



KAMALA: SUBJUGATION OF WOMEN

THOKCHOM SUNANDA DEVI¹, Dr. CHARU CHITRA²

¹Research Scholar, K.R.G (Govt.) P.G College, Gwalior.

²Assistant Professor, K.R.G (Govt.) P.G College, Gwalior.



THOKCHOM
SUNANDA DEVI

ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the impact of women in a patriarchal societal set-up. In the initial part of the paper, the trademark of every woman from the birth is analyzed. Their flexible attitude in a more male-oriented and idealistic society is also mentioned in the latter part of the paper. Vijay Tendulkar the most prolific Marathi writer exposes through his plays the lower and lower-middle class people of all walks in its original form. Most of the topics of his plays deal with power and violence, social taboos, corruption, oppression, sensationalism, plight of a woman etc. His plays are the product of his keen observation of the surrounding society.

Keywords: exploitation, women's of Elizabethan and Edwardian Era, voice of Indian women, patriarchal set-up, Impact on women,

©KY PUBLICATIONS

Since time immemorial, women have been the victims of exploitation from every angle. In their own birthplace also, they are not treated equally in some or other ways as compared with the opposite sex. Dissemination and exploitation of women is like the birthmark of every female born in India. Abolition of 'superiority and inferiority' among different sexes by all genders give perspectives and commented in a more positive way irrespective of caste and creed yet in real hands-on, its complexity is worth mentioning. Kamala is one such play by Vijay Tendulkar, about the unidentified status of women in the modern exploitative world of power: the power which is created by human being itself out of the tradition and culture of a patriarchal society which further deterred the empowerment of women.

Vijay Tendulkar, the greatest leading contemporary Indian playwright, published the play Kamala in 1981, inspired by a real life incidents

exposed by the journalist Ashwin Sarin of The Indian Express. He exposes the flesh trade, which is continually going on and on in some parts of India. For these works, he bought a girl from the rural flesh market, from a village Dholpur and presented him at a press conference. In the play Kamala, the main protagonist of the play, Jaisingh Yadav bought Kamala for two hundred and fifty rupees from the flesh market of Ludharga beyond Ranchi to expose the barter system of human being. Jaisingh Yadav is in-fact a self-seeking journalist who sold humanitarian values of others for the sake of his own profit through the media. Media in one sense is a very important means to communicate with the public and also acts as a guardian to protect the public from malpractices. He reveals his dualistic nature: outwardly, he bought Kamala so as to expose the wrong doers in society yet inwardly his real motive is to get fame and promotion in his career. To fulfil his aim and objectives he uses

Kamala and his wife Sarita as a stepping stone to his career and comfort and discarded Kamala in an orphanage home like an object after being used. Although he bought Kamala yet what he was doing during the press conference and after is like exploiting the rights of human beings. In the Press Conference they asked inhumane questions in front of officials exploiting the rights of being born as women of lower status like

- If there is free sex among you, what do you do with the illegitimate children?
- You must be having free sex too. How many men have you slept with?
- Kamala- tell me where he-where Jaisingh Jadhav bought you. Was it in bazaar? Or did he come home? (Tendulkar 29)

They mocked the innocent and illegible rustic woman. After Jaisingh uses Kamala he sends off her to women's home showing his stubbornness and also he was in the constant fear of losing the case for buying Kamala which can even keep him in the jail. Exploitation in the sense of using others for benefit directly to indirectly impacted to societal problems. The exploiter divided the world into 'him' and 'other' to fulfil his inner desire. Here, 'him' i.e. Jaisingh Yadav uses Kamala as 'other' and put them in a comfortable arena in front of the people, but his unspoken desire to get fame and promotion leads to treat with indifference to 'other' after his desire is fulfilled. Kamala, who is deprived of everything and wanted to have her own family thought that the women in the house of Jaisingh Yadav were all brought by the master of the house, which exposes the weak, ignorant mentality of a slave.

During the Elizabethan Era also, the roles and positions of women were mechanized and robotized by the higher authority and also keep their mouth hushed even when they wanted to speak out something improper that fell in front of them. Male-dominated the Elizabethan Era also and women were acknowledged as the 'inferior gender'. There was no place for unmarried women and single women. If they don't want to get married, then the better option for them was to join 'nunnery' which was considered at that time as marriage to God. The judgements and conceptions towards them were highlighted in a more contradictory and detrimental

way. In the book *Shakespeare and Women*, Racking says that "in a well-ordered patriarchal world, women are silent or invisible. First daughters, then as wives, they are subject to male control, and their men speak and act on their behalf" (Racking 178). The voices of women of these era were nowhere and snatches away wholly by the men. Women have no options rather than staying solitude and mum and even reprimand if they don't get married. In *women's Role in Renaissance*, Brown quoted that "The single life would have been a costly choice, economically and socially" (Brown 66). They are forced to live under the artificial authorization of rules and regulations set up from the ages. If a minor mistake is done by women against the line drawn by superior sex then instant consequences will come apparently. Joan Kelly writes in her book about the differences between the female and male gender during the Renaissance period. In her book, "when women are excluded from the benefits of economic, political and cultural advances made in certain periods, a situation which gives women a different historical experience from men, it is to those 'advances' we must look to find the reasons for that separation of sexes". (Kelly 4)

The voices of Indian women on the other hand also stand merely under the shadow of their male counterparts. Their lives are ruled by a stubbornly male dominating chain of commands. The rules and regulations of our traditional Indian society shaped women's career, even their activities in the society are watched by the artificial authority. These inferior sexes don't have their own identity. They have to act according to the time and need as a daughter or a wife or as a daughter-in-law or a mother or a grandmother. No enough time to bring up in front like the opposite sex. If the inferior sex had done something out of the laws then they have to face the dire consequences. Women are deprived more than anything, their likes and dislikes, opinions are kept hidden inside, devoid and helpless of their own rights also. In actuality, they are in fear of male dominated rules and regulations imposed which helped in demarcating the two different sexes. Beauvoir describes the awful conditions of woman to man upon both the old and new testaments in *The Second Sex*, "For the man is not of the woman

but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman but the woman for the man.....for the husband is the head of wife even as Christ is the head of the church is subject upto Christ, So let the wives be their husband in everything”(Beauvoir 110). It clearly manifested that woman is created for man and man is not created for woman.

Unfathomable feelings of a housewife and the way they cope up with the surroundings without a grudge to any other beings show the very remarkable and passiveness which garlanded the very name designated as ‘women’ in a more beautiful way in the eyes of every person: older or younger generations. These character traits are found in the Character Sarita, wife of Jaisingh Yadav. She is an educated, sophisticated and well to do person, but she becomes a slave and walked under the shadow of her husband. She provided all the needs of her husband even carried out the tasks given by her husband with accurate details on time. She works like a private secretary of her husband avoiding her own wants and desires. She receives every phone call and wrote details of everything which were instructed by her husband. If not then she received unnecessary taunting from her husband. She tells Kakasaheb:

.....if I say they didn't tell me their names he gets angry with me for not asking (Tendulkar 3)

This shows how a man treats his own wife in a holy institution of marriage. If the husband treated in that manner to their wife, it is beyond the thinkable boundary the pathetic position of women in our society. Marriage is the sacred of the sacred, considered by all but inside these sacredness lies the position of women in the most demeanor way. Society looked down upon woman if they did mere mistakes but if it is done by male then it seems like nothing and not mentionable to the surroundings. The lives of Indian women are restricted to family and societal norms and restrictions. Any attempt to defy these will be treated like an outcast and further leads to subjugation, harassment etc. Because of these systems, by and large woman's thought process are also under the shadow of those pressurize artificial authorities and automatically

they too start thinking in a more patriarchal way. At the end they are more prone to self-realization and alienation. Sarita is also a victim of the biasness even at her holy nuclear family. About marriage Dr. Radhakrishnan observes, “Marriage is not a mere convention but an implicit condition of human society. It is an adjustment between the biological purposes of nature and sociological purpose of man”. He further says, “It is an institution, a device for the expression and development of love.” Its purpose is not only the generation and nurturing of children but also “the enrichment of the personality of the husband and wife, through the fulfilment of their need for a permanent comradeship, in which each supplement the life of the other and both may achieve completeness”(Radhakrishnan 211). But in the play *Kamala* the bond between husband and wife is not cordial even if they look more from outside.

Life of woman was indeed hard in Victorian as well as Edwardian England. Girls born in middle class families from their childhood onwards were allowed to think only home bound side. They have to remain in their home and accustomed to the belief that they have no duty beyond their family. They also follow the patriarchal standard of living where the father is the head of the family and provide money to run the family. Even those females who work outside home for income also have to do household chores after the day's hard work. The superiority over males is delicately reflected in drama like St. John Evrine's *Progress*, the general apprehension about women's inferiority is conveyed by the acclaimed scientist. He accused women for their deficit impersonal devotion to themselves. Sarita in the play *Kamala* was also a victim of gender biases even in her holy house. It is through *Kamala*: the one who was bought from the market, that she realized her positions of being a woman from the eyes of public. Her sincerity and the position of ideal woman shattered when *Kamala* asked about her:

Kamala: How much did he buy you for?

(Sarita is confused at first)

Sarita: What?

Kamala: I said, how much did he buy for?

Sarita: (Recovering) Me? Look here, Kamala (Changes her mind, and sits down beside her). For seven hundred. (Tendulkar 34)

After Kamala learnt that Sarita is childless woman, she decided to go live side-by-side with Sarita to fill up the hole of childless family. She speaks out very seriously:

Kamala: Memsahib, if you won't misunderstand, I'll tell you. The master bought you; he bought me, too. He spent a lot of money on the two of us. Didn't he? It isn't easy to earn money... So, memsahib, both of us must stay here together like sisters. We'll keep the master happy. We'll make him prosperous. The master will have children. I'll do the hardwork, and I'll bring forth the children. I'll bring them up. You are an educated woman. You keep the accounts and run the house... Fifteen days of the month, you sleep with the master; the other fifteen, I'll sleep with him. Agreed?

Sarita: (In a whirl at all this, and also very moved by it). Agreed. (Tendulkar 35)

Sarita realizes her own worth from the words of Kamala. She woke up consciously from her slumber life. She realized that she too was a pawn in the game of chess for attaining the needs and goals of her husband. She cannot be able to differentiate between her and Kamala. What makes her remarkable from Kamala is that her husband didn't purchase from the market, but legally through the institution of marriage, she is living under the same roof with her husband. The reality of life came in front of her eyes when Kamala entered into her house. Though Kakasaheb tries to calm down her mood yet she felt worthless and plans to dissect the ugly hidden truth about her husband in front of the public. In frustration and anger she says to Kakasaheb "Why aren't women ever the masters? Why can't a woman at least ask to live her life the same way a man? Why must only a man have the right to be a man. Does he have an extra sense? Woman can do everything a man can". (Tendulkar 47)

Jaisingh uses Kamala and Sarita for his personal benefit rather than for the humanitarian spirit of rescuing women folks. He uses Kamala in the name of exposing sex racket prevailing in some parts of our country, but the hidden aim for him is

also to be stepped up in his professional life. Likewise his wife, Sarita used like a domestic helper who serve him and make him comfort no matter what the situation is. On the contrary, to these, Jaisingh remembers his wife when he wants to take her to the party as a companionship, when he wanted know the details of the phone calls while he was out of the house, when he wants to fulfil his desire and when he needs emotional support when everything around him deceived him. Not a single word of Sarita's desire has been asked by her husband, which shows accurately, the only one sided love from Sarita's side only. But Sarita does realize her own state of being. From that time she was in quest of her identity as a human being but luck did not favor her. She started revolt her husband by denying to go with Jaisingh in the party exposing directly her will to her husband because she thought that that she too like Kamala was purchased by her husband legally. During that time when she was starting to protest to her husband, her husband life and job shattered due to the involvement of some higher authority about the matters of the press conference. Her husband, Jaisingh was not only in a traumatic situation but also his job was ransacked. She forgot what she wanted to convey to her husband about the inner unspoken feelings of her. Her docile and humanitarian attitude made even a stronger woman melt and the way she provided a shoulder to lean on to her husband even when she encountered the bitter truth. Because of her unsettle and unforeseeable behaviour, she was even called 'lovely bonded labor' by her husband's friend, Jain.

The secondary role of women in our society leads to the position of weaker section and their voice that comes from literate as well as illiterate become voiceless in front of the superior sex. Mary Wollstonecraft, who works for women's liberation was very angry because she thought women themselves were responsible for their bondage: their ignorance and uselessness provided fuel to the anti-feminist. She pointed out how girls are encouraged by their parents and teachers to conform to feminine ideals of modesty and dependence. Against drudgery she complained that constant companionship among sisters, mother and

in-laws denied them the solitude necessary for mental growth.

Again Greed, power and fame have destructed the lives of so many people. Blinded by their hunger of more power and recognition, those people ruined themselves leaving aside unhappy partner. Nothing tops the lust laden pursuit of fame and recognition in its insolent boldness, unscrupulous and devious behaviour and they are more insensitive to the needs and feelings of another. Jaishingh Yadav was on an adamant course of self-destruction and was in full persistency to become the most acclaimed man at any costs. The consequence of his greed to attain more and more fame leads to depression, anxiety, shamefulness at the end. Not only this, his project leads to considerable damage to others and their expectations shattered. Instead of bringing fame and recognition even the smallest happiness of the family goes in vain.

Patriarchy is a system which is prevalent in India, where male holds supreme and cardinal power in every sphere. Generally it refers to 'male domination' according to Feminism. According to Allan G. Johnson patriarchal social structures are: i) Male dominates- which doesn't mean that all men are powerful or all women are powerless- only that the most powerful roles in most sectors of society are held predominantly by men, and the least powerful roles are held predominantly by women ii) organized around and obsession with control, with men elevated in the social structure because of their presumed ability to exert control whether rationally or through violence iii) Male identified: aspects of society and personal attributes that are highly valued are associated with men while devalued attributes and social activities are associated with women. iv) Male centered: it is taken for granted that the centre of attention is the natural place for men and boys and that women should occupy the margins. (Johnson, Allen. <http://gray.intrasun.tcnj.edu>)

Modern India is progressing at a great speed with the joint hands of both man and woman side by side. Many women hold the highest position of power in our country, yet the system of patriarchy and woman's subordination is still

undergoing submissive in the sense that they are still lacking to the accessibility of facilities and amenities and also in decision making. Still, they are used as an object and they are the one which is negatively portrayed in the media. If the ideology of the patriarchy is changed, then there will be equal on all sides, including social, political, economical, family etc and there will be no unfair treatment among the sex.

References

- [1]. Tendulkar, Vijay. *Collected plays in translation*, Oxford University Press. 2003
- [2]. Bandura, A. (1999). "Moral disengagement in the perpetration of humanities". *Personality and Social psychology Review*, 3, 193-209.
- [3]. Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. The New York: Random House, 1974.
- [4]. Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. "Religion and Society" [1956] page 147 as quoted by C B. Mamoria in "Social Problems and Social Disorganization in India" page 211
- [5]. Racking, Phyllis. *Stage of History: Shakespeare English Chronicle*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1990.
- [6]. Brown, Meg Lota., and Kari Boyd. McBride. *Women's Roles in the Renaissance*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2005.
- [7]. Kelly, Joan. *Women, History and Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984. Print.
- [8]. Everine, St. John G. *Progress*. G.Allen & Unwin: 1931.
- [9]. Johnson, Allen. http://gray.intrasun.tcnj.edu/Coming%20of%20Age/a_basic_definition_of_patriarchy.htm