

Gender, Power, and Identity in Vijay Tendulkar's Kamala: A Feminist Analysis

*¹ Dr. Pranav Ratnaparkhi and ²Kishor Maruti Shitole

*¹ Associate Professor & Research Supervisor, Department of English, HPT Arts & RYK Science College, Nashik, Maharashtra, India.

²Research Scholar Dept. of English, HPT Arts & RYK Science College, Nashik, Maharashtra, India.

Article Info.

E-ISSN: 2583-6528

Impact Factor (SJIF): 6.876

Peer Reviewed Journal

Available online:

www.alladvancejournal.com

Received: 24/Oct/2025

Accepted: 23/Nov/2025

Abstract

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the famous Marathi dramatists and his works are translated into English language. Kamala is a realistic play and this play highlights the actual life of incident. The dramatist explains how society to the reject of women as human being and to deny those mainly of human rights by the male counterparts. His play indicates that the realities of life in modern era social milieu. This dramatist had written thirty plays in Marathi language and ten plays are translated into English language. This dramatist shows that in their plays the status of modern women at modern times through the very realistic and naturalistic portrayal of both women and men. In 21st century high society woman is presented in contrast to a poor uneducated slave women. The dramatist sketched a few female characters that have been almost no voice at all throughout the play. His female characters are delicate, treated as insignificant and above all victims of patriarchal socio-political oppression and suppression. Through the play is set in a particular socio-political background of colonized India to develop the idea of authority or power. The role of women is discredit or under estimated in all walks of life in the male controlled society. The playwright focuses on the expectation of female characters. Vijay Tendulkar has indicated women self-identity in this play. In this play, there are three main characters Kamala, Sarita and Jaisingh stand meant for persons who lose their status in the male dominates society. The dramatist highlights of male dominated society, conditions of women and how men have used women as an object of gain and pleasure. The present research paper will focus on Kamala, to present the position of women in the society and to explain the issue of oppression on the basis of gender.

Keywords: Feminism, Feminist Critique, Gynocritique, Patriarchal, Female Power, Gender-Equality etc.

*Corresponding Author

Dr. Pranav Ratnaparkhi

Associate Professor & Research

Supervisor, Department of English, HPT
Arts & RYK Science College, Nashik,
Maharashtra, India.

Introduction

Girls have discriminated against in their health and education. The infant mortality rate of girls is higher than that of boys in most countries. Girls are made to do more works than boys and parents prefer educating their sons rather than their daughter in the hope that the son will earn and support a family in the further but they oversee the old says that "Educate a man and you educate an individual; educated a woman, and you educate a whole nation". Women have treated substandard in the male dominated society. They have been subjected to several restrictions and were unsafe to violence and exploitation. Violence against women exists everywhere. It differs from time to time and place to place, in type, frequency, intensity and control. Nowadays there are many cases of violence and many ways in which women are

needed to tolerate. The playwright displays that the disgraceful moralistic standards of the so called civilized middle class Indian society of post-independence era. Feminism in India is the movements which focus on defining, establishing and defending the equal rights for Indian women. The dramatist shows that how society adds to the devaluation of women as human being and deprives those most of private rights which are related to personal life, freedom, equality, status of the individual. The dramatist shows that how women are exploited ill treatment and victimized. Women are made to suffer throughout their life is the central concern of the paper. An attempt has been made to display the unfair treatment of women that compel them tolerate all types of violence, physical, mental and emotional. The dramatist also has been treated his female characters in the plays with great

comprehension and sympathy. He explores and exhibits their lives in such a way that they seem realistic and alive. His women characters are reveal his intensive treatment of themes like social conscience and complex human relationships. Most of his women characters are both oppressed and courageous at the same time. Vijay Tendulkar's *Kamala* is a seminal play in Indian theatre that sharply critiques patriarchy, exploitation, and media sensationalism. Based on a real-life incident where a journalist "bought" a woman from a rural flesh market to expose the inhuman practice of human trafficking, Tendulkar's play goes beyond a mere journalistic scandal. It offers an intense feminist critique of Indian society and challenges the audience to reflect on the intersections of gender, power, and morality. At its core, *Kamala* becomes a compelling exploration of how women, even in urban, seemingly empowered spaces, are treated as objects by a patriarchal system.

Feminism has become a dominant force in contemporary literary criticism like Deconstruction and New historicism. It has challenged several assumptions of traditional Criticism. It has made considerable advancement during a small period of time Virginia Woolf, Elaine Showalter, Kate Millett; these are the major exponents of feminist criticism. Feminism is a social, cultural, political movement for women and men. In a simple way, feminism means an attempt to understand woman as a woman. Feminism begins in U.S.A. and feminism is also called women's Liberation. According to Elaine Showalter, dividing two types of feminist criticism. a) Feminist Critique b) Gynocritique. Feminism is usually defined as the advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of equality of the sexes. Literature reveals the life, culture and social situation of the time in which it is has created. Feminism is an attempt to free women from male dominated ways of seeing, to resist, to subvert or to remove the patriarchal culture, to assert a belief in sexual equality, and eradicate sexist domination. During the Elizabethan, England, the gender equality of ideal woman was silent, virtuous, devoted, chaste woman. They were brought up to converted virtuous housekeepers and youngster bearers. In Greek literature, women were treated as inferior who depended on men as fathers, husbands and spouse. At the time of Shakespeare, Queen Elizabeth ruled over England evidencing that a woman can handle political and state affairs as capably as man. However, patriarchy was an accepted form of belief. There was a great equality between men and women and women were repressed in various ways. Many people acknowledged that were many women who were superior to their husband's both intellectually and spiritually. Now women were included from social life and political life. They have no rights to choose or to take an active part in legislations and social issues. They were only presented through roles like nurse, cooks, homemakers etc.

Gender, Power, and Identity in *Kamala*

Kamala is written in 1981 and *Kamala* is a realistic drama. This also portrays the patriarchal society who values the gender more than the quality of person and treats woman as a slave and which is taken granted by this society. The dramatist also exposes, the career centric Jaisingh Jadhav, one of the major and male character in the play, which are relate to the most of men modern society and it emphasis on the different role of women in society. *Kamala* is one of the best plays motivated by a real-life incident the Indian Express representation by Ashwin Sarin, who really purchased a girl from the bazaar of rural area and untaken at a press conference. By using this event, the dramatist increases

definite issues about the current situation of a current society which is prepared towards sacrifice human morality in the name of humankind. The male dominant character of the play is Jaisingh Jadhav, journalist, who treated the woman, Kamala to whom he has been purchased from the flesh market for the purpose that can buy a promotion in his good job and a status in his professional life. Jaisingh bought Kamala for two hundred and fifty rupees but he does not know what will be happen to Kamala after this depiction.

Jaisingh: "They sell human beings at this bazaar...They have an open auction for women of all sorts of ages." He continues,

"The men who want to bid handle the women to inspect them...How they feel in the breast, in their waist, in their thighs and..."

(Collected Plays 14)

He sells Kamala who is poor and uneducated woman. Jaisingh discards Kamala in an orphanage. He not only gives ill treatment Kamala but also his wife Sarita. Through the ill treatment to Kamala, Jaisingh makes Sarita recognize that she is also a slave by him. Sarita, a middle-class, educated woman who lives under the illusion of equality within her marriage. Her journey from passive submission to self-awareness mirrors Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir 295). Sarita, like many women, has accepted her role as a compliant wife because society has conditioned her to believe that it is natural. However, as the events of the play unfold, she begins to realize that her womanhood has been constructed by male-defined expectations, not by choice. Sarita's transformation in the play shows how societal structures shape her gendered identity. Initially passive, she realizes that her husband treats her no better than the woman he bought, Kamala. She becomes aware of her oppression and starts questioning her role in the patriarchal setup. Sarita's identity as a "wife" are shaped entirely by patriarchy. She is not treated as an individual but as a supportive extension of her husband, Jaisingh. Her journey from a submissive housewife to a questioning woman reflects her realization that her "womanhood" was constructed by societal expectations, not her own will. Sarita notices how he rejects a bath to Kamala and takings her in awkward clothes to the press-conference for his professional profit. He has used both the woman, Kamala and Sarita in his own purposes. He is the persecutor. For the constancy in the society and status in the society, he used Kamala as a slave. After successful of his professional life 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, and Jaisingh Jadhav's reporting is shown in a critical manner. Jaisingh believes himself to be liberal-minded. At the finally, there is a hope that Sarita will get independent in the future.

Kamala was inspired by a real incident involving Indian journalist Ashwin Sarin, who bought a woman from a flesh market in 1981, to expose human trafficking. He brought the woman to a press conference in Delhi to highlight the ongoing atrocity. Tendulkar took this incident and fictionalized it in *Kamala*, turning the journalist into Jaisingh Jadhav, an ambitious man eager to gain fame and recognition. While the original journalistic act was meant to highlight a grave social evil and Tendulkar uses fiction to critique the very motives behind such acts. Was the woman, Kamala, liberated or was she just used as a proper for male ambition? This question forms the basis of Tendulkar's feminist inquiry in the play.

Kamala's character embodies the rural, voiceless woman who has faced centuries of exploitation. She is illiterate, unaware of the urban world, and treated as a commodity both in the village market and in the urban media space. When Jadhav brings her home, it is not for her benefit, but for the spectacle. Her voice is rarely heard; her opinions are not sought. She is confused by her surroundings and treated more like an artifact than a human being. Kamala's powerful moment comes when she innocently asks Jadhav whether she will be allowed to stay and work as a servant in his house. This simple question holds a mirror to society: she does not seek love, justice, or retribution only survival. Feminist theorist Gayatri Spivak's concept of the "Can the subaltern speak?" (Spivak 66) becomes relevant here. The tribal woman Kamala bought and displayed by Jaisinh is a literal subaltern. She is denied a voice, paraded as a symbol of oppression, and then discarded. Even Sarita, though more privileged, realizes that both she and Kamala are silenced women, used by men to prove a point, not to be heard. The parallel between Kamala and Sarita exposes the layers of subalternity. Kamala, the rural woman bought in a flesh market, is reduced to a spectacle in Jaisinh's press conference and is quickly discarded once her purpose is served. Sarita recognizes that she too is silenced and displayed just like Kamala, though in a more sophisticated setting. This powerful identification bridges the gap between rural and urban, rich and poor women, showing that patriarchal objectification knows no class boundaries. Kamala is spoken about but not too; her identity is always mediated through male narratives. Sarita is an urban, educated woman. But education does not equate to liberation in the world Tendulkar presents. Her husband, Jadhav, is progressive in his public life but highly patriarchal in his domestic role. He expects Sarita to be the perfect, subservient wife who manages the house, supports his ambitions, and does not question his actions. Sarita is not consulted about the decision to bring Kamala home; she is simply informed. It is in Sarita that the play's feminist resistance truly develops. Watching Kamala's treatment forces Sarita to reflect on her own position. She realizes that while Kamala was bought in a literal market, she too has been "bought" in the name of marriage. Her final monologue is a powerful act of defiance where she decides to confront her identity and step beyond the walls of her home. She states, "I'll go to the press conference... I'll face them... I want to see how it feels to stand on one's own two feet". One of the most striking feminist themes in Kamala is the co-modification of women. Whether in a village flesh market or a metropolitan press conference, women's identities are reduced to their bodies or their roles in relation to men. Tendulkar's portrayal is not limited to the rural exploitation of Kamala but extends to the more insidious, "civilized" exploitation of women like Sarita. The play questions the structure of marriage as a system that enables and perpetuates male dominance. Sarita is intelligent, well-spoken, and modern, yet she has no say in the decisions that affect her life. Her identity is always subsumed under her husband's. Through her transformation, Tendulkar critiques the assumption that urban, educated women are free. Sarita's feminist awakening is a reclaiming of her selfhood beyond being "Jadhav's wife." The media, too, is shown to be complicit in the objectification of women. Jadhav's act of "buying" Kamala is not an act of rescue but of exposure for personal gain. The play asks whether the media truly cares about social change or is simply feeding its own ego.

Kamala is paraded for headlines, much like how rural women are paraded for customers. This intersection of patriarchy and media sensationalism exposes how systems of power be they traditional or modern continue to exploit women. Kate Millett's feminist theory further illuminates the play's critique of gender power within the family. Millett argues, "Patriarchy's chief institution is the family" (Millett 33), and this is evident in the structure of the Jadhav household. Jaisinh, Sarita's husband, poses as a liberal, progressive journalist, yet he reinforces the same patriarchal ideologies he critiques in public. He dominates Sarita intellectually, emotionally, and socially, reducing her to a decorative presence in his professional life. Sarita is not an equal partner but an accessory her voice and opinions routinely dismissed or ridiculed. The domestic space, as Tendulkar shows, becomes a microcosm of larger patriarchal society, where women are trapped in roles of obedience and invisibility. The family institution in the play is shown as male-dominated. Jaisinh treats his wife Sarita as an accessory rather than an equal partner. His private and public behavior is rooted in patriarchal privilege. Sarita is emotionally and intellectually oppressed within the household, which is structured to serve Jaisinh's ambitions. He dominates her decisions, mocks her intellect, and uses her presence as a means to maintain his public image. Her realization that her home is also a space of exploitation reflects Millett's view of the domestic sphere as patriarchal

Sarita's journey is central to the feminist thrust of the play. Initially passive, she becomes introspective and then assertive. Her epiphany comes not through a sudden revelation but through the slow realization that her condition is not much better than Kamala's. Her decision to attend the press conference in place of her husband is symbolically revolutionary. Though the play ends ambiguously, her assertion of autonomy signifies a break from internalized patriarchy. It is not just a rebellion against her husband, but against the whole system that confines women to roles of service and silence. Kamala's silent strength also cannot be ignored. Despite her lack of education and awareness, she displays resilience and dignity. Her desire to work rather than beg, her confusion at being "used," and her quiet retreat into the margins reflect a deeper tragedy the silencing of the marginalized woman. Yet in that silence, there is a powerful indictment of the system that Tendulkar masterfully portrays. Shailaja Wadikar comments on lower status of woman and exploitative nature of society.

In the play '*Kamala*' Tendulkar explores the ruthlessness of the media and the position of woman in society. The play exposes how a man either degenerate woman or venerated her for his selfish motives depending upon the necessity of the situation (82)

In *Kamala*, the dramatist shows that male dominated society in which women are only inferior to men's quest for power. In the play, there is the extraordinary world of human relationships which are hereditary. In this play, the dramatist shows that human relationship between husband and wife like Jaisinh and Sarita, exploiter-exploited relationship between Jaisinh and Kamala and the relationship between Kakasaheb and Sarita. Jaisinh treats Sarita as a domestic slave or stepping stone. Sarita represents educated slave whereas Kamala represents illiterate slave. Kamala's question,

“How much did he buy you for?”

Sarita instead of being annoyed innocently replied, “For seven hundred.” Kamala continues with her own amazement, “It was an expensive bargain, memsahib. If you pay seven hundred and there are no children...”?

(Collected Plays 34)

Sarita with her sympathy makes Kamala to reveal the reality of her life. Kamala plans her future in the company of Sarita. She wants to be a co-partner in the family of Sarita and also intends to share the family responsibility collectively. Even she gives a comprehensive suggestion to share the sexual life with Jaisingh on contractual basis. Makes Sarita realize that there is no difference between both of them. She realizes her place in Jaisingh's life. Kamala makes her realize that she is also a slave for Jaisingh. Being realized Jaisingh's true color; Sarita transforms herself into an assertive woman and tries to protest his domination.

She tells her uncle that she will hold a press conference to expose her husband. Throughout relation of Jaisingh and Sarita, the playwright shows that Sarita is a sensitive, caring and passionate but Jaisingh treats Sarita a slave in his home-based like Kamala. Thus the relation of Jaisingh and Sarita is not affectionate relationship like a husband-wife. The relations of Jaisingh and Kamala are called exploiter-exploited relationship. Jaisingh exploits Kamala as a slave. Jaisingh had been purchased Kamala from the flesh market and he shows that Kamala in the press-conference became a slave. He has to show the condition of women in the slum area. So Jaisingh does not give any facility to Kamala at the home. He rejected a bath to Kamala and takes her in ungainly clothes to the press-conference because he wants to show the condition of slave woman in the modern society. After the achievement in the job, he throws out Kamala from home. He doesn't care about her future. He only used Kamala for his promotion in his profession. Being as a human being, he has no sympathy, kindness about Kamala. So the relation of Jaisingh and Kamala is not affectionate. Kamala brings not impartial of social station but also a variety of emotions in the play. The dramatist shows that such types of relationship in his play which happens in day today life in the society. In an interview, the dramatist said: I have not written about hypothetical agony or formed an unreal world of sorrowfulness. The dramatist says that I have come from a middle class family and I have seen the cruel ways of life by keeping my eyes openly. My work has come to from within me, as an outcome of my opinion of the world in which I live In *Kamala*, the dramatist has explored the condition of women in contemporary Indian society, women who are toppled throughout and are treated as feeling fewer objects as if they have no sentiments. Kamala and Sarita are the two women characters in the play, in the same condition and Tendulkar shows that how both of them are prevented from doing certain essential works and grief an unfair justice emotional and mental crises overlap Sarita with a sense of realization that like Kamala, she is also just a pawn in his game of chess. Now Sarita asks the overwhelming and thought proving question why women are not master like men? Why can't a woman at least ask to live her life the same way as man? Why must be only a man have the right to be man? Sarita determined asserts on the need of a change in the concept of manhood and the possessions and execution of certain rights in all domains of life. *Kamala* belongs to the post- independence phase of the feminist movement. The dramatist shows that the women characters are in the process

of progress and during the play they get knowledge and aim to get freedom and status and the so called modern, broad-minded men are stripped naked and their true color as self-seeking. Jaisingh Jadhav is concerned with his goal and journalist who is singularly focused arranged his life achievement and does not to take care about humankind and values, he tries to exaggerate his news to gain more appreciation. Kamala and Sarita are the most important women characters who are used a doll and objects to be used for improvement in status through the play. Sarita is an educated woman who looks after the household. In this play she has seen acting if she is her husband's secretary and is very careful in nothing down his messages and takes care that everything Jaisingh needs is ready. The break in this accepted comes when Jaisingh brings Kamala at home after buying her meat counter form? When Sarita asserts herself and objects to Jaisingh decision of sending Kamala to the orphanage, Jaisingh very filmy shows that Sarita her place and tells her like our ancient fathers that it is his home and what he wants will occur here. The dramatist uses the play also to reside on the characteristic suffering of the Indian middle-class woman made to suffer by self-centered. In this play the dramatist portrayed the woman in quite realistic way. The character of Kamala the victim of flesh business who sold to Jaisingh Jadhav is shown as practical and she has accepted the truth of life and trying to adjust her life. Kamala is found of her master although she knew he is not going to marry her and unaware of the reality of that he is just going to use her for his own professional profit. The long conversation between Kamala and Sarita. The oblivious inquiry that Kamala raises about the cost of Sarita opens her eyes to her genuine position in Jadhav's life and influences her to understand that there is essentially less distinction between her life and that of Kamala's. She replies that she is worth seven hundred rupees. Kamala, uneducated and oblivious about the reality, sympathizes with Sarita when she discovers that she is childless. Kamala, thinking Sarita to be a barren slave, tries to help her companion in this way:

You are an 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 a land of our own. Don't worry about it, that's all my responsibility. Fifteen days a month, you sleep with the master; the other fifteen, I'll sleep with him. Agreed?”

(Collected Plays 34)

Later we find that when Sarita prevents Jadhav from shifting Kamala to the orphanage, he asserts his masculinity by saying:

“It's I who take decisions in this house, and no one else. Do you understand?”

(Collected Plays 34)

So it is clear that male chauvinism is the guiding spirit of men like Jaisingh. A supporter for women liberty, Jadhav, finds it difficult to acknowledge that his wife can have her very own will. She also sees Sarita wife of Jaisingh and another slave whom her master bought and trying to live with her. Kamala has influenced of male-controlled thinking other personality. Throughout the play until her existence of the character, Kamala is shown as a simple masculine thinking woman who loves of her master while unconscious of his intention. The

dramatist also shows that another women character in the play that is Sarita. Elaine Showalter writes that "Feminist criticism is concerned with woman as the producer of textual meaning" (Showalter 38). By the end of the play, Sarita reclaims the narrative. She no longer accepts the male-defined meaning of her identity or her marriage. She demands to speak, to interpret, and to define herself not in relation to Jaisingh, but on her own terms. Her voice, previously silenced, becomes a tool of feminist reclamation. The dramatist shows that the role of women in patriarchal society through the character of Sarita. Sarita is a wife of a successful journalist Jaisingh inferior and does not give her any chance to take a decision on any subject or matter. From the play it proves that Jaisingh doesn't value the opinion of Sarita. It is also questionable that whether he gives Sarita as the status of his wife. For Jaisingh, Sarita is related with only for his satisfying like physical, mental, social needs and for domestic works. He doesn't treat her as a human being rather her treat her as his personal slave. Jaisingh exploits her in every way. But due to Sarita married to Jaisingh in patriarchal society. Sarita has to tolerate that torture of Jaisingh because in male-controlled society the females are considered as inferior to males and them to listen to their husband or father. The portrayal of the male controlled society, the play is highlighted actual patriarchy system in Indian cultural. The wife or women should to listen to male, even male is assumed as a characterless, or without any great achievements. It is the miserable reality which has been represented through the play and through the character of Sarita. The dramatist trying to show the feminist perspective in Indian society. Particularly, in Kamala, the dramatist signifies his women characters are revealing all the shades of womanhood. They are realistic and multi-faceted. This play highlights the critical condition of women in society and their mixed reactions towards the complexities put of forth by their family and society. They are dominated by their male-partner or master.

Women are marginalized on all the levels-family, society and workplace. They are used only as a commodity or plate and are fully exploited. The voice of rebellion, if it ever comes, is suppressed. They are based on the actuality which he finds that around himself, in his society. Kamala obviously indicates portraits the status of Indian women is revealing that how marriage is a sacred institution enslaves women and Kamala deals with the victimization of women. This play represents the exploitation of women by the success concerned with men. Later we also find that Jadhav was shocked to learn from his wife that she doesn't want to go to the party tonight. In following dialogue, Sarita affirms her identity. Fear transforms into retaliation:

Jaisingh: Do you want to come to the party?

Sarita: No.

Jaisingh: You don't want to come? Why?

Sarita: That's my will.

Jaisingh: Your will.

(Rather surprised)

Sarita: Aren't I allowed to have a will of my own?

(Collected Plays 45)

The conversion of Sarita becomes a new experience both: for Jaisingh and Kakasaheb. None of them is serious about the terrible havoc going on within the mind of Sarita. Both of them ignore her as insane. It is not an expression of insanity but is an expression of common human sensibility. Sarita realizes that what Kamala is proposing, she already does all

that. She is the slave to her master husband already. Sarita knows that she holds no power, no right in this home. She realizes that not just Kamala, even she is a pawn in Jaisingh's game of chess. In the Indian contemporary drama the female characters are developed from silent suffering to angry, explosive outburst. Their voice is the voice of the ultra-modern, liberated woman of the modern age in its assertion and determination. The following dialogue shows Sarita's state of mind:

I am going to present 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. 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 for free not just free the slave's father shelled out the money a big sum. Ask him what he did with it.

(Collected Plays 45)

Kakasaheb is asking Sarita to accept the way of the world and not try to change the way things are. The unpleasant things are in the share of women only. But Sarita stands her ground and says that this thinking must be changed. The manly ego Kakasaheb stresses upon is demeaning to women, as if they have no self-respect. But at the end of the play, Sarita acts as a loving and understanding wife when Jaisingh loses his job and is upset. But this does not mean that Sarita will go back to her old life. She is humane hence can't bring herself to throw another storm on Jaisingh at that moment. Sarita decides to forget what happened in her life and become an independent and confident woman. She says,

Sarita: But at present I'm going to lock all that up in a corner of my mind and forget about it. 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.

(Collected Plays 52)

Sarita's sacrifice in a domestic world finally leads her to become an able modern woman, strong willed, optimistic and free.

Contrast Struggle between Sarita and Kamala

In *Kamala*, Vijay Tendulkar effectively contrasts the experiences of two women Sarita, the urban, educated wife of a journalist, and Kamala, a tribal woman purchased in a flesh market to highlight the multi-layered nature of patriarchal oppression in Indian society. Both women suffer under male dominance, yet their struggles differ in form, scope, and visibility. Tendulkar thus critiques patriarchy not as a monolithic structure but as a complex, adaptive system that varies across class, caste, and education. Sarita's struggle is emotional and psychological; emerging as she gradually becomes aware of the power dynamics within her marriage. Despite being educated and relatively privileged, Sarita realizes that she is not treated as an equal partner but rather as a convenient object, much like the tribal woman her husband exploits. Her self-awareness becomes clear when she states, "I thought I was free. But I was just a puppet... a toy... a

convenience" (Tendulkar 55). Sarita initially believes in the illusion of modernity and marital partnership, but her husband's treatment of both her and Kamala as tools for his journalistic success reveals a deeper structure of gendered exploitation. Her awakening is central to the play's feminist message that even educated women are subject to subtle but pervasive forms of male control. In contrast, Kamala's struggle is literal, physical, and existential. She is a symbol of the voiceless subaltern woman, sold and bought in a flesh market. Kamala is unaware of the deeper socio-political implications of her exploitation. Her silence is not just personal but also political, representing what Gayatri Spivak famously termed the "muted voice of the subaltern" (Spivak 271). Unlike Sarita, Kamala does not have the language or education to understand or articulate her suffering. She accepts her fate with resignation, which makes her a tragic figure of passive oppression. Kamala's entire identity is constructed by forces of class, patriarchy, and systemic neglect.

Aspects	Sarita	Kamala
Class	Urban, educated	Rural, tribal, illiterate
Awareness	Gains awareness gradually	Unaware of being exploited
Struggle	Psychological, emotional	Physical, existential
Voice	Finds her voice at the end	Silenced throughout
Role	Supposed "partner" in marriage	Treated as property

The contrast between these two women highlights the intersectional nature of female oppression. Sarita, with her social privilege, is eventually able to question and reject her role, while Kamala, belonging to the lowest strata of society, remains voiceless and powerless. Sarita's rebellion, however late, reflects the beginning of a feminist awakening, while Kamala's silence continues to represent the deep-rooted, systemic nature of female subjugation. The final scenes of the play suggest a transformation in Sarita, as she prepares to live independently, stating that she will now begin to "learn to live... like a human being" (Tendulkar 59). Thus, Tendulkar uses the characters of Sarita and Kamala not only to depict personal suffering but to expose the broader social mechanisms of patriarchy. Their differing experiences represent the dual faces of gender oppression: one that is covert, intellectual, and middle-class, and another that is overt, physical, and subaltern. Feminist theory reinforces this duality, showing how patriarchy operates differently across social and economic divisions. The play, therefore, becomes a layered feminist critique of Indian society, calling for awareness, resistance, and transformation. In *Kamala*, Tendulkar does not just narrate two women's lives; he stages a profound feminist critique of Indian society. The contrast between Sarita and Kamala highlights how patriarchy assumes different forms depending on a woman's position in the social hierarchy. While Sarita moves from ignorance to resistance, Kamala remains a symbol of the silenced and the forgotten. The play ultimately urges for a broader, intersectional feminist consciousness one that includes not just the educated urban woman but also the rural, tribal, and voiceless women who suffer invisibly.

Kamala's-Relevancy in today's Context

Vijay Tendulkar's play *Kamala* remains deeply relevant in today's context because it explores enduring issues like patriarchy, gender inequality, media exploitation, and the co-modification of women, all of which continue to resonate in contemporary society. The core theme of *Kamala* is the subjugation of women under a patriarchal structure. Sarita, the

educated and urban wife of Jaisingh, is treated like an object in her own home mirroring the exploitation of the tribal woman, Kamala. Women's roles are still restricted, even in progressive settings. Domestic patriarchy is often hidden under a mask of modernity. Despite legal and social advancements, women continue to face systemic oppression in personal and professional spaces. Jaisingh buys Kamala from a flesh market to expose the system, but ends up using her for his own professional gain just as he uses his wife. This critique of using women's suffering as spectacle reflects, the media's sensationalism of women's issues for attention and profit. The failure to treat women as individuals, not mere symbols. Women's trauma is often commoditized in media, social activism, or politics without truly empowering them. Tendulkar exposes the moral hypocrisy of intellectuals, like Jaisingh, who claim to be reformers but practice the same oppression they criticize. Many who claim to be feminists or progressives still uphold patriarchal attitudes in private life. The play ends with Sarita's awakening: she declares she will step out of her husband's shadow and find her own identity. This reflects the feminist awakening that many women experience. The quest for women's autonomy and voice is central to current feminist and social justice movements. Kamala, the tribal woman, represents intersectional oppression gender, class, caste, and ethnicity. Her exploitation to the continued neglect of marginalized women's rights. Lack of access to justice and dignity for rural/indigenous women. Tribal and Dalit women still face extreme violence, trafficking, and invisibility in mainstream discourse

The Nature of Patriarchy in Kamala

Patriarchy, as a socio-cultural system privileging male authority and control over women, has historically manifested in overt forms of dominance, exclusion, and violence. However, in contemporary society, although its visible structures may have evolved the spirit of patriarchy remains resilient and deeply embedded in institutions, media, and interpersonal relationships. This chapter explores how patriarchy has adapted to modern sensibilities while continuing to subjugate and marginalize women in more subtle, insidious ways. The nature of patriarchy has evolved, but its core spirit male dominance, control over women, and gendered power imbalance largely remains intact. In modern times, patriarchy often hides behind the façade of progress, appearing more subtle and institutional than overt and violent, as it often was in the past. Historically, patriarchy enforced clear gender roles men as breadwinners and women as domestic caretakers with legal and religious support. In contrast, modern patriarchal practices often appear under the guise of liberalism and equality. Women are now legally permitted to access education, employment, and political participation. Yet, they often face symbolic violence, economic disparity, and gendered expectations that reflect the unchanged essence of patriarchal power. Patriarchy is more covert and structural women can vote, work, and lead, but they face discrimination, objectification, and glass ceilings. Women's voices are heard more but still frequently ignored, undermined, or appropriated. Women continue to earn less than men for the same roles globally. Me-too movement exposed how power structures protected male harassers across industries "The burden of proof in sexual harassment cases still falls on the woman, showing how the system favours the powerful. "Jaisingh, many modern men support women's rights publicly while controlling their choices privately. This is reflected in the digital age where men may celebrate

women's freedom but still shame them online, undermine them at work, or expect traditional roles at home. Kamala, the tribal woman "purchased" for a press conference, is silent, submissive, and unaware of her co-modification. But in modern times, women are often still reduced to roles of utility, beauty, or sacrifice only now, the platform is global and the mechanisms are sophisticated. Even Sarita, initially complicit in her husband's worldview, must confront how deeply she has internalized her subservience. Her journey mirrors that of many women today, who must unlearn patriarchal values they have inherited. The patriarchy Tendulkar exposed in *Kamala* has simply changed its costume. It no longer always buys women in markets it hires them cheaply, silences them politely, and praises them superficially. But the spirit of control, hierarchy, and exploitation lives on. As long as women must fight for equal respect in every sphere from the newsroom to the bedroom the play *Kamala* will remain tragically contemporary.

Conclusion

In the play *Kamala* through the characters of Kamala and Sarita the dramatist shows that harsh reality of exploitation and slavery of women in traditional Indian Patriarchal society which can towards to the modern Indian society as well. Lastly whether women like Kamala who has been purchased by Jaisingh Jadhav, a journalist from a bazaar in Bihar merely two hundred and fifty rupees only still exists or not is debatable. But what exists a poignant reality is that till today women in India are exploited, Oppressed and dominated by men in varied forms in the society. At last the patriarchal thoughts are very harmful for society and it responsibility of people of that society to have gender equality in every aspect of life because women and many are both dependent on the each-others. He shows that the position of women in contemporary Indian society through his woman characters. In this play, the dramatist depicts women as loyal, docile, Hardworking, and sympathetic. The dramatist deals with the reality of human being, human mind, Human psychology and human relationship through his plays. The issues of violence, sex, illicit... This plays shows that the dramatist has shown dissimilar types of themes in his plays but the theme of human relation is very complicated. So, we find that all the three female characters in the play 'Kamala' are the victims of male dominance and violence. Patriarchy as a leading power force in society stops women to be liberal and live their life freely. All three female characters, Kamala, Sarita and Kamalabai want to live their life on their own conditions, however restricted in the chain of relationship and responsibilities. Kamala has not only pleased her master of Jaisingh Jadhav, but also fulfilled her duties as a wife. In return they both are dominated by their master. It can be said that women's slavery, exploitation in patriarchal society. The Exploitation of women can be described to the 21st century's women too. That till today women in India are exploited, oppressed and dominated by men in varied forms. Be it physical, mental or psychological violence, the psyche of Indian male largely, yet considers women as slaves whose chief duty is to serve him and lead a life as per his whims and fancies. At last, the patriarchal thoughts are very harmful for society and, it responsibility of people of that society to have gender equality in every aspect of life, because woman and man are both dependent on each other.

Vijay Tendulkar's *Kamala* is not merely a play about human trafficking or media ethics it is a profound feminist text that critiques the treatment of women in both rural and urban contexts. Through Kamala and Sarita, Tendulkar shows how patriarchy wears many masks sometimes brutal and direct, at other times subtle and institutional. *Kamala* is a compelling feminist text that challenges the audience to reflect on the systemic exploitation of women in both rural and urban India. Through the characters of Kamala and Sarita, Tendulkar critiques the patriarchal structures that commodity and silence women. While the play does not offer a radical feminist solution, it powerfully illuminates the need for women's emancipation and autonomy. Sarita's realization of her own oppression and her resolve to assert her voice marks the beginning of feminist resistance a quiet yet significant revolution within the domestic sphere. The feminist perspective in *Kamala* does not offer easy resolutions. It reveals the uncomfortable truth that even those who speak of liberation may themselves be agents of oppression. By juxtaposing the experiences of a tribal woman and an urban housewife, Tendulkar emphasizes that feminism must speak for all women not just the educated, urban elite. Sarita's final act of rebellion is a call to all women to recognize their oppression and reclaim their agency. Kamala's quiet tragedy serves as a haunting reminder of those still unheard. In this way, *Kamala* becomes a powerful feminist text that remains relevant in contemporary discourse on gender, identity, and power.

Acknowledgements

Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune

Gokhale Education Society's HPT Arts & RYK Science College, Nashik.

References

1. Tendulkar Vijay. Collected Plays in Translation, Introduction, Samik Bandyopdhyay. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002.
2. Tendulkar Vijay. Collected Plays in Translation. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.
3. Tendulkar, Vijay. *Kamala*. Translated by Priya Adarkar. Oxford University Press, 2000.
4. Showalter Elaine. *A Literature of their own*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977.
5. Woolf Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. The Hogarth Press, London, 1929.
6. Beauvoir Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany- Chevallier, Vintage Books, 2011.
7. Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. University of Illinois Press, 2000.
8. Morris Rosalind C. editor. *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea*. Columbia UP, 2010.