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## **Exploitation of Women by Media in Vijay Tendulkar's *Kamala: A Study***

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**Abstract:** The role of media in presenting the image of women and their participation in the public arena is legitimately questionable in any society of the world. Women form half of the world population and have acquired political citizenship in most of the societies. Yet, their concerns and status have remained marginal within the social, economic and political structures. The research paper explores Vijay Tendulkar's play *Kamala* as a powerful treatise against sensational journalism in projecting the image of women. The play is about a journalist called Jaisingh Jadhav who buys an *adivasi* woman Kamala in a flesh market and plans to expose her in public in order to grab name and fame in media. Sarita his educated wife comes to realize the plight of kamala and her own and resolves to fight with him. As a journalist turned dramatist, Tendulkar brilliantly exposes various diabolical dimensions of sensational journalism through the play. The researchers would try to interpret the play in the light of various feministic views of the media as how it is biased in honouring men and women and discusses the contemporaneity of the play.

**Keywords:** Sensational journalism, media, image, misrepresentation, news making.

The democratic role of media in representing the image of women and their participation in the public sphere is legitimately questionable in any society of the world. Women form half of the world population and have acquired political citizenship in most of the societies. Yet, their concerns and status have remained

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marginal within the social, economic and political structures. How has the media responded to the women's question in a democratic society where they act as primary definers of public issues? For instance, do the media perceive women as individually important and hence promote and encourage their participation in the public sphere? Does it allow women the right to communicate and be heard? What kind of ideas and ideologies are being perpetuated by the media in relation to women? Is it contextualizing women's contemporary positions properly? Or in the name of 'humanizing the women news', is it gradually shattering its own visage and losing its real meaning? Needless to say that in the contemporary politically amalgamated, scientifically advanced, commercially oriented and gender biased contexts, media is on the verge of collapse in portraying women's image this regard.

In this context, Vijay Tendulkar's play *Kamala*, certainly, is a powerful treatise against sensational journalism in projecting the image of women where reporting can be distorted by the personal attitudes of journalists even though they claim to be proud of their objective. The play has raised pens and typewriter keys, both for his denouncement of trendy journalism and his own trendy stance of sympathizing with the plight of a woman, a theme he has been pursuing with some consistency through plays like *Silence! The Court is in Session*, *The Vultures*, and *Sakharam Binder*. The play is about two women exploited by a sensational journalist outside and inside the house and engages himself in adventurous investigations. It is ironical that, Jaisingh who appears a warrior against exploitation outside, exploits his own wife.

Sarita's concern for her husband's security reminds the archetypal image of an ideal housewife. Woman feels insecure when her husband is in threat. Sarita worries about her husband and encourages her uncle to guide him properly. Her husband does not practice what he teaches. Print media has a big role to play in originating opinions on vital issues in a democratic system, where the constitution has guaranteed freedom of press. Freedom has deeper roots where free press is encouraged. Newspapers have to extend that freedom by making people think on their own because a free press and democracy are indivisible. One can't survive without the other. Jaisingh demands freedom of press but he doesn't give the same to his partner. Talking about the duty of a journalist,

*London Times* put it:

The duty of the journalist is the same as that of the historian - to seek out the truth,

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above all things, and to present to his readers not such things as statecraft would wish them to know but the truth near as he can attain it (Louis, 1985: 16).

Tendulkar conceptualizes the need of education for women. Sarita realizes Jaisingh's true self. He, in the name of eradicating tyranny, himself tyrannizes his own wife. Exploitation of Kamala by a journalist proves the famous cultural critics correct in accusing mass media of using sex in advertising. They point out how media promotes the objectification of women to sell their goods and services (Robert, 1989: 169).

He presents Kamala in a press conference to prove flesh market is like the overt use of sexuality to promote breast cancer awareness advertisements, through fund raising campaigns where these advertising campaigns suggest that having sexy breasts is more important than saving their lives, which devalues them as human beings. Victimization of women is a common result of commercial advertisements. "If Kamala is interviewed by visual media, the scene would be entirely different," says Sambaiah (2009: 168). Sambaiah also draws a parallelism to film media and quotes Budd Boetticher's view of projecting the heroines in films,

What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance (Patricia, 1990: 198).

As Kamala is young and beautiful, she would certainly be interviewed to be provoked than presented.

In honouring men and women media is biased. It is true that media honours man more than woman. Jaisingh is proud of the honour media gives him. But he doesn't know that it is the result of trendy journalism. Kakasaheb is honoured when Sarita tells him that his houseboy, who is now the defence minister, enquires about him, whenever he meets Sarita and Jadhav at a party in New Delhi. Kakasaheb's response in this context, though tinged with bitter sarcasm is significant. His words clearly indicate the world of differences that exists between his kind of journalism and that of Jadhav's.

KAKASAHEB : I'm honoured. Who asks after me now? I'm a back number – remnant of times past. A dead journalist – who's just about staying alive! Now it is the day of yours husband's type of journalism. The High-Speed type! . . . Eyewitness report! [5].

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The action of the play accelerates with the arrival of Jaisingh Jadhav to house, bringing with him Kamala, a village woman, whom he has bought for two hundred and fifty rupees in a village in Bihar. He has made all arrangements to present her at an exhibit to prove that flesh-trade is rampant even in the remote villages of India. On the other hand, Kamala does not know that Jadhav is going to present her at the 'press conference' and she thinks that Jadhav has bought her in order to keep her in his house forever as his mistress. He doesn't have any sympathy for the downtrodden and tribal women like Kamala.

Tendulkar satirizes the hypocrisy of those who are associated with the pseudo reformative actions in Indian society. Pintu Karak (2015) also finds verbal irony in Jaisingh's words as he uses cheap and enticing language with Kamala. He is a pseudo reformist. He wants to prove himself as a reformist to the public but he has poor opinion about tribal people. Outwardly he projects himself as reformist but inwardly he is a racist. He is such a 'risk taking person' for the women of other States but neglects his own district where 'corruption', 'gambling', 'illicit liquor making' and 'red light houses' are the prevailing scandals [6]. It is true that, besides being oppressed by patriarchy within the community, adivasi women face lot of problems. Sruthy Pandyan in *People's March* reports the plight of tribal girls of Orissa and Bihar. She points out,

Many tribal girls from Sundargarh district have been sold to brothels in Delhi for sums varying between Rs.8,000 and 20,000. The social repercussions are proving disastrous. Migrant tribal girls find it difficult to get married within tribal societies, as people suspected, she could be HIV positive euphemistically called 'Delhi disease'.

Even minor illness are feared to be disease and the girl is socially boycotted and her family also faces social isolation (2016: 3).

Kamala's issue is the microcosm of what happens on the media with the image of women. Media is an essential link in the chain of information which challenges people to conceptualize the issue and come together for realization. But the linkage becomes almost imperative when it comes to the 'women's question'. It is true that women's issues are published by the press as women's issues. But they are done 'separately', in a 'box item' or in 'highlighted colour', and more anxiously by way of sensationalizing the news of atrocities on women. There are two extremes. Print media either portrays women sporadically, as it is, with the sexist- bias and in

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complete disregard of the reality or picturizes as common phenomena in the spheres of political, economical, social religious and women movement. In politics, women are induced to shun politics like 'dirty fly' and give up their sector as it is not their duty. In economical scene, woman is portrayed as one who never produces knowledge or wealth, but always consumes. She is shown as a parasite or one who is completely dependent on her male. In the social scene, woman is viewed as somebody's daughter, wife, sister or mother and not as an individual who succeeds on her own. If in religious field woman is portrayed as a preserver of religious values in women movement, she is criticized a 'self serving affluent'. Thus, it is obvious that media not only 'reflects' but also 'affects' social reality by being selective in 'what' it reports and 'how' it interprets.

Jadhav's way of conducting 'press conference' shows how news is constructed within the parameters of a bureaucratic universe. Jadhav warns Sarita strictly not to tell any one that he is going to exhibit Kamala at the press conference. His aim is to disprove the government's allegation that newspapermen tell lies. He hopes: "There will be high drama at today's press conference. It will create uproar!" [15]. As an adventurous journalist, he could have arranged the press conference in the village itself. But he brings a poor woman to his place and organizes his news. This kind of conducting 'press conference' by Jadhav and his 'eagerness to throw the whole caboodle in the government's lap' – is a way of "social organization of news" - a prevalent feature of trendy journalism. A reporter does not go out gathering news, picking up stories as if they were 'fallen apples' or 'the world is not sitting quietly out there waiting to be discovered', but he is placed in locations where stories might occur, locations like – police stations, courts, hospitals, corporations, political chambers etc. News papers need bureaucracies because the journalistic system of producing news is itself bureaucratically organized. Therefore, the press normally records what has been already recorded and indirectly perpetuates the evil practices of the institutions. Media obviously omits those events which take place outside the purview of reporters. Ordinary people have remote chance of being caught in the news net, since they lack power. But the 'unknown' like protesters, victims, voters, get into the media only when involved in unusual activities, natural disorders and calamities. Thus, Bernard Roscho says:

Prevailing social conditions, and the social arrangements that cause and maintain them, usually are widely accepted as the natural environment by media. This in-built-

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bias in the process of news selection is ideological in which one picture of the world is systematically preferred over the other (1975: 82).

As the play comes to an end, Sarita is not ready to change her opinion about marriage and husband-wife relationship she says:

SARITA: I'll go on feeling it. 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 . . . That day has to come. And I'll pay whatever price. I have to pay for it" [52].

The change that occurred in the both inner and peripheral are clearly seen. Sarita is neither revolutionary nor submissive but something different. Some illumination and transformation has happened in her inner and outer being.

The pervasive and profoundly influential image of media as a socializing force has been put to a dissection by Tendulkar. The play presents how image of woman is constantly polarized and twisted gender issues in media have fundamentally anti-social effects. By discussing how the media has a woman problem, the play cleverly elevates how that basic problem turns to be a gross gender problem.

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