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ISSN 2278-9529  
**Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal**  
[www.galaxyimrj.com](http://www.galaxyimrj.com)

## Oppressed and Marginalized Women in Vijay Tendulkar's *Kamala*

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Vijay Tendulkar is the most influential Marathi dramatist who has gained international recognition. Many of his plays have derived inspiration from real life incidents or social upheavals, which provide clear light on harsh realities. As a social realist, he clearly brought out the prevailing inequality between the gender in Indian society. 'Kamala' is a naturalistic play inspired by a real life incident. It is the story of a tribal woman, Kamala who is sold in the fresh market. The play is a satire on the trendy journalism we come across everywhere. The play mocks the practice adopted by some journalists who are so lost in sensationalism and the breaking news cycle that they leave ethics behind. The goal then solely is to be on the front page, get a prominent byline and be the editor's favorite. Simultaneously, here Vijay Tendulkar has attacked on the marriage institution. The character of Sarita suggest that even a modern woman is not as free as her male counterpart in contemporary society, as she has to follow her husband's whims. Through Kamala and Sarita, Tendulkar expresses the male chauvinistic spirit where male believes in liberty of themselves and at the same time they try to suppress the voice of women in the society either by force or trickery. It is interesting to note that most of Tendulkar's plays are gyno-centric. As a play wright he seems often to be on the side of feminists for he projects women as victims of chauvinistic oppression. His men are highly immersed in patriarchy. They are totally biased against women and staunch believer of patriarchy which justify limited freedom for women.

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the great Indian dramatist of the twentieth century. He is the most influential Marathi dramatist who has gained international recognition. Many of his plays have derived inspiration from real life incidents or social upheavals, which provide clear light on harsh realities. As a social realist, he clearly brought out the prevailing inequality between the gender in Indian society. 'Kamala' is a naturalistic play inspired by a real life incident. It is the story of a tribal woman, Kamala who is sold in the fresh market, the play is a satire on the trendy journalism we come across everywhere. In the words of Tendulkar, "Kamala for me is not just a character, she is a living person, and she just doesn't remain on my papers."

Women are endowed with the power of creation. She is an entity where beauty, power, responsibility and dignity with respect to a mother, a daughter, a wife and a sister merged harmoniously. Despite that indispensable and multi-dimensional contribution to the society, throughout the ages, they are still becoming victim of violence, discrimination and inequality. As Dr. Prasanna Sree Sathupati observes :

"Women, who constitute half of the world's population, are paradoxically not treated on par with men in all spheres of human activity. They are confined to their homes, oppressed and marginalized in the matter of sharing available opportunities for fulfillment of their lives. Even in the modern changed ambience their position is still unenviable as she stands on the threshold of social change."

Vijay Tendulkar's play 'Kamala' is based on a real life incident of Ashwin Sarin the then correspondent of the Indian express, who bought a girl from rural flesh market and presented her at a press conference. In the play, Jaisingh Jadhav is a self-seeking journalist, who brings Kamala from a rural flesh market. Kamala is a tribal woman and Jaisingh buys her for 250 rupees to prove that such auctions are a reality. He does not have any sympathy or any motive to reform Kamala's life but as an object that can buy a promotion in his job and a reputation in his professional life. The play mocks the practice adopted by some journalists who are so lost in sensationalism and the breaking news cycle that they leave ethics behind. The goal then solely is to be on the front page, get a prominent byline and be the editor's favorite. The erosion of human values in our society today has become a phenomenon. There is a maddening pursuit to accumulate wealth, power and status to the total exclusion of humanness in us.

Simultaneously, here Vijay Tendulkar has attacked on the marriage institution. Sarita, Jaisingh's wife is an educated, modern woman. Though highly educated, she lets herself to the status of a slavish, docile wife. She is indeed a 'Lovely bonded laborer. Her duty is to make a note of all the important incoming calls and any failure on her part to do so would inevitably attract her husband's displeasure leading to eventually to domestic discord. These phone calls serve to indicate how slavish and claustrophobic Sarita has been reduce to on being married to Jaisingh. Sarita is shocked when she is told about the way he bought Kamala. –

Jaisingh : I bought her – in the Luhardaga bazaar, in Bihar.

Sarita : Huh! Bought her?

Jaisingh : Yes. For two hundred and fifty rupees. Even a bullock costs more than that. They sell human beings at this bazaar.....human beings. They have an open auction for women of all sorts of ages. People come from long distances to make their bids.

Sarita : They auction – women?

He goes on to speak of the ways in which auctioneers handle the women, checking them physically to find if they are sexually appealing. Women is seen as the plaything of man, reduced to objects which can be bought, sold and traded for the satisfaction of their lust or momentary benefit. In this play, Kamala is victimized by their male counterparts. The play shows the degraded attitude of men towards women.

Jaisingh presents Kamala in the press conference in the same torn sari, that she has been rearing. Even when Sarita opposes his decision of taking Kamala to an orphanage, the dominant male chauvinist in him wakes up and says - " It is I who take decisions in this house and no one else." The character of Sarita suggest that even a modern woman is not as free as he male counterpart in contemporary society, as she has to follow her husband's whims.

Sarita realizes her poor position after the entry of Kamala. Kamala's entry in her house reveals her husband's egoistic deceitful nature. Like Kamala, she is also an object in her husband's life, an object that provides physical enjoyment, social companionship and domestic comfort. Kamala sympathizes with her for her lack of children and asks her for how much their master has bought her? She makes Sarita conscious that she is the slave of her husband, Jaisingh. Kamala's views on the subject how both of them have to adjust with Jaisingh are like a revelation for Sarita. She says - "Memsahib, if you don't misunderstand I'll tell you, the master bought you, he bought me too.... so, Memsahib, both of us must stay here together like sisters. We will keep the master happy....fifteen days of the month, you will sleep with the master, the other fifteen I'll sleep with him."

Sarita feels the insignificance of herself in Jaisingh's life. Now she does not wish the company of her husband. We understand this from her words when Jaisingh ask her to accompany him to a party.

Jaisingh : You don't want to come? why?

Sarita : That is my will.

Jaisingh : (Rather surprised) Your will?

Sarita : Aren't I allowed to have a will of my own?

Jaisingh : (Sarcastically) Never noticed any signs of it before.

Sarita even tells Kakasaheb that she is going to hold a press conference at which she intends to show the hypocrisy of her husband. She says -

"I am going to present a man who in the 1982 still keep a slave right here in Delhi. JaisinghJadhav. I am going to say : This mans 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. Listen to the story of how he bought the slave Kamala and made use of her. The other slave he got free - not just free - the slave's father shelled out the money - a big sum. Ask him what he did with it.

Through Kamala and Sarita, Tendulkar expresses the male chauvinistic spirit where male believes in liberty of themselves and at the same time they try to suppress the voice of women in the society either by force or trickery. Sarita converses with Kakasaheb and the conversations suggest that exploitation of women in male dominated Indian society is perpetual process in the past and coming future. Kakasaheb also is a part of that patriarchal society as he forced his wife to follow him silently without any grudge.

Thus, at last we look at Sarita as an intelligent thinking woman capable of self-analysis. A proper understanding of one's own self enables a person to set his or her goals and directions properly according to his own interests which in turn give himself satisfaction. In Sarita's life too this self-knowledge has given her the capacity to take decisions which she thinks would make her happy. She doesn't go back to same point, but she moves on. As a human being, she is tied to so many relationships. She is aware that certain compromises have to be made, certain responsibilities have to be taken up and certain duties are to be undertaken. In the words of ShashiDeshpande - "Liberation doesn't mean you do away with all these human needs. Liberation means you refuse to do

things which go against your conscience. You realize the potential you have within you, you don't let other people tell you what to do. You know what you are worth. You know what is your value. You take that in to account and this is liberation. This doesn't mean going away with all ties."

Sarita's determination is seen when at the end of the play she says - " I'll go on feeling it. But at present I'm going to lock all that up in a corner of my mind and forget about it. But a day will come, Kakasaheb, when I will stop being a slave. I'll no longer be an object to be used and thrown away. I'll do what I wish, and no one will rule over me. That day has to come. And I am prepared to pay whatever price I have to pay for it.

It is interesting to note that most of Tendulkar's plays are gyno-centric. As a play wright he seems often to be on the side of feminists for he projects women as victims of chauvinistic oppression. His men are highly immersed in patriarchy. They are totally biased against women and staunch believer of patriarchy which justify limited freedom for women.

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