Kamala was inspired by a real life incident - the Indian Express expose by Ashwin Sarin, who actually bought a girl from a rural flesh market and presented her at a press conference. Using this incident as a launching pad, Tendulkar raises certain cardinal issues regarding the value system of a modern success-oriented generation which is ready to sacrifice human values in the name of humanity itself. The central character of the play is a self-seeking journalist, Jaisingh Jadhav, who treats the woman he has purchased from the flesh market as an object that can procure for him a promotion in his job and a reputation in his professional life.

Jaisingh buys Kamala, an Adivasi woman, at the flesh market of Luhardaga beyond Ranchi for two hundred and fifty rupees to prove that such auctions are taking place. To get an eye-witness for human sale going on in the latter half of the century, he buys a woman and he himself becomes a criminal. That is the irony of Jaisingh's ideology. He defends his inhuman act:
... When I first wrote about it, I didn't have any definite facts. But I could smell something wrong. The police, as usual, washed their hands of it. The Home Minister put his hands over his ears. They made the false charge that newspaper men tell lies. So it fell on me to put the noose round the right neck with evidence.*

He is egoistic because he is the first journalist to reach the bazaar of Luhardaga. He doesn't take the risk of going to this bazaar to redeem the lives of Adivasis or in sympathy with their lot. He argues with his wife, Sarita, that there is nothing unusual about the Luhardaga flesh market because women are sold in many places like that, all over the country. Otherwise, how could the red-light districts operate? He emphasizes:

That's not the point. The point is how we project Luhardaga - the technique of it. The art lies in presenting the case itself. (p.15)

That is Jaisingh's single-minded track of investigation. Like Oedipus he investigates to "make dark things plain." He
is not interested in the sufferings of the victims of poverty. He is anxious to create sensationalism by presenting Kamala, the woman he bought in the flesh market at the Press Conference suddenly. He takes care to conceal her from others except his wife, Sarita, and her uncle, Kakasaneb. Even with them he is reticent. He tells about Kamala to Sarita only after giving a warning to her to keep the secret in tact till the Press Conference is over. And he evades proper answers to the inquiries of Kakasaheb. He doesn't reveal it even to his close friend, Jain.

There is a cruelty dormant in the heart of man. Eventhough man is a civilized being now, there is still the savageness of primitive man in him. With savage selfishness Jaisingh doesn't allow Kamala to take bath before the Conference whereas he enjoys the luxury of bath after his tedious journey. He rejoices in the fact that Adivasis are used to that kind of dirty life and they can stay without a bath for days:

SARITA: We've put her in Kamalabai's room for the moment. I'll just give her some hot water for bath.
JAISINGH: ('Loudly') No!
('Sarita is uneasy once more')
I mean she can have her bath tonight or tomorrow morning. 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 the bath. Please don't do any such thing concerning her without asking me first. For God's sake.
(p.18)

Without any conscience he wakes her up from sleep even though she is not feeling well:

SARITA. She's asleep. She isn't feeling well.
JAISINGH. Wake her up.
SARITA. She's only just gone off to sleep.
JAISINGH. Never mind. Wake her up and send her here. I want to talk to her. (p.19)
He orders Kamala to follow him to the Press meeting. He ignores her request to let her stay at home. He is a hypocrite. He deceives her by saying that there will be a feast in her honour at the Conference. When she agrees to accompany him and draws his attention to her torn and dirty sari he asks her not to worry and declares: "She will come to the Press Conference in the same clothes she's wearing now". (p.21)

Jaisingh is an insensitive opportunist. As soon as his purpose is served he disposes of her as a wasteful commodity. He doesn't give her an inkling of his objective in buying her and lets her believe that he has purchased her like the others at the flesh market and she dreams of a handsome husband, children and a palace-like house. He unconsciously encourages her to nurture such hopes by asking her to think of his house as hers. He amusingly asks her:

... how do you like it here?

KAMALA. ('Not emerging from the veil').
It's nice. Such a big house!
Like a royal palace.
JAISINGH. ('Winking at Sarita').

Would you like to stay here always, Kamala?

KAMALA. ('Nodding her head delightfully')

Yes! (p.13)

Without any sentiments he decides to send her to women's home as her presence after the Conference will be fatal to him. The great ones depose the down-trodden after their perverse purpose is served. He doesn't think what will happen to her after she is exposed at the meeting. When Sarita asks him whether he has thought of Kamala's feelings, he tries to convince her that Kamala will find the home a luxury after the way she used to. She will be given two full meals a day without doing any work and she will be under the protection of the home. She will be more than happy under such circumstances. He gives an example also. When he interviewed some Adivasi women, who were sent to jail because of a riot, he discovered that they were thrilled to be there and they asked him to keep them permanently in the Jail. So he asks Sarita also not to be sentimental but to look from Kamala's point of view. He pronounces the final savage judgment:
She must go there tomorrow. Once today's Press Conference is over, she has no business here. It's all been arranged. (p.26)

He openly confesses that he has no obligation to individuals and he attacks only bad trends. The first half of the statement is true but the latter is a falsification. His enthusiasm is directed towards sheer sensationalism. He creates sensationalism at the expense of Kamala. He "sold a woman - that poor and illiterate woman - " to the press men for their amusement. She is made a laughing-stock. He exposes her to their vulgar inquiries. As Leela Benare is exposed to the taunts of her co-actors, Kamala is also exposed to the obscene interrogations of the pressmen. But Kamala is incapable of understanding her situation and enjoys it as a fun whereas Benare feels it keenly and suffers the agony.

Finally, without any compassion for Kamala, like the diplomatic politicians of today, Jaisingh Jadhav discards Kamala in an orphanage for women for his safety, after she ceases to be an advantage to him. P.D.Dubbe says:
He duped Kamala who had come prepared to become his bonded feeling of sex, keep with all the associated feeling of sex, motherhood and living.

Jaisingh Jadhav exploits not only Kamala but also his wife, Sarita. Arundhati Banerjee aptly remarks:

Like Kamala, Sarita is also an object in Jadhav's life, an object that provides physical enjoyment, social companionship and domestic comfort.

Jaisingh treats her as his personal secretary. In his absence she has to receive a number of phone calls for him and note down the names of those who call upon him, if they don't give their names she has to enquire and note down. Kakasaheb, her uncle, suggests that she need not ask their names and if necessary, they themselves will give their names. Sarita naively clarifies her position to him that her husband sees it differently and if she doesn't ask their names he will be angry with her:
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're not important.

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

This is the drudgery to which Jaisingh Jadhav, the saviour of Adivasi women, exposes his wife. It is through Sarita "Tendulkar exposes the chauvinism intrinsic in the modern male who believes himself to be liberal-minded". 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 a curry for him and to get beer for him and also enquires whether his clothes were back from the washerman. All these she does in such a flurry as if some chief guest, not her husband, not her life-partner, is arriving.
Jaisingh has made her life, a life of tensions, with his reckless behaviour and irregular activities. He goes off anywhere, he comes back at any odd time and he doesn't say where he goes. She has to receive all kinds of terrible and threatening phone calls. He goes out without any weapon for self-defence. She is forced to bear all these uncertainties of life. When she warned him once that she would be going to Phaltan, her native place, without any hesitation he started booking a ticket for her. She argues with Kakasaheb:

.... Do you think he's going to change - just because you (Kakasaheb) tell him to? I tried that once - I got so fed up, I said I was going back to Phaltan. What was the result? He started booking my ticket. (p.7)

This sensational journalist who tries to bring a revolution in the outlook of the society through his articles is utterly selfish, cruel and insensitive to the feelings of his wife. He returns home after being away for a week on duty. But he doesn't show any concern for her even after a week's separation. He demands comforts for himself:
Well, who were all the people who phoned me? ('Sarita hands him the notebook') Ask someone to heat up water for my bath.... Oh, and also bring some tea. And that suitcase has four days' worth of dirty clothes in it. Take them out and give them out for the wash.... (p.8)

This is the compassion shown to his wife by the man who is attempting to draw the attention of the public to the inhumanity of flesh market.

Jaisingh deliberately insults Sarita with his distrust of her. while telling her about Kamala he expresses his lack of confidence in her:

But keep this (buying Kamala) absolutely secret for the time being. No one at all must find out. If there's even a slight leak, all my work is wasted.

SARITA. ('Noticing his warning glance'). Yes. JAISINGH. I'm not sure about you...(P.15)
Jain, a friend of Jaisingh, holds a mirror up to his nature jestingly:

This warrior against exploitation in the country is exploiting you (Sarita). He's made a drudge out of a horse-riding independent girl from a princely house. (p.17)

He rebukes Jaisingh in the same vein:

Shame on you! Hero of anti-exploitation campaigns makes slave of wife! (p.17)

Jaisingh, through his treatment of Kamala, makes Sarita realize that she is also a slave - a lovely bonded labourer - to him. She observes how he refuses a bath to Kamala and takes her in clumsy clothes to the Press Conference for his professional profit. And by keeping Kamala ignorant of his purpose of buying her, he lets her imagine that Sarita is also his slave and wounds her deepest feelings. Kamala sympathizes with her for her lack of children.
and asks her for how much their master has bought her. She feels sorry for Jaisingh that he has bought her for seven hundred rupees but he has no children. In her earnestness to do justice to Jaisingh she promises her that she will have as many children as Sarita likes and do all the hardwork of the house. Sarita can give company to Jaisingh in sophisticated matters. Kamala lays guidelines for their living together in future:

The master bought you; he bought me too....
fifteen days of the month, you sleep with the master; the other fifteen, I will sleep with him, agreed. (p.35)

She requests Sarita to tell it to their master. Kamala, thus, enlightens Sarita with the awareness that Jaisingh treats her no better than a slave and he who has been her life-partner has become a master of a slave: "Kamala opens the real life of Sarita, Jaisingh's wife, who considers herself to be in the same situation". Jaisingh has never thought of her as an individual with a personality of her own. He argues with her angrily for refusing him his right without understanding her feelings. When she resists his
attempts to send Kamala to orphanage he snubs her by asserting his right: "It's I who takes decisions in this house, and no one else". (p.42) He becomes surprised when she doesn't like to accompany him to a party given in his honour:

JAISINGH. You don't want to come? Why?
SARITA. That's my will.
JAISINGH. ('Rather surprised'). Your will?
SARITA. Aren't I allowed to have a will of my own?
JAISINGH. ('Sarcastically'). Never noticed any sign of it before...
(p.44-45)

So Jaisingh has never thought of her as a person with a "head". Sarita sums up the aggressive nature of Jaisingh:

... 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 can

130
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 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 .... (p.46)

P.D. Dubbe says: "Sarita is a symbol of slavery in family system". She slaves for her family without asking for anything in return. She continues:

They (women) must only slave away. 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. (p.46)

Jaisingh uses both the women, Kamala and Sarita as pawns in his game of chess.
According to Sudhir Sonalkar:

... almost all the characters in *Kamala* are hastily drawn. It is as though Tendulkar saw dramatic potential in a newspaper story and wanted to pounce on it before anyone else did.

Sudhir Sonalkar comments rather unjustly. Tendulkar's aim is to probe into the characters of the play as much as required for the exemplification of the theme of exploitation of women by the educated male society. And he has successfully done it through Jaisingh's egoism and his domination over the women characters.

Not only Jaisingh but Kakasaheb also behaved recklessly with his wife. When he was young he did not care for her feelings. He marched forward with a confidence that she would follow him, even if she couldn't. And "she did follow, the poor thing". Kakasaheb's recapitulation of his cruelty to his wife proved that cruelty to woman is an eternal manifestation in man's life and woman is still in the
modern world a symbol of Victorian womanhood - an embodiment of service, slavery and sacrifice.

Jaisingh is unkind and inconsiderate to their maid-servant, Kamalabai, also. He bosses over her rudely. He admonishes her for not keeping the newspapers in the rack promptly. He doesn't mind giving trouble to her. He asks her to prepare tea as many times as there are people in the house. He comments that she is there only to serve them. Whereas Kakasaheb who is used as a talisman to Jaisingh spares the trouble for her. He tells him that he will take tea with Sarita. The Saviour of slaves makes slaves of his family. Through Jaisingh's exploitation of the three women in the play Tendulkar "succeeds in depicting the status of women in present day society in comparison to the male chauvinistic world of today".

Jaisingh represents male domination in the society "but he is also a slave of the bourgeois mentality of the society", which exploits the weak and helpless.

Jaisingh is a young, agile, aspiring and sensational journalist liked very much by his colleagues and his
boss. He seeks sensational news risking even his life. He travels far and wide to get evidence for his news. He faces a number of inconveniences on his way. For instance, he has to stink for a week without bath during his visit to Luhardaga. He commits a criminal offence by buying a woman in the flesh market. He sins against sin itself for the sake of his paper. He has raised the circulation of the paper. But he is a slave to money and money-minded capitalists. He slaves for money and publicity. His sensational journalism has fetched him a bungalow in Neti Bagh, servants and a car. He can travel by plane all over the country. He stays in five star hotels. He gets invitation from foreign embassies. He has access to ministers and chief ministers. It is a kind of game. It is mercenary journalism. The news is printed in English. So only the educated few, the elite society, can read it. It effects no change in the outlook of the high class or it brings no change in the suffering of the victims. It is not pragmatic journalism. Kakasaheb represents the old type of pragmatic journalism. He is an antithesis to Jai-singh. He points out:

This new journalism of yours - if money making is not the object of it - then it's Vandhya - Sambhog. In case you don't understand these
difficult Marathi words. I'll explain. What I mean is - nothing will ever come of it. 'Arre', write the people's language first. Speak it. Then try and teach them. (p.24)

It turns to be of no consequence to Jaisingh. It launches him on a criminal offence. By the pressure of the "big people" who are involved with flesh-market he is sacked down by his proprietor, "A bloody capitalist. A swindler. A black marketeer. A bloody income-tax evader. A criminal". (p.50) His valiant confidence that his editor would fight his case in the Supreme Court is belied even though he has been doing a wonderful job to make the paper famous and respectable. Jain explains the treacherous situation:

A big paper doesn't recognize respect and all that, Kakasaheb - it only knows about circulation and advertisements. And profit and loss. (p.48)

Jaisingh has crossed the path of the wrong people. He has discarded Kamala in the orphanage earlier after his purpose is served as her existence becomes an imminent danger to him, shattering all her dreams of a master, children and a house. Similarly he is also dismissed from his service after he has
brought fame and name to the paper blasting all his hopes of promotion in his profession and prosperity in his life. Talking to Sunil Shambag, Tendulkar observes:

... Kamala after a time becomes a symbol. The wife of the journalist becomes 'Kamala' and ultimately even he (the journalist) becomes 'Kamala'.

Kamala is a symbol of slavery. Sarita is a symbol of sophisticated slavery. Kamalabai is a slave to her master and mistress. Jaisingh himself is a slave to his employer. So none is free from the cruelty of their oppressors in our society. Jaisingh, the Persecutor, persecutes his Victims - Kamala, Sarita and Kamalabai. His role shifts to that of the Victim and he is persecuted by his proprietor, the Persecutor. Jaisingh was unkind to the women in the play and his proprietor was cruel to him under compulsion. So man is either a slave to others or an oppressor of others in this world. He is either submissive or aggressive. Struggle for power, suppression and submission, has been a continuous process in primitive man's life and still it continues to flourish in the life of a civilized man.
REFERENCES:

* "Kamala" translated by Priya Adarkar, Five Plays, Vijay Tendulkar (Bombay: OUP, 1992), p.15. Further references are from this text parenthetically quoted.


3. Ibid., p. xvii.


