not know that he himself has become a part of such degradation society. It is proved by the conversation between Kakasaheb and Jaisingh. Kakasaheb says Jiasingh, "you sold a woman to them to do so. ...

You sold a woman – that poor illiterate woman – by doing so” (31).

Sarita, Jadhav's wife is also an object in Jadhav's life, an object that provides physical enjoyment, social companionship and domestic comfort. He talks about freedom and equality of women but at home he does not follow these principles. She performs the duties of an ideal wife as she notes down all his phone calls if he is not present, prepares delicious meals for him, etc. She is so docile that Jaisingh's friend Jain used to call her.

The play shows that the husband – wife relationship between Jadhav and Sarita has deteriorated to a disgraceful master – slave relationship. In his blind flight towards success, Jaisingh fails as a husband also. In fact Jadhav, the successful journalist turns out to be cruel not only towards Kamala but also towards his own wife Sarita. Kamala to him, is only an object that helps him win instant fame as a journalist.

Sarita is not aware about her own exploitation but the entry of Kamala in the house awakes her conscience. After her arrival she comes to know that she is treated in the house only as a useful object. The entry and the condition of Kamala awakes Sarita, so she says,

I was sleep. I was unconscious even when I was awake. Kamala woke me up. With a shock. Kamala showed me everything. Because of her, I suddenly saw things clearly. I saw that the man I thought my partner was the master of a slave. Slaves don't have rights, do they, Kakasaheb? They must only slave away. Dance to their master's whim. Laugh, when he says, laugh. Cry, when he says, cry. When he says pick up the phone, they must pick it up. When he says, come to party, they must go. When he says, lie on the bed – they. ... (46).

This dialogue truly shows Jaisingh's slave like treatment towards Sarita inside the house. She cannot prevent her husband when he sends Kamala to orphanage. But her likes, dislikes and opinions are never taken into consideration by Jaisingh. So, he sends Kamala to the orphanage. Sarita argues to her husband that Kamala is going to stay here. But Jaisingh says to her, "It is I who takes decisions in this house, and no one else. Do you understand?" (42).

Here Tendulkar exposes the male -dominated society in which man dominates the woman whether she is educated or illiterate. The male dominated society never gives her chance to voice her feelings in the house. She feels that her role remains within the house is as an ideal housewife to cook, to rear the children and to be obedient to her husband. The condition and status of women are like living in a cage like situation at home. We can find it through the character of Sarita who is well -educated, but her husband treats her like a slave within the house.

Through this play, Tendulkar comments on the system of marriage in Indian society. In this play, character of Sarita is purchased legally through transaction under the system of marriage. The institution called marriage has given the authority to Jaisingh to dominate Sarita. The play is an evaluation of the role of an Indian woman within the institution called marriage, which is considered to be the holiest of all ceremonies in our society, definitely provides a completely novel point of view showing that women are still mere slaves to their male owners in Indian society in the later half of the twentieth century.

Tendulkar introduced three female characters in Kamala such as Sarita, Kamala and Kamalabai. These three women characters are in some way or other dominated by the male character Jaisingh Jadhav. Though this three characters Tendulkar reveals the condition of woman in free India.

Conclusion

Tendulkar never tries to reform the society through his drama, but in this play he performs the role of reformer by presenting the exploitation of Kamala and Sarita through the revolt of Sarita. After her awaking she denies to go with Jaisingh in the party which is the first sign of her revolt. She feels that she is purchased like Kamala and that too, legally. Her conversation with Kakasaheb truly reveals that she is awoken against the dominance and hypocrisy of her husband.

In the climax of the play, Jain announces her that Jaisingh has sacked his job and she get shocked and unconscious. At this very moment Sarita changes her mind. She decides to give moral support to her husband Jaisingh. In the end of this play, Tendulkar reveals the common mind-set of Indian women.

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