



A Critique on *Kamala* : Feministic Ideology



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Abstract :

Vijay Tendulkar is a well-known playwright in contemporary Indian theatre. He reminds us other playwrights such as Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar and Mohan Rakesh. His Kamala is a gyno-centric play focusing on a stereotypical confined life of an Indian woman. The play shows the radical changes in the life of a modern woman who always dreams to retain her status in Indian society. She seeks to rebel against all the oddities that she faces in her life. Undoubtedly Kamala is a gyno-centric play. He has a tremendous exposure to Marathi theatre from his childhood. He points out the contemporary socio-political issues through his plays. He seeks to portray the intricacies of human character, individual stress and tensions, and a web of the natural relationship between a husband and a wife. The focus of his writing is on the plight and predicament of women in the urban middle-class society. Kamala is a

real story of a journalist who purchased the woman from the rural sex industry which shows the involvement of police and politics in this trade. Sarita's sacrifice in a domestic world finally leads her to become an able modern woman, strong willed, optimistic and free.

Keywords : Kamala, flesh-trade, Sarita, gyo-centric, Indian society

Research Paper :

Samuel Johnson states, "Nature has given women so much power that the law has wisely given them little." (*Studies in Women Writers in English*, 213.) The play Kamala written by Vijay Tendulkar demonstrates a pessimistic note on the married life between a journalist and his wife. It is an expression of feministic ideology encountering with male oppressors. However, his Silence! The Court is in Session is about how an emancipated woman undergoes in her social intercourse with her male counterparts against urban surroundings. On the other hand, the urban middle class society is ridiculed in Kamala. The satirical mode of writing is the crux of the play. Watching the play on the stage, the readers or audience seek to uproot tensions in the minds of Jadhav, a journalist and Sarita, his wife. It has the elements of suspense and satire which often arrests the attention of readers or audience and also makes them think over the plight of an Indian woman and her freedom. His use of satire as a narrative technique exposes the hypocrisy of the urban upper middle class. It also points out the competitive world of a journalist, corrupt politicians and a natural relationship between a husband and a wife. The play brings out the social institutions of politics, marriage and journalism.

Vidyut Bhagwat says :

Traditionally, women were stereotyped as passive and dependent, while men were regarded as active and independent. The traditional roles of women as housewives and men as breadwinners lead to marriage and family patterns that were basic in perpetuating inferior treatment of women. It is only now, in our current times, that women are being encouraged to engage in work outside the home, whereas men are being urged to participate equally in childcare and housework. ¹(*Feminist Social Thought*, 3)

Sarita and Kakasaheb become major instruments to deride marriage as a social institution. Kamala is an illiterate Indian village woman who remains a symbolic manifestation of the existed flesh-trade in some villages in Bihar. Is there any socio-political purpose behind the presentation of Kamala at the Press Conference? Jadhav, convincing both Sarita and

Kakasaheb, states : “I didn’t hold this Press Conference for my own benefit. It was to drag this criminal sale of human beings into the light of day.”(Kamala, 31). Kakasaheb expresses sarcasm, says : “And you sold a woman to them to do so.” (Kamala, 31). He further states that Jadhav is more inhuman than flesh-traders in Bihar as he sold Kamala in the market of commercial journalism. He is a successful journalist but failed in his domestic world. He is brutal not only to Kamala but also to Sarita, his wife. Kamala has truly become a source of his instant name and fame as a journalist. N. S. Dharan opines :

Sarita to him, is, again, an object to be paraded as a wife at parties, to enhance his status as a successful journalist. In essence, he is the typical Indian husband, who has no time to spare for his wife assuring her of his affection for her. In short, it is the husband-wife relationship that has come under increasing threat in metropolitan cities like Bombay which has been the butt of satire in *Kamala*.²(Kamala, 57).

Jadhav, her husband’s craze for publicity through journalism makes him an irresponsible husband. He ignores the existence of his wife as a life companion. The play obviously demonstrates a master-slave relationship rather than a natural husband-wife relationship. In a sense, Kamala is a thought-provoking play dealing with press, politics, power and a strange man-woman relationship. It is also studied as a political satire on modern society.

N. S. Dharan states :

“Jadhav in *Kamala* exposes himself to ridicule all around because of his insensible pursuit after worldly fame. In the process, despite his initial success, he loses his job and lands in a situation that can be saved only by his wife’s sympathy, care and understanding, though he has been treating her all along with utmost impudence.”³ (Kamala, 59).

Vijay Tendulkar’s Kamala is a realistic play wherein social issues are discussed and debated at length.

The setting of the play is a city and the ambience is quite tensed. It is a two act play with a few characters. It is a demonstration of ongoing thought processes in the mind of characters especially Kamala and Sarita. The constant phone calls indicate the hectic schedule of a journalist in the play. Some calls threaten Jadhav with murder whereas some are work-oriented.

Having been married to Jadhav, Sarita has been placed in the claustrophobic world from where she has hardly any escape. Since her marriage, she has been leading a slavish, suffocated and suppressed life in a male-dominated society. Darkness on the stage shows the

inner conflict of Sarita and a stereotypical life of Indian woman. Silences are quite suggestive and connotative in the play which shows the stagnant position of woman in the society, for example, Sarita sitting alone in the drawing silently in Act II.

In the play, the dialogue between Sarita and Kamala show the understanding between the two women wherein a feminine sensibility is tackled with due attention to the utmost deepened concern of women as detailed below :

“Kamala : ...Where does he (Jadhav) sleep?

Sarita : Who?

Kamala : He – the one who bought me.

Sarita : In the room upstairs.

Kamala : ...No little ones?

Sarita : What little ones?

Kamala : Children

Sarita : We don't have any...”⁴(Kamala 34).

To sum up, can a woman understand another woman throughout the play? If yes, how far is she able to support her in the critical situations she has been trapped in since long?

The play thus exposes feministic ideology of the playwright through female characters like Kamala and Sarita.

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