That was the ulterior motive in the mind of the sixteenth century Elizabethan playwright, who materialized his patriarchal agenda through his craftily woven dramatic expressions. As some would say, The Taming of the Shrew was written by a man, performed by men, and viewed by predominantly male audience, to make fun of women's frailty, out of insanity. It is not merely fun in the form of a comedy. The comic aspect of the play is overshadowed by the seriousness of the topic. It deals with a serious theme -- man/woman relationship in society. Shakespeare trivialized the balance of the relationship. George Bernard Shaw rightly termed the play as 'altogether disgusting to modern sensibility'. According to him, the play is a vile insult to womanhood and manhood from the first word to the last. It is a harshly misogynistic celebration of patriarchy and female submission.

The final scene of The Taming of the Shrew is most horrible, in my assessment, whereby Katherina expresses total submission to her tyrannical husband. It brings tension in male/female relationship through apparent peace, destroying social order. There is no moral lesson in it; rather it presents a moral dilemma. The modern audience cannot approve of the Shakespearian position on woman's dignity. Harsh treatment is not any medicine for the politically defined aberrant behaviour of women. Katherina is thrust into love with Petruchio, to whom she is no more able to express her hatred. A lady who is initially rebellious is tormented psychologically so as to bring under the foot of a greedy gentleman. She is made a personal property of her husband. She loses her own mind and language and is, at last, transformed into a caged parrot that would utter the words taught by the machinery of male chauvinism. Notice how Katherina advises other ladies (and how demeaning it is!) in the last scene:

"Thy husband is thy Lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy soueraigne: One that cares for thee,
And for thy maintenance. Commits his body
To painfull labour, both by sea and land:
To watch the night in stormes, the day in cold,
Whil'st thou ly'st warme at home, secure and safe,
And craues no other tribute at thy hands,
But loue, faire lookes, and true obedience;
Too little payment for so great a debt.
Such dutie as the subiect owes the Prince,
Euen such a woman oweth to her husband:
And when she is froward, peeuish, sullen, sowre,
And not obedient to his honest will,
What is she but a foule contending Rebell,
And gracelesse Traitor to her louing Lord?
I am asham'd that women are so simple,
To offer warre, where they should kneele for peace:
Or seeke for rule, supremacie, and sway,
When they are bound to serue, loue, and obay.
Why are our bodies soft, and weake, and smooth,
Vnapt to toyle and trouble in the world,
But that our soft conditions, and our harts,
Should well agree with our externall parts?
Come, come, you froward and vnable wormes,
My minde hath bin as bigge as one of yours,
My heart as great, my reason haplie more,
To bandie word for word, and frowne for frowne;
But now I see our Launces are but strawes:
Our strength as weake, our weakenesse past compare,
That seeming to be most, which we indeed least are.
Then vale your stomackes, for it is no boote,
And place your hands below your husbands foote:
In token of which dutie, if he please,
My hand is readie, may it do him ease."



Not only in The Taming of the Shrew, Shakespeare also took condescending view of women in other plays. In Macbeth and Hamlet, for example, he sketched some female characters with negative characteristics. He depicted Lady Macbeth as a vile woman, who persuaded her husband to kill King Duncan, and who was ultimately regarded as the 'fourth witch'. He made Gertrude, mother of prince Hamlet, an accomplice of Claudius, who killed King Hamlet and married her. Thus many of his female characters are mean and wicked, as opposed to good dominant male.

Shakespeare had little respect for women. His personal life is probably responsible for this. He took a disrespectful stance as he failed to earn any respect from the women he was associated with during the prime time of his life. In his youth he played love with two girls (Anne Wetly and Anne Hathaway) together; he was stuck between the hatred and/or love of them. He wanted to marry the former but he was forced to marry the latter. It has been a great embarrassment for him. During marriage, he was