

## *CHAPTER III*

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#### Exploitation and Enslavement of Kamala and Sarita

Vijay Tendulkar's major concern is the fragmentation of society born out of the distinctions of value system based on gender inequality. The play *Kamala* clearly pictures the status of Indian women revealing how marriage as a sacred institution enslaves women. Tendulkar, through the experience of Jaisingh and Sarita presents two distinctive spaces, both at mental and physical level. He tries to represent this aspect of social discontent through his play *Kamala*. The play is a dramatic representation of the plight of the poor woman, Kamala and the educated woman, Sarita who are called the 'oppression incarnated.' The life stories of Kamala and Sarita are a testimony to the fact that a woman cannot think of her own spaces in gender determined social structure.

Kamala's sufferings are used as a material for the success of the journalist, Jaisingh, who wants to represent Kamala's case as a 'hot news' for the press conference. In the book *Dramatic World of Vijay Tendulkar*, Beena Agrawal quotes the words of Arundhati Benerjee, who writes in her introduction to the play, *Kamala* that the play . . . was inspired by a real life incident – the Indian Express expose by Sarin who actually bought a girl from the rural flesh market and presented her at a press conference. But using this incident as a laughing pad, Tendulkar raises certain cardinal questions regarding the value system of a modern success oriented generation which is ready to sacrifice human values even in the name of humanity itself. (47)

P. Obula Reddy in the article "Cruelty in Family and Society in Vijay Tendulkar's *Kamala*" perceives that, "Tendulkar exposes the chauvinism intrinsic in the modern male

Jaisingh, who believes himself to be liberal minded” (60). Jaisingh is an associate editor in the English language daily and for him professional success is a culmination of his desires. He is finicky about his appearance, fond of exhibiting his status. He is a career oriented and high paced journalist who singularly focuses on his promotion and does not care about humanity or any of its values. He tries to sensationalize his news to gain more recognition. He is assertive at office as well as at home. Jaisingh Jadhav is a typical Indian husband, a hounding and a belligerent husband who has no heed towards his wife and her emotions. He fiddles his wife’s desires and needs, without caring for her sensitive nature. He remains absolutely indifferent to the domestic worries that have been the prime concern of Sarita. He imposes his authority on his wife, as if she is a mute as dead property, a stone image without any choice. As a husband, he has been least understanding and he could never speak to her of her needs and desires.

Tendulkar projects Sarita to be an image of an ideal Indian wife who is extremely sensitive to her husband’s needs and tastes, quite eager to pamper to his own whims and fancies. She attends to her husband’s needs with an alacrity that makes one wonder how she, an educated girl, rich enough not to depend on any one, could be so slave-like to him.

Sarita survives within the periphery of her husband’s decision. Sarita holds no other identity apart from physical identity. It is implicit that she is confined to the kitchen. Sarita survives in her kitchen’s spaces and appears only with the tray of breakfasts. Her duty is to attend all telephone calls and to note down the details of them to communicate them to her husband. This is a mechanical exercise of Sarita but has no courage to assert her choices. Yet she shows sign of bliss within familial context.

Sarita's mechanical response reflects her slavish mentality. But her whole mind is preoccupied with the well-being of Jaisingh. When she receives a message of his expected return, she at once becomes alert and hastens preparations to receive him. She orders her maid-servant, Kamalabai, to cook curry for him and get beer for him and also enquires whether his clothes were back from the dhobi. All these she does in such a flurry as if it is for a chief guest and not her husband, or her life-partner who is arriving.

The home centered approach of Sarita makes Kakasaheb to commend, "You may be highly educated, Sarita, but you are still a girl from the old Mohite *wada*!" (5). The repeated calls and the mechanical response of Sarita irritate Kakasaheb, a man guided by Gandhian ideology who believes in the dignity of spirit. He confesses and warns Sarita against the impending perils in the threat against the enthusiasm of Jaisingh, who buys Kamala from the flesh-market and calls in the 'high-speed type' journalist. He also tries to convince Jaisingh to leave his enthusiasm that he has shown in Kamala's case.

In Kakasaheb's observation on the passion of the new journalist there is an echo of the deterioration of the values related with those who are associated with press. For the press is no longer a voice of people but is a method to monopolize the resources of power in which there is no space for safety and sentiments of the people. Tendulkar reflects on the modern day culture and the blind flight of the people to become reputed in an instant at the cost of negligence of moral values. The writer tries to present Jaisingh as selfish and success-oriented man of this generation through the field of journalism.

Kakasaheb, who is associated with the cause of the suffering of the poor, never thinks of using the power of press for his personal success and cheap public popularity. But with Jaisingh, poverty and exploitation of Kamala are materials for his own applaud

at the press conference. The obscene comment Jaisingh makes, “Why don’t you come and see for yourself, *yaar? Ekdum Id-ka Chand!*” (9) only highlights the cruelty and crudity existing in the mind of males like Jaisingh. For him Kamala’s life has no significance and bringing Kamala is a method to ensure personal success. Jaisingh admits, “Not on people. On bad trends. I have no obligations – no concern with individuals” (11). For Tendulkar, press is an instrument of power for the imposition of authority on those who are powerless.

Tendulkar through the relationship of Sarita with her husband seems to agree that in social order there is no space for equality of sexes. Sarita in spite of being Jaisingh’s wife has no power to raise questions against the action of her husband. Instead, she as a devoted wife gets an insight into the restlessness of her husband. Jaisingh reveals to Sarita that Kamala is bought from the auction market where people make bid of woman. He admits, “For two hundred and fifty rupees. Even a bullock costs more than that” (14). These words are the first exposure of Sarita to the cruelty and humiliation done to women. The position of women in poverty-stricken area is no better than that of bonded labour. The horror of it is not only confined to the idea of gender discrimination but also expresses the evil and cruelty existing within the power domination in society. Talluri Mathew Bhaskar in the article “Vijay Tendulkar’s *Kamala*: A Critique of the Male - Dominated Society” states,

The triangular relationship of Sarita-Jaisingh-Kamala exposes the oppressive modern society where house wives like Sarita are exploited inside their houses by their husbands, and men, too are exploited outside their houses by their masters or employers. Woman is entrusted with the

household responsibilities, particularly those of cooking food and rearing children. This leads to the formation of exploitative and oppressive society of men as against the exploited and oppressed society of women. (11)

Jaisingh further elaborates, “The men who want to bid – handle the woman to inspect them. Whether they are firm or flabby. Young or old. Healthy or diseased. How they feel in the breast, in their waist, in their thighs and . . .” (14). In this description Tendulkar exposes how Jaisingh tries to impose authority with greater vehemence on Sarita. Sarita shudders at the thought of the auction of woman in the flesh market and looking at her nervousness, Jaisingh enjoys the situation. In the humiliation of Kamala, Sarita seeks the reflection of her loss of self-respect. At the mental level she becomes restless to tolerate the steps of her husband but in reality she is not permitted to open her lips.

Jaisingh is a man of double standards. By exposing Kamala at the press conference he wants to prove himself as a saviour of women but inwardly he wants his own recognition as a journalist. So with savage selfishness prevents Sarita from lending a saree to Kamala as she is in tattered clothes. He wants to present her as she is and this shows the deadened sensibility of modern man. He shouts at Sarita saying, “I tell you, don’t give her a thing without asking me” (21). This shows the cruelty in the heart of the man. And this kind of cruelty is worse than the physical violence inflicted on the sufferer.

Jaisingh does not allow Kamala to have her bath because to him even her stinking body without bath furnishes a material to be exposed in the press conference. His presumption becomes clear when he says, “. . . people of her kind don’t have a bath for days on end. . . . And you’ll be surprised – she’ll feel dirtier after her bath” (18). Kamala

is marginalized in three ways – as a woman; as a poor and uneducated woman; and is picked up from the flesh market. These markers of the identity of Kamala become the strength of Jaisingh, “. . . and people of her kind don’t have a bath for days on end. It’s a famine area. Where could they get the water? And you’ll be surprised – she’ll feel dirtier after her bath. Please don’t do any such things concerning her without asking me first” (18).

Jaisingh’s attitude towards Kamala is an emblem of the view of master class which treats deprived section of the society as the slave. He treats Kamala as commodity of sexual pleasure having no civilization and prestige. Jaisingh cunningly takes the benefit of her poverty and in his garb of social service, he exhibits the evil hidden in his consciousness.

The nature of questions presented to Kamala by the congregation of dignitaries at press conference suggests that they are no better than the auctioneers at the flesh market. Jain, friend of Jaisingh, without caring for the sentiments of Kamala presents a very obscene question, “How many men have you slept with?” Jaisingh tells Sarita about the purchase of Kamala – her price, the handling of women at the hands of the auctioneers and also adds that Kamala has no bidders that’s why she is sold at a cheap rate, lesser than the bullock cost. Tendulkar presents the inhumanness of men. Jaisingh through Kamala makes fame in his profession and he is not ready to voice for the crime committed against women.

Tendulkar explores the various modes of violence and expresses that even though the man is a civilized being there is still the savageness of primitive man in him. In these conditions Sarita for the first time registers her protest against her butchered feminine

sense. Sarita cries out, “She’s a woman, after all. And her sari is torn” (21). Tendulkar accepts the fact that all women share identical sensibility that can never be realized by men.

Tendulkar suggests that a woman has a better realization of their fellow woman. Both Sarita and Kamala have a heart to heart talk where Kamala expresses her happiness being in a palatial house. Kamala is amazed to see the big house of Jaisingh but in this big house Sarita has no sense of belongingness. Kamala is curious about Sarita’s role in the house. Sarita replies, “Yes, Kamala. The house . . . it devours us. It’s so empty . . .” (34).

Sarita is taken away by her ignorance and shares her loneliness with Kamala. Kamala finds Sarita no better than a bonded labour. Kamala picks up courage to ask some pertinent questions to Sarita. Kamala interrogates, “how much did he buy you for?” (34). Sarita instead of being annoyed innocently replies, “For seven hundred” (34). Kamala continues with her own amazement, “It was an expensive bargain, memsahib. If you pay seven hundred and there are no children. . .” (34).

Kamala expresses her sympathy on the bareness of Sarita and blesses her that she must have children. Kamala insists that children will give a meaning and purpose in life. The conversation between Kamala and Sarita, about the wishes to have children and plan to work together are symbolic representation of dividing the space and responsibility for themselves. Kamala proposes that she will do all housework while Sarita will look after accounts and such ‘sophisticated’ things. She adds that they will share their master's bed half a month each.

When Sarita enquires Kamala about her children, she replies that she will have as much as she wants. And she continues as,

The master bought you, he bought me, too. He spent a lot of money on the two of us... We'll keep the master happy... The master will have children. I'll do the hard work, and I'll bring forth the children... You keep accounts... Put on lovely clothes and make merry with the master... Fifteen days of the month, you sleep with the master; the other fifteen, I'll sleep with him. Agreed? (35)

This is the only scene, which brings the two women emotionally together and establishes a female bonding between the two of them. It remains emotional and sensitive part throughout the play. In Sarita's married life, she is nothing better than a bonded slave. Kamala plans her future in the company of Sarita and wants to be a copartner in the family of Sarita and also intends to share the family responsibility collectively. She even gives a comprehensive suggestion to share the sexual life with Jaisingh on a contractual basis. Kamala's suggestion of common sharing of Jaisingh's household indicates the radical conversion in the society. Though her suggestion is a mockery of the entire patriarchal social structure, she challenges the chauvinism of Jaisingh. It is indication that Kamala maintains her own autonomy of self. She retains her own freedom of thought even better than Sarita.

This radical approach of Kamala brings a new consciousness in Sarita. She realizes that the cooperative existence is the only solution to resist the forces of patriarchy. Sonali Jain rightly argues, in her article "*Kamala: Within and Beyond*" that Kamala is a "signifier of exploitation: she is the catalyst who brings Sarita, the educated,

intelligent wife of Jaisingh, to her existential crisis and precipitates the fall of Jaisingh” (93).

Now Sarita is compelled to think of her own status and reveals the truth saying:

Kamala woke me up. With a shock. Kamala showed me everything.

Because of her, I suddenly saw things clearly. I saw the man I thought my partner was the master of a slave. I have no rights at all in this house.

Because I’m a slave. Slaves don’t have rights, do they, Kakasaheb? They must only slaves always. Dance to their master’s whim. Laugh, when he says, laugh. Cry, when he says, cry. When he says pick up the phone, they must pick it up. When he says, come to a party, they must go. When he says, lie on the bed – they [she is twisted in pain.] (46)

Kamala’s conversation inspires Sarita to make a reassessment of her own position in the family of Jaisingh. Sarita realizes that she is married by Jaisingh marries her after receiving a handsome amount as dowry and treats her just as a fancy slave. She has to be there for him sexually, as a domestic servant and as a well-educated modern wife to show off in society and she has no say in any of it. She comes to know about her status as his wife - a passive victim of the unalterable male oppression. She is beginning to loathe her husband after knowing how he has used Kamala.

Kamala unconsciously lights the flame that enlightens the life of Sarita. It is Kamala who catalyzes the awareness of Sarita about her gender victimization and her slavery. It is through her association with Kamala that discovers that Jaisingh has no respect for her as a woman.

The vision of Kamala becomes the strength of Sarita and starts to become conscious of her slave like position. She now understands the words of Jain, who warns Sarita against the double standards of morality existing in society. This is implicit in Jain's comment on the hypocrisy of sensational journalism of Jaisingh,

This warrior against exploitation in the country is exploiting you. He's made a drudge out of a horse-riding independent girl from a princely house. *Hai, hai!* [*Theatrically, to Jaisingh.*] Shame on you! Hero of anti-exploitation campaigns makes slave of his wife! . . . (*To Sarita*) Bye, lovely bonded labourer. . . (17)

The phrase 'lovely bonded labourer' indicates a lot about Jaisingh's treatment of his wife. He uses his wife as a mere object. He talks about equality and freedom of a woman but at home he does not allow these, since he believes that there are a set of rule and regulations for a woman, which she has to follow and behave as a wife. A woman is always bound by restrictions imposed by society.

When Jaisingh tries to send Kamala to the orphanage, shirking all his responsibility of her rehabilitation, Sarita gets furious and protests vehemently. She recollects her courage and tries to articulate her voice. She is transformed from being a docile wife into an assertive and defiant woman, who musters energy and resources to confront her husband and protests stating, "You're deceiving her?" (41). She proposes that Kamala would stay with her in her family. Sarita with assertive tone admits, "I'm telling you this very seriously. Kamala is going to stay here" (41).

In this resolution of Sarita, Jaisingh pays no heed and exercises his own authority. "It's I who takes decisions in this house, and no one else" (42). He has unmasked the

patriarchal hegemony in him through his words and behavior and also authenticates Sarita subjugated position in the house. He even tells Sarita not to be sentimental about Kamala as she will not be feel bad going to such a home. This shows the different attitudes of the two: Jaisingh has no feelings for the emotions of the girl. She is a plaything in his hands to expose the evil perpetrated in the system. Sarita, on the other hand, goes deeper in to the heart of the matter, taking stock of the feelings and sensibilities of a woman like herself. For Jaisingh, Kamala is only a tool in the hands for his media success. For Sarita, Kamala is a woman like herself with feelings and emotions.

Due to Jaisingh's autocratic attitude, Kamala leaves the place. Tendulkar proves Jaisingh to be a male chauvinist and a tormentor. The play affirms that both Sarita and Kamala have no reverence and respect. They are expected to bear the comments of Jaisingh in perpetual silence. They both remain marginalized and appear as silent subjects. They are like mirror images of each other; both are parts of the same split self, one is the other's alter.

Jaisingh treats both Kamala and Sarita as 'objects' that exist to advance his interests. The former brings him a promotion in his job and reputation in his professional career; the latter provides him with domestic comfort, social companionship and sexual pleasure in his married life. Sarita now comes to discover the disadvantages of being a woman. She undergoes a sea-change and is now entirely an independent and an assertive woman who finally discovers her real identity. She refers to Jaisingh by the term 'gentleman' which implies that she considers him to be a stranger in her life. She demonstrates that individual freedom is so precious that it should not be compromised or

allowed to be suppressed. She voices to Kakasaheb her conviction of the essentials of a meaningful liberation for woman.

With the dawn of this new insight she comes to look upon marriage not as a holy union of souls but as a bond of slavery. Sarita gets a realization of her own position and she also realizes the loss done to her 'self-dignity' in the name of the institution of marriage but Kakasaheb tries to defend and to pacify the anger of Sarita in the name of the institution of marriage.

Tendulkar uses Sarita as a mouth piece of all women to whom marriage is nothing but 'legalized rape' and marital household literally a prison-house. Sarita realizes that she is used merely as an object of sexual satisfaction, of social companionship and of domestic comfort. She finds herself as a slave. Kate Millett in the book *Sexual Politics* comments that there is "no remedy to sexual politics in marriage" (147). In realization Sarita bursts forth saying "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'll pay whatever price I have to pay for it" (52). Sarita decides to forget what has happened in her life and become an independent and confident woman. It also indicate Sarita's changed perspective that encourages her to take her own decision and hope for the bright future. Her self-realization enables her to raise questions against 'male mastery,' and develops her self-confidence that a woman can do everything that a man can.

When Kakasaheb tells Sarita that Kamala is a ". . . pawn in his game of chess" (43). Sarita becomes impatient and with great trouble confesses, "Not just Kamala, Kakasaheb. Not just Kamala, Kakasaheb. Me too . . . me too" (43). She even attacks the

hypocrisy of Jaisingh when she says “. . . 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” (46). Her repressed anger accumulated over the year, against the person responsible for the meaninglessness of her life assume an identity. She tells Kakasaheb that she is going to convene a press conference in which she intends to declare before the whole world, the real state of affairs at home. She says that,

. . . a man who in the year 1982 still keeps a slave, right here in Delhi.  
 Jaisingh Jadhav. I’m going to say: this man’s a great advocate of freedom.  
 And he brings home a slave and exploits her. One you can use and throw  
 away. He gets people to call him a sworn enemy of tyranny. But he  
 tyrannises his own slave as much as he likes, and does not think of  
 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. (46)

A revelation is at hand for Sarita who realizes the way her husband exploited her in pure slavery. The only difference she finds is that Kamala was bought for a paltry sum, while she was sold through a huge dowry from her father at her marriage to Jaisingh. He is nothing but a slave-driver for Sarita. The only thing that happened in between them is the institution of marriage.

In the new awakening of Sarita, Kakasaheb finds a loss of his own manhood. In spite of being disgusted with the sensational journalism and the carelessness ways of Jaisingh Kakasaheb defends the male domination of Jaisingh. He glorifies his own role as

a husband and takes pride in his irrational authority. Not only Jaisingh but Kakasaheb also behaved recklessly with his wife. When he was young he too did not care for her feelings. To pacify Sarita he says,

That's why he's a man. And that's why there's manhood in the world. I too was just like this. Don't go by what I seem to be today. I gave your aunt a lot of trouble. As if it was my right. I didn't care what she felt at all. I just marched straight ahead looking in front of me. I was confident she would follow, even if she was limping. And she did follow, the poor thing.

(47)

Kakasaheb's recapitulation of his cruelty to his wife proves that cruelty to a woman is an external manifestation in man's life and a woman in the modern world is still a symbol of Victorian womanhood – an embodiment of service, slavery and sacrifice. Tendulkar aims at the very core of hypocrisy and inhumanity of the male chauvinists of the Indian middle class.

Kakasaheb in spite of his liberal ideology and immense sympathy for the poor maintains the identical male chauvinism that is a cause of anger and resentment in Sarita. Sarita is not able to tolerate the word of Kakasaheb because in his vision she finds no place for the freedom of the individual. She as the subjugated wife becomes the voice of feminine dignity and freedom and she tries to articulate the voice of women with utmost vehemence. Having come to know the egoistical insincerity of her husband, Sarita questions the social injustices practiced against a woman in a male dominated society.

Why can't men limp behind? Why aren't women ever the masters? Why can't a woman at least ask to live her life the same way as a man? Why

must only a man have the right to be a man? Does he have one extra sense? A woman can do everything a man can. (47)

But all her queries lead to no substantial answer. Kakasaheb only repeats the same age old adage; “What a man does is manhood” (47). Sarita’s plea to change the mindset brings only more and more frustration enveloped in anger.

Tendulkar accepts that every woman is individual with a distinctive identity of her own and her identity cannot shadow in the male identity. Therefore the dramatist makes Kamala and Sarita to redefine their self and to make protest against the humiliations and cruelty done to them. Her sacrifice in a domestic world finally leads her to become an able modern woman, strong willed, optimistic and free. Sarita is ready to face the reality with her changed attitude. She is optimistic in her perspective.

Tendulkar through the play makes it clear that the real object of marriage is not home and house-keeping, domicile and poultry, but it is companionship and intellectual and emotional association between man and wife. He asserts that true marriage is a relation based on mutual understanding.