

The Complexity of Relationships in Vijay Tendulkar's *Kamala*

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Abstract

In the past few decades, drama in Indian languages has grown a lot. In the post-independence period, modern Indian play in English presents a stark depiction of social and political reality. Vijay Tendulkar is the most prolific and controversial playwright among Indian playwrights who wrote after independence. Tendulkar's plays have covered a wide range of topics, from relationships between men and women to new takes on events in history, society and politics. His plays focus on various facets of human nature and the intricacies of interpersonal relationships. He was captivated by the violent interaction between the exploited and the exploiter, as well as between husbands and wives, brothers and sisters and lovers and beloveds. Women are very important in his plays. Most of the women in his novels come from lower and middle-class households, like housewives, instructors, mistresses, daughters, slaves and servants. These women provide a lot of different emotions and socioeconomic classes to the plays.

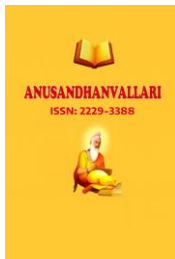
Key Words: brutality, gender, human relationship, socio-economic condition

Introduction

Indo-English literature, Indo-Anglian literature, Indian Writing in English and other names for the same thing have gotten a lot of attention from both Indian and Western scholars. Sadly, most of this attention is only in fiction and poetry. To do a complete and accurate historiographic study of Indian drama in English from its origin to now, you need to make a real, complete and up-to-date bibliography in the topic. It was 1978 when the project started and there was no real bibliography like this one. To find out the complete output, personal visits were conducted to libraries and institutes all over India and people in the theatre were met to get first-hand information about playwrights, plays and play productions.

Different people have done a great job of translating the works of playwrights like Badal Sircar, Vijaya Tendulkar, Nahesh Elkunchware and Mohan Rakesh. They have also been effectively staged in English all throughout the country. There is a link between English drama in India and plays in regional languages that were often translated. Vijay Tendulkar, one of the best-known Marathi playwrights, was born in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, in January 1928. He lived in Mumbai when he was a child. The literary environment in his household encouraged him read and write. He started off as a reporter. Tendulkar is one of India's most famous playwrights. He is one of the most important Indian playwrights since independence. Tendulkar is a sub-editor for a Marathi weekly. He started out writing prose, but later he shifted to writing plays. In his work, Tendulkar has become an essential voice for the common people, notably women and other people who are down on their luck. He shows how bad things are for women in modern society in many of his plays. His many writings spanned five decades. Most of his plays show both men and women in a realistic way and they talk about every part of life, whether it's happy or sad. Dhyaneswar Nadkarni observes:

Vijay Tendulkar leads the vanguard of avant-garde theatre that developed as a movement separate from the main stream. Tendulkar and his colleagues were dissatisfied with the decadent



professional theatre that characterized the Thirties and Forties. They wanted to give theatre a new form and therefore experimented with all aspects of it including content, acting, decor and audience communication. (9)

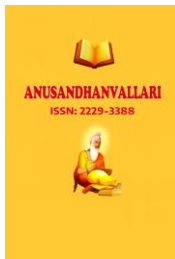
Discussion

Vijay Tendulkar's *Kamala* is a piercing portrayal of the exploitation of women in a patriarchal culture, where gender-based violence and oppression permeate the social, political and creative dimensions of daily existence. The play talks about how women are treated like objects and how it has become acceptable for them to be treated this way in both public and private settings. It was written at a time when women's rights in India were becoming less and less important to talk about. Tendulkar uses the story of Kamala, a tribal woman who is bought and used by a journalist for a news article, to make a strong point on how patriarchy and capitalism turn women into objects that are controlled. The study analyses the gender dynamics in *Kamala* through a textual examination of its characters, themes and societal commentary. It contends that Tendulkar's play reveals the intrinsic brutality of gender delineation and examines the male-dominated media and social frameworks that perpetuate the subjugation of women. The play uses Kamala's situation as an example of how women are pushed to the edges of society. It also shows how women's bodies are turned into objects and how their voices are systematically silenced in patriarchal countries. M.P.Ganesan observes: "Vijay Tendulkar has projected light on social and political concerns through his plays like *Silence! The Court is in Session*, *Kamala* and *Ghashiram Kotwal* respectively" (159).

Kamala is about a young woman who is forced into the sex trade because of her situation. It also helps people comprehend the problems that sex workers confront and the bigger problems that the business has. The title serves as a window through which the audience is asked to experience the terrible realities faced by women, illuminating systemic injustice. The name "Kamala" also has artistic meaning because it is a common Indian name that means "lotus," which is a symbol of beauty and purity. This difference between the name's traditional meaning and the harsh reality Kamala faces in the play makes her character more complex. It shows how different the ideas of chastity and virtue are for women like Kamala in society and how harshly they are treated in real life. The title not only relates to the main character, but it also sums up the larger issue of how women are seen and treated in society. Kamala's story shows how many women who are pushed to the side and used for physical and emotional damage in a culture that mostly sees them as objects for men's pleasure. Kamala's journey is hard, but it also shows how adaptable she is. Her persona, which is full of resolve and the desire for a better life, is a personification and a goal in the face of hard times. Kamala's fight to be accepted by society in the play shows how sex work is still seen as dirty.

Society is getting more and more complicated these days. Science, technology, globalization, capitalism and industrialization have all made life more mechanical for people. The life of the modern man has lost any sense of order and has become broken. All of this led to the relationships between people. The relationship between men and women has always been at the center of the network of all human relationships. The theme of the interaction between men and women is a common one in literature from all across the world. The portrayal of human relationships in literature is intertwined with the cultural, social, economic, moral and political challenges of the time. In today's world, things are getting more complicated when it comes to psychology, sociology and patriarchy. In a culture where men are in charge, women don't have a good place. In a patriarchal society, women lack avenues to articulate their feelings, love and emotions.

Vijay Tendulkar's *Kamala* is the most tropical drama based on a true story. It was inspired by the Indian Express story by Ashwin Sarin, who bought a girl from a rural market and brought her to a news conference. Tendulkar uses this event to talk about certain problems with current society, which is willing to give up morals in the sake of humanity. Jaisingh Jadhav, a journalist, is the main character in the drama. He considers Kamala, the lady he bought from the flesh market, like an object that can get him a promotion at work and a good name in



his professional life. Jaisingh paid two hundred and fifty rupees for Kamala, but he hasn't considered about what will happen to her after this news story comes out. He sells Kamala, a woman who is destitute and can't read or write. Jaisingh leaves Kamala at an orphanage. He takes advantage of both Kamala and his wife, Sarita. By treating Kamala badly, Jaisingh makes Sarita understand that she is also his slave. Sarita sees how he won't let Kamala take a bath and then takes her to the press conference in clothes that are too big for her. He plays with both Kamala and Sarita like they're pieces on a chessboard. He is the one who is being persecuted. He uses Kamala as a slave to keep society stable and his own reputation high. He throws Kamala out when he does well at work. For this reason, he employs Kakasaheb, an old-school journalist, to highlight the true values of journalism. In contrast, he shows Jaysingh Jadhav's reporting in a negative light. Jaisingh thinks of himself as open-minded. There is hope that Sarita will be free at the end of the performance.

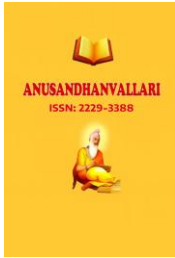
The play Kamala shows a world where males are in charge and women are only stepping stones in a man's path to power and fame. There is a bizarre realm of inherited human ties throughout the play. In this play, Tendulkar has shown all kinds of interactions between people, like the husband-wife relationship between Jaisingh and Sarita, the exploiter-exploited relationship between Jaisingh and Kamala and the friendship between Kakasaheb and Sarita. Tendulkar showed Sarita as a caring, loving and passionate person through her connection with Jaisingh. However, Jaisingh treats her like a slave in his home, just like Kamala. So, Jaisingh and Sarita don't have a good relationship as husband and wife.

Kamala says:

... Then speaks very seriously. 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. A man has to labour like an ox to do it. So, memsahib, both of us must say here together like sisters. We'll keep the master happy. We'll make him prosperous. The master will have children. I'll do the hard work and I'll bring forth the children, I'll bring them up. You are educated woman. You keep the accounts and run the house. Put on lovely clothes and make merry with the master. Go out with him on holidays and feast-days. Like today. I can't manage all that. And we must have land of our own. Don't worry about it, that's my responsibility. Fifteen days of the month, you sleep with the master; the other fifteen ... (35).

The connection between Jaisingh and Kamala is one of exploitation. Jaisingh uses Kamala as a slave. He bought Kamala at the flesh market. He wants to display her as a slave during the press conference. He has to show how ladies are living in the slums. So he doesn't let Kamala use any of the things in the house. He won't let Kamala take a bath and takes her to the press conference in clothes that don't fit well because he has to illustrate how bad things are for slaves in today's world. After he gets the job, he kicks Kamala out of the house. He doesn't worry about what happens to her in the future. He merely exploits her to get ahead in work. He doesn't care for Kamala as a person. So Jaisingh and Kamala don't get along well. Kamala adds a lot of different social levels and feelings to the play. Tendulkar has also highlighted these kinds of relationships in his play that happen in real life. The writer has not written about anguish that could happen or made up a universe of sadness. He is a middle-class man who has witnessed how hard life can be by keeping his eyes open. His work has emerged from inside him, as a result of how he sees the world.

Tendulkar also writes about issues that show how violent relationships can be. Vijay Tendulkar's plays focus on many parts of human nature and how complicated relationships may be. He uses his female characters to demonstrate how women are treated in modern Indian society. In this drama, he shows women as devoted, obedient, hard-working and kind. His plays explore the essence of humanity, the human intellect, psychology and interpersonal relationships. In all of his plays that have been translated into English, he talks with violence, sex, illegal relationships, power, stability in society and other social themes. Tendulkar shows how violent selfish people and similarly self-centred societies can be in his work about human relationships and tensions. He freed Marathi theatre from the oppressive rules of traditional theatre, which used little doses of social and political satire



just to make people laugh. It reveals that Tendulkar has written plays with many various topics, but the theme of human relationships is incredibly complex.

The play shows the universal bond between a husband and wife. But this drama shows that this relationship has been abused and taken advantage of. In Indian society, women inside the framework of family lack the opportunity to articulate their emotions and opinions in a patriarchal context. Kamala and Sarita show us how women are taken advantage of both inside and beyond the family. They are also examples of naive Indian women who are honest with men. Kamala is a representation of a lady who is taken advantage of by people outside of her family. Jaisingh brings her from the flesh market to get what he wants: fame and money. He sells her in the market of men policy. Sarita, on the other hand, is a symbol of a woman who is taken advantage of by her family. She has to do her job well and she can't say she's weary or that she can't do it. She has to give up things for her spouse. They are both on the same boat that is sinking. They are not seen as people, but as things to look at. The first one gets him a promotion at work and a good reputation in his field and the second one makes him happy in his marriage. He wants to say that women come for men, not the other way around. Tendulkar thinks that women are treated like things. Their husbands, fathers, brothers and friends all oppress them.

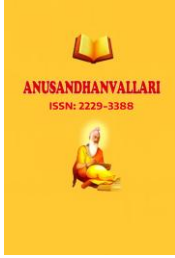
Vijay Tendulkar not only started the experimental theatrical movement in Marathi, but he also led it. Tendulkar was involved in civil rights campaigns in Maharashtra. All of this shows how much he cares about his country and his people. In his plays, he shows how idealistic changes and movements are bound to fail. He wrote plays while he was a journalist. Kamala, which Tendulkar penned, is quite poignant and current. Tendulkar used the world of journalism to make his point, which is based on a newspaper story. A journalist named Jaidev Singh buys Kamala to show the world that this form of slavery is still going on in India. Kamala, on the other hand, opens up the real life of Sarita, Jaidev Singh's wife, who thinks she is in the same scenario. In the play, Sarita's uncle Kakasaheb is an essential character because he is the older generation and is in charge of many strange things that happen in their home. As a movie, Kamala had tremendous effect on Indian society. Sudhir Sonalker opines that:

Almost all the characters in Kamala are hastily drawn. It is almost as though Tendulkar saw a dramatic potential in a newspaper story and wanted to pounce on it before anyone else did. But there is almost an inexplicable element in the play. The journalist wife detests the whole incident and says that the Kamala incident has taught her that she too is a slave. The connection is very weakly brought out. The play is hurriedly written. But what is this about after all? Nothing is developed. No character becomes a focal point and the play leaves you simply untouched. (24)

When the curtain goes up, we see Kakasaheb, Sarita's uncle and Sarita, Jaisingh's wife, in a tiny bungalow in the trendy New Delhi suburb of Neeti Bagh. Jaisingh Jadav is a well-known young journalist who works as an associate editor for an English-language daily newspaper. He and his wife Sarita live there. A woman is the main character in Tendulkar's plays. Tendulkar reveals society's flaws and vices through the way he writes about women. Women are generally shown as victims and losers. Tendulkar says in an interview:

... show the struggle of a woman, it is not one woman's fight. The individual must have name and identity and caste and background to be credible, but she is not just a woman on stage, in a particular play. I am, in writing of her situation, showing that the possibility of a struggle against it exists... By not giving a solution, I leave possibilities open, for whatever course the change may take. When the members of my audience go home and chew on the situation, they might be able to see their daughter or sister in the woman's position and come with a way of changing the situation for her advantage. (40)

The drama shows how women are enslaved in a culture where men are in charge in India. The play has a harsh criticism of marriage as an institution. Jaisingh only paid 250 rupees for Kamala, but years ago he got 700 rupees as a dowry from Sarita's father and Sarita's services as a woman-servant in the name of wife. Sarita's words show this:



... to present a man who in the year 1982 still keeps a slave, right here in Delhi. Jaisingh Jadav. I'm going to say: this man's 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. (46)

Conclusion

Vijay Tendulkar provides a persuasive commentary on the commodification and subjugation of women within patriarchal social frameworks. Tendulkar uses the character Kamala to show how women are silenced and how institutions like the media and the law, which are run by men, keep their abuse alive. The performance is an important reminder of how necessary it is to reform society and treat men and women equally. It makes the audience think about how women are treated and shown in society. The play is still an important work of literature that questions society's morals and argues for the end of institutions that are unfair to people. It does this by telling the story of Kamala's struggles in a powerful way. P. Rajeswari and M.P.Ganesan point out: "Tendulkar explored violence against women in its various forms: domestic, sexual communal and political" (307).

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