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Vijay Tendulkar's 'Kamala': A Denunciation of the Success-Oriented Male Dominated Society

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Abstract

No doubt, there are variations in Tendulkar's theme as well as form; from purely naturalistic plays and dark tragedies to farces, from musical set in traditional folk modes to absurd drama and from full length plays to one act plays. In the thematic point of view, his plays are ranged from social individual tensions to the complexities of human characters. From the exploration of man-woman relationship to the reinterpretations of historical episodes, the greatest quality of Tendulkar as a creative writer and dramatist rests in the fact that he can simultaneously involve and distance himself from his creation. This affords his works with infinite subtlety. Two other hallmarks of his creative self are his sense of humour and his intense compassion, which are sometimes difficult of notice because of their invisible quality. Tendulkar is a great name in Marathi theatre and he has refurbished it with vigour and vitality to awaken the dormant conscience of society through the medium of art. In *Kamala*, the human relationship between man-woman is depicted as husband-wife and exploited-exploiter relationship. He exposes the inhuman violence in its verbal form of the patriarchal society against women. The themes of the play are based on the present socio-economic situation, family and marital relations, violence and male domination.

Keywords- Indian drama, Human relationships, Marital relations, Male Dominated Society

Introduction

Vijay Dhondopant Tendulkar, Indian playwright and screenwriter was born in 1928 and brought up in the heart of Bombay City in Kandewadi, a small lane in Girgaon. He wrote more than 30 full-length Marathi-language plays and numerous one-act plays, short stories, and movie scripts about controversial social themes, including violence, poverty, women's rights, and corruption. Some of Tendulkar's most famous plays include *Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe* (1967; "Silence! The Court Is in Session") and *Sakharam Binder* (1971). *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972; "Ghashiram the Constable") was recognized as one of the longest-running plays in the world, with more than 6,000 performances staged

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internationally. Tendulkar along with Girish Karnad changed the dramatic mould by demolishing three act structure of the well-made play and giving it a new mould appropriate to the performance tradition. His plays sometimes used the expressionistic technique of dramatic make believe of dreams within the framework of naturalistic play.

Today our society is becoming more and more complex. Industrialization, globalization, capitalism, science and technology have made the life of man more Vijay Tendulkar, one of India's most influential playwrights, was born on 1928. His Prolific writing over a period of five decades includes thirty full-length plays, twenty-three one act plays, eleven children's dramas, four collections of short stories, two novels and five volumes of literary essays and social criticism. He is an important translator in Marathi, having rendered nine novels and two biographies as well as five plays. He is the author of original stories and screen plays for eight films in Marathi. He has written television serials in Hindi. He is a leading contemporary Indian playwright who writes in Marathi about contemporary issues. His plays have been translated and performed in English. In his plays, women play a central role. His female characters are mainly from the lower and middle class families such as housewives, teachers, mistresses, daughters, slaves and servants. These women bring not just variety of social station but also a broad range of emotions into the plays. Arundhati Banerjee, in her introduction to Five plays of Vijay Tendulkar, said: "...from the unbelievably gullible to the clever, from the malleable to the stubborn, from the conservative to the rebellious, from the self-sacrificing to the grasping."¹ His eight plays are translated in English and *Kamala* is one of them. *Kamala* is translated in English by Priya Adarkar and published in 1995. Tendulkar is also screen and television writer, literary essayist, political journalist and social commentator. Thematically, Tendulkar's plays have ranged the alienation of the modern individual. The themes of gender discrimination, sexual norms, violence, and stability in the society, man-woman relationship, and institution of marriage, social issues, power and morality have been featured prominently in his plays. The play has made an attempt to provide a comprehensive critical statement on human relationships mechanical. Life of the modern man has lost all sense of coherence and has become fragmented. All this resulted in the human relationships. In the total network of human relationships, man –woman relationship has always occupied a central place. The theme of man-woman relationship is universal theme in the world literature. Depiction of the human relationship in any literary work stands with cultural, social, economic, moral and political issues of the age. Today's society is becoming more complex in the context of psychological, sociological and patriarchic society. In the patriarchic society, woman's position is bad. Women have no ways to express her feelings, love and emotions in the patriarchic society. Beauvoir describes the bad condition 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 Church. Therefore, as the church is subject up to Christ, So let the wives are to their husband in everything."² It shows that the man is not created for

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woman but the woman is created for man. In the context of psychology, marriage is the most significant and socially recognized form of man-woman relationship. Marriage is a social institution supported by tradition, custom and social morality. The theme of human relationship deals with the major aspects of marital, premarital, post marital relationship and adolescent love. This type of relationship appears to be inexhaustible and the changing times and social situations have served to bring out its amazing diversity. In this context of premarital relationship, A.A. Khatri says:

“There are two kinds of involvements in Pre-marital relationship-unilateral and bilateral. In unilateral involvement, a spouse prior to his/her marriage was romantically attached and/or erotically attached to another member of the opposite sex but latter did not reciprocate by love and/or erotic response. In another type of unilateral involvement, a spouse was an object of romantic love and/or sexual attraction of a member of the opposite sex but he/she did not reciprocate. In bilateral involvement, a spouse, prior to his/her marriage and another member of the opposite sex were mutually involved-romantically and/or erotically.”³

Tendulkar tries to awaken people’s conscience and create awareness about the defects of society. He satirizes the ills of the society with an intention to correct them. He envisions an ideal society, free from exploitation and oppression, in which there is equality, freedom, happiness and peace for everyone. A sick society with decaying standards of morality cannot hope to prosper and flourish. Thus Tendulkar has attempted to eradicate the obstructive forces that stand in the way of a healthy growth and development of human life. It is an effort on the part of the playwright towards the creation of an ideal society.

Vijay Tendulkar’s *Kamala* (1995) is the most tropical drama inspired by a real life incident-the Indian Express expose by Ashwin Sarin, who actually bought a girl from the market of rural area and presented at a press conference. By using this incident, Tendulkar raises certain issues regarding the present condition of a modern society which is ready to sacrifice human morality in the name of humanity. The central character of the play is Jaisingh Jadhav, journalist, who treats the woman, Kamala to whom he has purchased from the flesh market as an object that can buy him a promotion in his job and a reputation in his professional life. Jaisingh bought Kamala for two hundred and fifty rupees but he has not thought about what will happen to Kamala after this expose. He sells Kamala who is poor and illiterate woman. Jaisingh discards Kamala in an orphanage. He exploits not only Kamala but also his wife, Sarita. Through the treatment to Kamala, Jaisingh makes Sarita realize that she is also a slave of him. Sarita observes how he refuses a bath to Kamala and takes her in clumsy clothes to the press-conference for his professional profit He uses both the woman, Kamala and Sarita as pawns in his game. He is the persecutor. For the stability in the society and reputation in the society, he uses Kamala as a slave. After his achievement in the job, he throws out Kamala. For this purpose, he uses

Kakasaheb, a journalist of the old school, Kakasaheb provides the true ideals of journalism and in contrast to these, Jaysingh Jadhav’s reporting is shown in a critical manner. Jaisingh believes himself to be liberal-minded. At the end of the play, there is a hope that Sarita will

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get independence in the future. Tendulkar uses the play also to dwell on the characteristic suffering of the Indian middle class women who are made to suffer by selfish, malicious and hypocritical male chauvinists. The man-woman relationship is also deftly touched upon in the complex relationship between Jadhav and his wife, Sarita.

Kamla is a satire on the trendy journalism we come across everywhere. Jadhav is indifferent to the humanness. He is capable of sacrificing human values, in the name of humanity itself. The husband-wife relationship between Sarita and Jaisingh is typical of the sort existing in the cities like Delhi, where executive husbands do not find adequate time for their wives who have to content themselves by being mere social beings.

Tendulkar has been a witness to many social movements and has travelled to remote parts of the country. And yet, as an artist, he was never tempted to use his information for photographic representation of social reality. His sensation as a human being goes deeper than that. His dramas present social reality. But his characters are imbued with dramatic power. He has created raw theatre language for his ape characters. Tendulkar chose themes, characters and situations from the contemporary life except some historical plays. His material for plays comes from the observation of life. The play *Kamala* indicates male dominated society in which women are only stepping-stones in a man's quest for power and reputation. In the play, there is the strange world of human relationships which are inherited. In this play, Tendulkar has shown human relationships such as husband-wife relationship between Jaisingh and Sarita, exploiter-exploited relationship between Jaisingh and Kamala and the relationship between Kakasaheb and Sarita.

Through the relationship between Jaisingh and Sarita, Tendulkar depicted Sarita as a sympathetic, kind and passionate modern but Jaisingh treats her as a slave in his home like Kamala. Thus the relationship between Jaisingh and Sarita is not cordial relationship as a husband-wife. The relationship between Jaisingh and Kamala is called exploiter-exploited relationship. Jaisingh exploits Kamala as a slave. He has purchased Kamala from the flesh market. He wants to show her in the press-conference as a slave. He has to show the condition of women in the slum area. So he doesn't give any facility to Kamala in the home. He refuses a bath to Kamala and takes her in clumsy clothes to the press-conference because he has to show the condition of slaves in the society. After the achievement in the job, he throws out Kamala from home. He doesn't care about her future. He only uses her for his promotion in job. As a human being, he has no sympathy, kindness about Kamala. So the relationship between Jaisingh and Kamala is not cordial. Kamala brings not just variety of social station but also a broad range of emotions in the play. Tendulkar has also shown such types of relationship in his play which happens in the society. In an interview, Tendulkar said: "I have not written about hypothetical pain or created an imaginary world of sorrow. I am from a middle class family and I have seen the brutal ways of life by keeping my eyes open. My work has come from within me, as an outcome of my observation of the world in which I live. If they want to entertain and make merry, fine go ahead, but I can't do it, I have to speak the truth."⁴

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Tendulkar also deals with themes that unravel the violence in human relationships. In an introduction by Arundhati Banerjee in *Collection of Five Plays*, Tendulkar noted: "...the basic urge (to write) has always been to let out my concerns as I perceive it."⁵

Thus, Vijay Tendulkar's plays concentrate on different aspect of the human character and complexity of the human relationship. He shows the position of women in contemporary Indian society through his woman characters. In this play, he depicts women as loyal, docile, hardworking, and tenderhearted. He deals with the existence of human being, human mind, human psychology and human relationship through his plays. The issues of violence, sex, illicit human relationships, power, stability in the society and social issues point out in all his plays in English translation. In this context. C. Coelho rightly points out: "In his portrayal of human relations and tensions, Tendulkar depicts the violent tendency of egotistical man and equally self- centered society. He liberated Marathi stage from the tyranny of conventional theatre with its mild doses of social and political satire for purpose of pure entertainment. It shows that Tendulkar has shown different types of themes in his plays but the theme of human relationship is very complicated."⁶

Tendulkar's play portrays different aspects of human characters. All of them underscore the complexity of human relationships. Most of his plays deal with the individual pitted against the society and explore the tensions between the two. In all of them, women play key roles in the plot. All the plays contain a subtle critique of modern middle-class and lower middle-class Indian society. Most of Tendulkar's dramas follow the naturalistic model of dramaturgy. Although there is similarity; the plays are clearly distinct from each other. *Kamala* is a denunciation of the success-oriented male dominated society where women are often victims or stepping stones in men's self-advancement. Tendulkar's plays open end may be seen as one of its striking features. Undoubtedly, his social conscience, the role he has scripted for women, his fight for justice, modern representation of gender roles, his criticism of class system in India and his dialogue with western theatre ranked him to the forefront of modern Indian theatre.

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