

## THE DEPICTION OF CULTURAL DIMENSIONS IN KAMALA

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### Abstract:

Translation plays a pivotal role in pointing out the cultural component existing in any society. Translation of *Kamala* in English crosses the linguistic limitations. The play *Kamala* elaborates on the crucial issue of the rights of women and their place in family and society. It exposes the subjugation of marginalized people or the exploitation of women in patriarchal society on a global scale. *Kamala* presents the horrific aspect of contemporary society where women are auctioned for the flesh trade. The play showcases the superiority complex existing in men. Sarita, a representative of women, finally challenges the patriarchal dominance inherited through culture. The force of culture makes women submissive. The culture may be in the form of patriarchy, matrimony, or orthodox ideology

**Keywords:** culture, translation, *Kamala*, equality

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### Introduction:

The objective of this paper is to show the depiction of cultural dimensions in a translated play, *Kamala*, which was originally written in Marathi by prolific writer Vijay Tendulkar in the year 1981. Later, Priya Adarkar translated it into English. In a translation, Priya Adarkar recreates the cultural dimensions. Vijay Tendulkar was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1984. *Kamala* depicts the harsh reality of the auction of women in the market and the secondary treatment they receive from men.

Translation plays a tremendous role in literature. It widens the appeal and scope of the literary works. Translation plays a crucial role in the appreciation of literature. Translation aid to understand regional, national, and international dimensions, including culture, religion, and society. The word translation originates from the Latin “translatio”. It means “to carry across”. Basil Hatim and Jeremy Munday define translation as “the process of transferring a written text

from source language to target language.” (Hatim, Basil, & Munday, Jeremy, 2019, p.6)

Translation globalizes the literary works. The readers across the globe understand the culture, trade, and social construct of other regions. Nida & Taber write, “Translation consists of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style.” (Nida and Taber 1982, p.32) Oxford English Dictionary states translation as “the action or process of translating a word, a work, etc., from one language into another.”

*Kamala* voices social injustice and the atrocities committed against women. The play is based on a real incident. To expose the racket of human trafficking, the journalist, Aswini Sarin, had bought a girl from a flesh trade. Vijay Tendulkar was inspired by this real incident and used to voice the place of women in society and in a family.



Vijay Tendulkar portrays a subtle cultural component, such as patriarchy, the man-woman relationship, hierarchy, and gender inequality. *Kamala* presents the exploiter and the one who is being exploited. The husband is an exploiter, whereas the wife is being exploited. Three women, namely, Sarita, Kamala, and Kamalabai, are controlled by their master, Jaisingh in the same house. Though they belong to different social and economic classes, there is a similarity in the exploitation and torment. Sarita is educated, Kamala is uneducated and belongs to a rural area, and Kamalatai is a maid in Jaisingh's house. Predominance of culture and traditions controls women in all walks of life.

The play begins in a small bungalow in the fashionable New Delhi neighborhood of Neeti Bagh. The journalist Jaisingh Jadhav is a central character. He bought Kamala from the flesh market by paying from Luhardanga bazaar, Bihar. The price of Kamala is less than the price of a bullock. According to Jaisingh, he bought her dirt cheap. The Heinous flesh trade points out the place of women in culture. Jaisingh describes the bazaar, "They sell human beings at this bazaar-----They have an open auction for women of all sorts of ages. People come from long distances to make their bids. (Tendulkar, 2000, P. 14)

Kamala is an adivasi illiterate girl. For Jaisingh, Kamala is a commodity, a ladder that is to be used for his personal objectives, such as career advancement or building his image. Jaisingh uses Kamala for the purpose of publicity. Jaisingh converses with Jaspalji when he brings Kamala home, "That'll make a nice front-page item. Even more publicity. (Tendulkar, 2000, p.9). The play reflects Jaisingh's attitude toward marginalized people. For Jaisingh, people like Kamala are "These downtrodden people are happy at the slightest excuse. Toil and labour take getting used to. Luxury doesn't. (Tendulkar, 2000, p.13). Jaisingh's dominating nature is shown meticulously in a number of incidents. Kamala is not ready to go with Jaisingh

for the Press Conference. Jaisingh orders her to obey him in the following words.

**Jaisingh:** Kamala, you won't obey me?

**Kamala:** How can that be? You are Kamala's master.

**Jaisingh:** I order you to come there with me. Today. (Tendulkar, 2000, p.20)

Sarita, Jaisingh's wife, is also tortured and controlled by Jaisingh. It clearly denotes that women are treated as slaves or commodities, irrespective of their education and social status. Jaisingh manipulates Kamala and Sarita. The moment he realizes the uselessness of Kamala, he disclaims her and dispatches her to an orphanage. According to Jaisingh, Kamala will be happy in the women's home as she will get meals and a roof. Jaisingh's indifferent nature and apathy towards women exemplify a culture where males establish superiority. From the perspective of Jaisingh, Kamala will be happy, "She'll find the home a luxury after starving the way she used to. Two square meals a day and no work to do. A proper roof over her head. And she'll be more than happy." (Tendulkar, 2000, p.26)

*Kamala* depicts a society that is dominated by men, where women are merely stepping stones in a man's pursuit of fame and power. The play canvases the dominance of males in domestic and social affairs. Sarita has to obey and depend on Jaisingh for trivial matters like answering a phone. In Act One, Sarita answers the phone in the absence of her husband. A conversation between Sarita and Kakasaheb denotes the dominance and control of Jaisingh even over communication. Jaisingh has instructed Sarita to note down the name of the callers.

**Sarita:** I have to write down each phone call.

**Kakasaheb:** Well, I've just taken three. How many are you going to write down? If it's anyone important, they'll tell you their names. If they don't, you can happily assume they are not important.



**Sarita:** That's the way you see it. My husband sees it differently. If I say they didn't tell their names, he gets angry with me for not asking. (Tendulkar Vijay, 2000, p.3)

Jaisingh scolds Sarita as she wants Kamala to take a bath before the Press Conference. He retorts, "Please don't do anything concerning her without asking me first." (Tendulkar, 2000, p.18). Jaisingh asks Sarita to get up, Kamala. Sarita is reluctant to disturb Kamala's sleep. Jaisingh orders Sarita to awaken Kamala, "What did I say? Can't you hear? (Tendulkar, 2000, p.19). Jaisingh even prohibits Sarita from giving a sari to Kamala for the Press Conference. He put it as, "I tell you, don't give her a thing without asking me." (Tendulkar, 2000, p.21)

Jaisingh always wants to showcase his superiority and supremacy as a husband. He is always keen to remind Sarita of his higher rank for being a husband. "Tell me, come on, I'm your husband, after all." (Tendulkar, 2000, p.32) Jaisingh proclaims his authority in these words, "It's I who takes decisions in this house, and no one else. Do you understand?" (Tendulkar, 2000, p.42). For Jaisingh, women, Sarita, and Kamala are mere pawns in his game. Sarita is treated as a slave. Her husband does not consider a slave a human. Jaisingh tortures his slave as much as he likes. Jaisingh is a master of the slave, who deprives his wife of all rights. He wants his wife to dance, laugh, or cry as per his orders. Sarita raises her concern about the greatness of man, "If a man becomes great, why doesn't he stay a great man? Why does he become a master?" (Tendulkar, 2000, p.47) Sarita anticipates equality. The play discusses the crucial issue of inequality and injustice done to women under the pretext of culture and tradition. The bondage of patriarchy and culture has weakened women. Sarita asks a crucial question about the rights of women: "Why only a man have the right to be a man? Does he have one extra sense? A woman can do everything a

man can." (Tendulkar, 2000, p. 47) Sarita expresses her determination that the day will come when she will not be treated as a slave or an object to be used and thrown away. No one will rule over women.

Man-woman relationship is vividly pictured in *Kamala*. At the beginning of the play woman is portrayed as a submissive and manipulative. But towards the end of the play woman is presented as a rebel and determined, who wants equality and rights. Sarita strongly denies wearing the sari brought by Jaisingh for the party. She asserts her individuality and identity as a strong and independent woman. Initially, Sarita obeys everything. Dr. Kangune Babasaheb observes, 'Sarita was totally absorbed into the world of her husband Jaisingh. She does not realize her own identity.' Sarita does not wish to go behind her master as a slave. Sarita challenges marriage institutes where the husband is granted superiority. She raises her voice against the suffocation and secondary position of women in the social setup. Her question is, "Why? Why can't men limp behind? Why aren't women ever the masters?" (Tendulkar, 2000, p. 47)

Two male characters, Jaisingh and Kakasaheb, show two generations and their views about women. Kakasaheb, representative of the earlier generation, advocates the suppression of women. Kakasaheb answers Sarita, "I too was just like this.----- I gave your aunt a lot of trouble. As if it was my right." (Tendulkar, 2000, p.47)

The play also highlights the rapid changes that take place in journalism. The conflict between old and new generations of journalists and their cultural norms has been vividly elaborated in a conversation between Kakasaheb, a representative of old generation journalists, and Sarita throws light on this aspect. "I'm honoured. Who asks after me now? I'm back number – a remnant of times past. A dead journalist—who's just about staying alive! Now it is the day of your husband's type of journalism. High-speed type! (Tendulkar, 2000,



p.5). Kakasaheb disapproves of the journalism of the new generation for not passing comment on illegal, unethical, or corrupt practices. The Press Conference, in which Kamala was introduced, was fun for the journalists. Kamala, who is adivasi and illiterate, was questioned about the poverty line and economic exploitation of tribals. Kakasaheb disapproves and puts “fun at poor woman’s expense”. (Tendulkar, 2000, p.30)

### Conclusion:

Tendulkar’s play *Kamala* depicts a man-woman relationship. Women are made subservient. Men deny them their basic rights. Women are forced to follow men. Women are taken for granted. Women are instructed on what they should wear, what they should do. Sarita challenges the cultural male dominance. Literate, uneducated, or a maid are controlled and molded as per the wishes of men.

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