

SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN VIJAYTENDULKAR'S *KANYADAAN*

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ABSTRACT

Vijay Tendulkar is considered as India's greatest playwright. A man of versatile genius, he has written plays, short stories, essays, film scripts, newspaper columns and a novel. Vijay Tendulkar has powerfully articulated the socio-political situations in his plays. With appreciation and criticism, Tendulkar reveals the realistic world in his creations. The play *Kanyadaan*, was published in 1983. This was his most complex creation about the cultural and emotional upheavals and the man-woman relationship of a family. It dwells on an extremely sensitive conflict between upper class and Dalit caste that is still prevalent in several parts of our country.. As a genuine dramatist Vijay Tendulkar opens his reader-audience's eyes to a social problem that continues to evade easy solutions.

Key Words – Caste Conflict, Upper Class, Dalit, Social Problem, Contemporary, Traditional, Political Comments and Self Nature.

Vijay Tendulkar is considered as India's greatest playwright. A man of versatile genius, he has written plays, short stories, essays, film scripts, newspaper columns and a novel. Often controversial, he has inspired cinema and theatre with his provocative explorations of morality, power and violence. His political comments and daring words depict his boldness and true to his self-nature. He wrote whatever he saw, felt and realized. It is this part of his personality that makes him a truly charismatic man.. Prof. Anshul Chandra in his research paper Vijay Tendulkar: A Critical Survey of His Dramatic World writes:

Vijay Tendulkar is a leading contemporary Indian playwright. He is also known as screen and television writer, literary essayist, political journalist and social commentator. In the realm of drama he has been the most influential dramatist and theatre personality in Marathi. He is a man of radical and progressive views.

Vijay Tendulkar has powerfully articulated the socio-political situations in his plays. With appreciation and criticism, Tendulkar reveals the realistic world in his creations. He perceives the realities of human society without any pre-conceived notions, reacts to them as a sensitive and sensible human being and writes about them in his plays as a responsible writer. The play *Kanyadaan*, was published in 1983. This was his most complex creation about the cultural and emotional upheavals and the man-woman relationship of a family. It dwells on an extremely sensitive conflict between upper class and Dalit caste that is still prevalent in several parts of our country. In spite of seventy years of Independence, Dalit continues to suffer abject misery and ill-treatment in the hands of upper castes. As a genuine dramatist Vijay Tendulkar opens his reader-audience's eyes to a social problem that continues to evade easy solutions.

As the title suggests *Kanyadaan* deals with the theme of marriage. The problem and the consequence of the marriage Tendulkar's show is self-created. The play *Kanyadaan* is about a girl born into a political family with progressive views who marries a Dalit man because she is too much attractive by his poetry. Her father's lofty ideals have inculcated in her a spirit which tries to find the good in people. However, after getting married to Dalit man, she soon realizes that the devil and the poet-lover are one and the same person and they cannot be separated, neither can he be cleansed of the vices (drinking, wife-beating) that are a part of him. In fact, there is a strange malice in him, a sadistic desire to punish her for the suffering his ancestors have gone through the ages.

There are five characters in the play. Nath Devlalikar is an MLA and his wife Seva is a social worker. Jayprakash is an M.Sc. student and his sister Jyoti is an intelligent girl. This Brahmin family belongs to the upper class. The play is divided into two acts. In the first scene of the first act, Jyoti decides to marry Arun Athavale, a Dalit youth from a village whom she had known only for two months. Arun, a B.A. student is poor but talented. A debate starts among them in regarding to Jyoti's inter-caste marriage with Arun as given below:

SEVA: He is not someone who can fit in among us.

NATH: Why? He is a dalit, is that why?

SEVA: [Sharply] Don't imagine you are the only one with a liberal soul among us. We too know what it is to look beyond caste.

NATH: Then what is it that prevents his fitting in here, in this home.

SEVA: His culture...

NATH: [Breaking out in fury] What do you mean by that? Manners and culture, are they your ancestral property? He is good boy...he is well behaved...can anyone be that without culture? (521-522)

Their discussion reflects that the caste and its culture have been an integral part of an individual in society and they are judged and received the social place on their basis.

In the second scene of the first Act Arun comes to Jyoti's house. He is dark complexioned and has a ruthless face, yet he is good looking. Being a Dalit he possesses his own lack of confidence and without thinking search for an accomplishment of it in the company of Jyoti. Jyoti married Arun. The marriage is predictable to be the gathering of two cultures to a certain extent than coming collectively of two persons in flesh and blood. Short-lived months put Arun and Jyoti's post marital connection in bottomless difficulty. Jyoti

come back to home, compressed and endeavor. She is a flattened outline in every sense of the expression. Taking the example of Arun and Jyoti, Jayaprakash clarifies the social structure on the basis of caste:

But this means that the very victims of violence may go on penetrate the same brutal violence upon others...Perhaps those who are hunted derive great pleasure to do so. The oppressed are overjoyed when they get a chance to oppress others...the moment one gets the chance one becomes a greater tyrant... one persecutes others with a vengeance, because one exults in doing that...In other words, yesterday's victim is today's victimizer. If he has been shot at yesterday, he shoots today... Therefore, there is no hope of man's gaining nobility through experience, he can only become a greater devil. (547)

On having been asked by Seva why he beats Jyoti, Arun bluntly answers that he is son of scavengers who do not know the Brahmins' non-violent ways to treat their wives like them; who drink and beat their wives sometimes without no reasons which is publicized; and he is barbarian by birth, and he has not claimed any white-collar culture. The consciousness of Arun about his caste makes him inferior, weaker and violent. He does not hesitate to use physical, mental, psychological and even sexual violence against Jyoti to exploit, abuse and threaten her on the name of his lower caste.

The atrocities, agonies and pains being inflicted upon Jyoti by Arun on the name of humiliations gone through his forefathers in the past do not come to end even after she becomes pregnant. He starts to kick her on her belly. Arun constantly taunts her about her caste and about her parents, heaping foul abuse on them for being highborn. Seva comes to the conclusion about his behaviour and says in sarcasm, "Why not? Doesn't his wife belong to the high caste? In this way he is returning all the kicks aimed at generations of his ancestors by men of high caste. It appears that this is the monumental mission he has set out to fulfill" (544).

In the beginning Jyoti was feeling herself helpless but now she realizes that she can handle the situation leaving aside her pre-imagined liberalistic opinion by accepting Arun in her entire life. Arun, due to his lower caste-driven anger, is unable to reconcile with his present conditions and always feels troubled in his mind. He feels tortured in his whole existence, and he always wants to revenge against higher caste people by beating to Jyoti. She herself narrates Arun's mental conditions to her father:

Arun is both the beast, and the lover. Arun is the demon, and also the poet. Both are bound together, one within the other, they are one. So closely bound that at times it is not possible to distinguish the demon from the poet. Filthy cursing is a part of his frenzied love; a sudden shower of hard, ardent kisses accompanies the rain of blows. (564)

At last of the play the web of caste becomes so powerful that Jyoti accepts her powerlessness and inferior self as a woman and even as representative of higher caste in ladder of hierarchical social structure before Arun, a lower caste on the ladder. Jyoti determinedly disassociates herself from her family and forbids them to visit her out of aid organization. The reversal of earlier victimizer into the present victim and the previous victim into present victimizer reflects the power pattern in social hierarchy. Due to agonies she starts to feel that she has been converted from Jyoti Yadunath Devalikar to Jyoti Arun Athavale, from a Brahmin to a scavenger. She requests her parents to 'Fly from my shadow, otherwise my fire will scorch your comfortable values (566).' The play *Kanyadaan* gives expression to inherent disease of caste and its agonies.

About this violent relationship Vijay Tendulkar writes that it is inevitable in social structure. He is of opinion that

“As a writer I feel fascinated by the violent exploited-exploiter relationship and obsessively delve deep into it instead of taking a position against it. It takes me to a point where I feel that this relationship is eternal, a fact of life however cruel, and will never end. Not that I relish this thought while it grips me but I cannot shake it off” (2003, xliv).

Thus Vijay Tendulkar in his play *Kanyadaan* highlights the caste system deeply-rooted in socio-political milieu of India. Hence the select play is remarkable in its deep deconstruction of the human psyche in respect caste pattern through the inter-caste marriage between Jyoti and Arun.

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