

A Comparative Study of Vijay Tendulkar's Kamala and Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House

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Vijay Tendulkar is hailed as one of the most influential dramatists in India since the last forty years. He is a prolific playwright with twenty-eight full length plays, twenty-four one-act plays, seventeen film scripts, eleven children plays and a novel in Marathi language to his credit. Many of his plays have been translated into English and other Indian languages. One of his plays *Kamala* published in 1981 was originally written in Marathi. It was later translated by Priya Adarkar. The play exposes the hypocritical attitude of the society towards women. It draws attention towards issues like the flesh market, the condition of typical Indian women (as portrayal through the characters of Sarita and Kamala), the unsolved discord in the marital lives of Indian couples etc. It also brings to our mind Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* which was published in 1879. The similarities in both these modern plays are beleaguered by their male characters and lucid imagery but the virtuous female characters here undergo unrelenting anguish. Both present a story of absent husbands who want a wife to behave just like puppet irrespective of whether she is literate or illiterate.

The play *Kamala* has been written with a naturalistic and realistic approach. Jaisingh is a crusading journalist and husband of Sarita. He brings a woman Kamala from the rural flesh market and presents her at a Press Conference in torn clothes. His professional and reputation and his promotion depends on this sensational presentation. He is not concerned with Kamala's future. He does not give a thought to what will happen to Kamala after this exposure. Kamala's entry into the household reveals the selfish hypocrisy that is practiced by Sarita and the inconsequentiality of her existence. It also opens all the every threads of weaving ball of marriage at the same time as authenticity of modern marriage. Sarita lives in a fantasy realism of her husband. Kamala shakes this revelation and touches her deeply with the soul. She feels helpless and tries to futilely search for the meaning of marriage. She examines her own rights, roles, wishes and all activities in the house. She is shocked to discover that in fact there is little difference between Kamala and herself. Kamala is ready to live her life as a slave. She perfectly understands that the person (Jaisingh) who has bought her will be her master and he is no less than god for her. She accepts him completely i.e. mentally as well as physically. Jaisingh always deceives her. He don't care his feelings and emotions and uses her for his promotion and great reputation. She is unaware of the aim of Jaisingh and goes along according to his wishes. She lives and behaves like a doll. But so does Sarita! After her marriage Sarita became the life partner of Jaisingh, her husband. It meant that she had become a registered slave of her husband and played to his whims. She finds that she is incapable of making any sacrifices to establish her identity. She investigates the meaning of her role in the life of Jadhav Jaisingh. She is a literal and a highly sophisticated woman but is presented as the victim of a chauvinistic male oppressor. She is an authorized living part of his modern and luxurious style under social and moral custom. Jaisingh exploits both ladies. "Like Kamala and Sarita in also an object in Jadhav's life, an object that provides physical enjoyment, social companionship and domestic comfort" (Banerjee, xvii). In this play, Kamala is a pure slave and Sarita is a highly sophisticated slave. Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* has been written on the same lines. It presents a feministic ideology. Nora is portrayed as the tragic heroine of this play. The play has various themes like liberation of the individual from the fetters and restraints of custom and conventions, declaration of rights of a wife, theme of illusion versus reality, a long sacrificed for the sake of personal happiness etc. Nora marries Helmer and has three children. Once when Helmer was ill, she had made a forged signature of her father in Krogstad's presence for money. Her husband doesn't know about this forgery. When Helmer recovers completely from his ill then he is appointed as a manager where Krogstad has already worked as a clerk. In the end, Helmer finds out the forged work of Krogstad. Helmer takes a decision to suspend him from his job. Krogstad starts threatening Nora that he would reveal her secret to Helmer because it is only Nora who can convince her husband to change the decision of her husband. Finally, Helmer comes to know about Nora's forgery. He is furious with Nora and feels ashamed at her act. He says that he is incapable to save her from her own deeds. She does this act for saving the life of Helmer but Helmer is insensitive and understanding the words of Nora's feeling. He neglects his duty towards Nora which is very painful for her. Nora's friend Mrs. Linde sacrifices to save her from the grip of Krogstad. In the end, she escapes from her problems without any emotional supports from her husband then. Helmer pompously shows his readiness to

“accept” her. She finds that Helmer is a self-centered man who doesn’t value her love, sacrifice, struggle and loyalty. She takes a very hard decision to leave him, his children and his house. It raises many fundamental questions on the meaning of a true life-partner.

Each play depicts a dutiful and loyal wife, Sarita and Nora. It justifies that a wife can do everything for her husband. But their husband cannot give even respect to his wife. It means that a woman remains a puppet from birth to death under her master --- sometimes in the form of father or brother or husband or son. It shows that our society is a male dominated society where female-voice is always denied by the male. Sarah Grimke aptly says:

Man has subjugated women to his will, used her as a means to promote his selfish gratification, to minister to his sensual pleasure, to be instrument in promoting his comfort; but never has he desired to elevate her to that rank she was created to fill. He has done all he could do to debase and enslave her mind. (Grimke, 10)

The life of Indian married women is totally based on various types of compulsions. Both plays raise certain cardinal questions regarding the value system of a modern man who is ready to sacrifice human values in the name of humanity itself. Vijay Tendulkar only highlights the condition of married woman but doesn’t give any suggestions or solutions. Henrik Ibsen provides a revolutionary key to women who wish to preserve their self-respect in the contemporary life of the English society.

Kamala has a well-knit structure. It shows all the stages of plot-construction which makes the action of the play very lively. It is divided into two acts. Act I contains the exposition and rising action. Act II reveals the relationships of the different characters to each other and builds the dramatic climax. There is a moment of explicit crisis and the crisis is finally comes to on end. The action has a single line story. The action is too limited and performed under the walls of Jadhav’s house. N. S. Dharan comments:

Kamala is a two-act play, designed on the mode of the popular dramatic construct of the present century. There are no scene divisions of the acts. The plots are expertly structured so that, the denouement unravels itself as ‘reversal’. The phone calls also serve to indicate how slavish and claustrophobic atmosphere. (Dharan, 60-64)

Tendulkar gives the modern concept of journalism which stresses mainly on the sensational. Kakasaheb and his ideas of journalism act as a foil to Jaisingh and his ideas. The plot-construction compassionates to think about holy word ‘Marriage’. Ravi Chopra observes:

Marriage provides the opportunity to enable commonality of thought and feeling between the two. Wife and Husband lived together for developing love which is not merely flame melting flame but spirit calling to spirit. Marriage was not an end in itself but the means of gaining self- fulfillment. Man and woman must realize their complementariness and base their relationship on equality and mutual respect. (Dr. Chopra, 36)

In our country marriage has been declared as the holiest institutions of our life. But at present times, one feels that this institution in fact actually provides a slave in the form of a wife to their male owners in the Indian society. It lays bare the truth of the modern world. It gives a clear and vivid picture of social obligations, ruthlessness of media, a true picture of journalism, a racket of flesh market, the condition of helpless oppressed women, a phenomenon of dominance and bondage. Thus the play exposes the social hypocrisy and its duality which offers no protection to women and instead turns them into slaves. It

reveals the truth of a woman's life just like a puppet the threads of which are held by a man. The dramatic effect is very carefully planned and the denouement comes at the end of the play. In the final part of the play, dismissal of Jaisingh from his job is most surprising to the spectators and readers. Similarly, the plot-construction of *A Doll's House* is well planned. It follows the unities of place, time and action. This play is also performed in Helmer's apartment. Ibsen's has totally focused on changes of husband and wife relationship. The story unfolds itself in three acts. It contains a sub plot the story of Mrs. Linde and Krogstad. Here Helmer plays a dominant role and Nora is merely a doll. Act I is full of rising action split into eight scenes. Nora is secretly frames a plan to earn more money which would help to save the life of Helmer. Act II is divided into seven scenes. This act is full of climax by the threatening of Krogstad to Nora for saving his job. Act III presents falling action and surprise to audience where Mrs. Linde plays the role of Nora's best friend who to speak to Krogstad on Nora's behalf. When Helmer knows about it, he is happy. But Nora is shocked and examines herself from Helmer's point of view.

Both plays have been constructed against domestic background specially based on husband-wife relationships. The entire action is executed in the household atmosphere. Both plays reveal the moral, ethical and social significance of life, revealing that suffering and impermanence of life are inevitable. They show a contrast between idealism and orthodox, reality and conspiracy, dominant and in dominant. They explore the helpless, dependent and oppressed women. Tendulkar's play bares hard hub realities with no lesson but Ibsen play can be called a feminist play following tradition of woman's liberalization. He uses the most powerful untraditional and modern technique. Nora grows as a modern tragic heroine. The ending of this play produces a bomb shell for Helmer as well as the audience. No one expects that Nora stands firmly for self respect with a definite resolution. Linda Hutcheon has pointed out:

While feminism and post modernism have both worked to help us understand the dominant modes of representation at work in our society, feminists have focused on the specifically female subject of representations and have begun to suggest ways of challenging and changing those dominants in both mass culture and high art. They have taught us that to accept unquestioningly any fixed representation – -in fiction, film, advertising or whatever –is to condone social systems of power which validate and authorized some images of women (or blacks, Asians, gays, etc.) and others. Cultural production is carried on within a social context and an ideology and lived value system –and it is to this that feminist work has made us pay attention. Feminisms have in this way, had a very profound effect on post modernism. (Hutcheon, 78)

It shows the brutal and bitter facts of feminism in modern times. It explains equality and fraternity comes as usual but not in practical life. He presents a bitter truth of male personality. Everyone wants women to behave like dolls. It shows the emancipation of woman but in this modern age. Tendulkar shows the stereotype woman. It provokes one to think on the relationship of wife husband and their shared responsibility towards each other. It touches the psychological insight of human beings.

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