



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

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Vijay Tendulkar's Kanyadaan: Critical Analysis of Caste-conflict

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Abstract

Whenever caste in society becomes dominant a conflict between higher class and lower class becomes prominent in Indian society. As the title suggest, *Kanyadaan* deals with the theme of marriage. Vijay Tendulkar's *Kanyadaan* a short play with only seven characters focuses on caste-conflict between a Dalit educated young man and a Brahmin middle class family. It shows that how a Dalit man treated a Brahmin girl after marriage. The problem of the consequence of the marriage Tendulkar shows is self-created. The play deals with psychological study of the social situations caused by casteism in India. Through the character of 'Arun and Jyoti' Vijay Tendulkar successfully exposed the hypocritical behavior and attitude of a dalit man towards upper caste people in the society.

This paper seeks to present the conflict of casteism in India with reference to Vijay Tendulkar's play *Kanyadaan*.

Introduction:

Vijay Tendulkar belongs to those graduate group of dramatists who can represent reality as it is, his plays becomes sharp criticism of Indian society, and the condition of woman in society. They also deal with the complexity of human relationship. Particularly our Indian society focuses on caste, class, religion of the person because of these criteria man woman relationship becomes very problematic, if there is inter-caste marriage then it's called big issue for the people of the Indian society. Now a day the concept is totally changed in urban areas but some people of rural areas doesn't ready to accept the change and they still living in their old culture and beliefs.

Kanyadaan by Vijay Tendulkar is best example of caste conflict between a Dalit man and a Brahmin girl it seems the conflict between upper class and lower class people.

Critical analysis of cast-conflict in the play:

Vijay Tendulkar's *Kanyadaan* is a story about Arun and Jyoti. Arun who was a young Dalit educated man falls in love with Jyoti who was a young and beautiful Brahmin girl. Jyoti was impressed by Arun's poetry and his writing. When Jyoti informs her parents and brother that she has decided to marry Arun, her father NathDevalkar agree at once because his dream is casteless society and for that he has been working. And



other side Seva her mother was shocked even though she has been fighting against ‘untouchability’.

Seva: (To Jyoti). My anxiety is not over hi being a Dalit. You know very well that Nath and I have been fighting untouchability tooth and nail, God knows since when. So that’s not the issue. But your life has been patterned in a certain manner. You have been brought up in a specific culture. To erase or to change all this overnight is not just possible. He is different in every way. You may not be able to handle it.

Jyoti: I will manage, mother!

Seva: Saying something is easy, but doing is very difficult...And later there is no chance for a woman to hide or to run away.

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Here we can see about Seva’s character that she proves that in spite of modern thoughts she thinks like a traditional mother who takes caste, background, attitude, position of the bridegroom in Indian society.

Here playwright very cleverly describes discomfort of Arun when Jyoti brings him to her house to introduce him with her parents and brother. He becomes nervous when he enters Jyoti’s house because the house is totally different from his small house, he also asks Jyoti not to leave him.

Arun’s thoughts towards upper cast people are very painful and because of his words Jyoti begins to weep uncontrollably, Arun apologizes for being rude in his speech. We can see that Arun’s words against Brahmin are full of poison, he asks Jyoti;

*Will you marry me and eat stinking bread with spoilt dal in my fathers’ hut?
Without vomiting? Tell me, Jyoti can you sit everyday in our slum’s village toilet
like my mother? Can you beg, quaking at every door for a little grass for our
buffaloes?*

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These words reveal how inferior he is in his thoughts, it may be because of his own circumstance. In spite of strange behavior of Arun, as Jyoti is firm in her decision she gets married to Arun. After marriage Arun comes home every night taking alcohol and beats Jyoti as illiterates do in backward society. This is unbearable and one kind of torture for Jyoti, so she returns her maternal home from Arun's home. Nath her father wants not to break the relationship so he asked that both stay in his house but that is rejected by Jyoti saying that she never be with Arun. After that Arun comes to say sorry to Jyoti. Seva asks him the reason for his beating to her daughter. He replies that he is the son of scavenger; he doesn't know the non-violent ways of Brahmins. He also says that he loves his wife but drinking and beating are common for them.

She marries under the influence of her father's idealism. Towards the end, she appears a tough and confident woman who has learnt a lot from her experiences. However, she seems disillusioned with what she has imbibed, and blames Nath for injecting wrong beliefs and values in her. Nath's offer of support is rejected by her. At this stage, she seems to carry the message of Tendulkar that crusade like inter-caste marriage needs a firm commitment and people may have to sacrifice a lot to make such enterprises a success. Her words with Nath reflect her Commitment:

Nath: your delivery.....

Jyoti: (Harshly) I have my husband. I am not a widow. Even if I become one I shan't knock at your door. I am not Jyoti Yadunath Devalikar now I am Jyoti Arun Athavale, a scavenger. I don't say harijan. I despise the term. I am an untouchable, a scavenger. I am one of them.....

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The principle aim of Tendulkar is to explore man-woman relationship and bringing out a social problem. The play is purely based on caste-conflicts are there only in India. In other countries we can see color and race conflict. The play expresses social change and conflict between two different races.

Indian Hindu society is well known for its social hierarchy and separation based on caste. *Kanyadaan* address the acculturation of substantial attributes as inherited from ancestors to the status quo. It portrays the psyche of an educated young Dalit Arun who is a Victim of caste system. He is a manifestation of hopeless tradition and culture of his community and caste violence on his wife after marriage. Man being a social



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animal cannot deny his birth and status in the society. He accepts or denies he is born with the tag of caste, culture.

Arun's characterization as a Dalit who fails to adjust with his high caste Brahmin wife has led many critics to conclude that Tendulkar has written a casteist play. They assert that through the depiction of Arun's failure as a husband and Jyoti's ill-treatment at the hands of Arun, Tendulkar legitimizes the prevailing ideology of caste hierarchy. Nath's disillusionment with his ideals further supports such notions. Hence, Tendulkar appears to be a modernist. But such interpretation needs to be studied more closely. There is no denying the fact that Nath repents towards the end for inculcating those values in his children which have rendered them crippled intellectually and emotionally. But one must remember that the play is set in the 70s and by this time, society had not widened its mental and philosophical horizons so as to incorporate deviations from the traditional values. So Nath's decision is groundbreaking and at this stage, it is bound to produce unexpected results and both Nath and Jyoti are aware of such consequences. Moreover, as far as Arun's recourse to ill-treatment of Jyoti is concerned, Tendulkar has imputed it to Arun's culture and background. Arun accepts that wife beating is a usual thing in his community and his own father used to beat his mother. Having grown up in such culture and under the stress of casteist ideology and family responsibilities, he was crumbles and starts beating Jyoti. He is a split personality. He loves Jyoti immensely but he gives in under the stress of various ideological and day-to-day forces. In fact, through his depiction of Arun as a split personality, Tendulkar presents a realistic picture of our society. He neither idealizes nor dehumanizes the real life; it has been presented very realistically.



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