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EFFECT OF UNTOUCHABILITY ON A HIGHLY EDUCATED AND HIGH CASTE WOMAN IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S *KANYADDAN*

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ABSTRACT

In the present society the life style of human is totally changed and especially the position of woman which become bad. Even the people who are calling them ideal, role models in the society they are also failing in the life when the situation comes to them where they have to show their idealism. In the mean while the Dalith people who always becomes victim in this caste game. As we all know Dalith suffer a lot many years in the hands of upper caste people of the society. He portrays the problems as they are but not favor any view. The institution of marriage is unique in the caste based in the society of India. Hindus give utmost priority to marriage. They take ever thing, for instance caste, character, occupation, economic status etc. into consideration. Of all these things caste of the bride and the bride groom should be the same. If any one of the above is not good usually marriage doesn't take place. In the marriage 'Kanyadaan' is essential feature. It means giving away bride to bridegroom. The title suggests that the play moves around marriage.

Key Words: position of woman, ideal, dalit, marriage, caste system

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Vijay Tendulkar's seminal play 'Kanyadaan' explores criticism of this caste system in Indian society. But what is interesting is that Tendulkar highlights here caste system, later he turns how all social amelioration prove fruitless in our progressive post independent society. This article is the texture of modernity and social change in India through a marriage between two people of different castes and backgrounds...Side by side with this 'dalit' and 'elite' issue, this play explains foolishness of a theorist who keeps his daughter's life at stake to prove the supremacy of his theory. The play gives obliquely hints the pathetic condition of women in this patriarchal society. According to V. M. Madge, through such matrimonial relationship, the

playwright, very sensitively, locates family and gender relations in the larger context of "the caste conflict" and "the corrupt nature of State." Jyoti becomes a site, a battle ground on which the clash between the upper caste and the Dalit castes takes shape. Madge finds that, "Jyoti becomes the vessel in which the conflicting caste ideologies pour their aspirations for power" (70). Tendulkar in this play presents entirely different aspect that the suffering of an upper caste woman and her family in the hands of a Dalith educated young man.

Vijay Tendulkar belongs to that avant-garde group of dramatists who can represent reality as it is. His plays become sharp criticism of Indian society and the condition of women in such

patriarchal society. They also deal with the complexity of human relationships. Each of his plays contains a subtle critique of modern Indian society, and a distinct character and message. 'Kanyadaan' explores the texture of modernity and social change in India through marriage between two people of different castes and backgrounds. It shows that what we assume as social and cultural progress in modern India is nothing but a big hoax the play entitled 'Kanyadaan' alludes to the traditional Hindu custom of marriage in our society-to give a marriageable daughter by one's guardian to an eligible young man who will give her safety and security in life. It is also desired that the young man will prove himself a constant companion of this woman Naturally it concerns much to the bride's father about her daughter's post-marriage life.

The story is set based on the situations in 1970s with the reference to the Emergency which Mrs. Gandhi has feared to impose upon the country. At the end of Act II, scene I, Nath receives a call from one of his political associations, when he says to the caller, "Don't tell me she is going to impose Emergency. Okay, if you hear anything more let me know, will you?" (Tendulkar 44-45). Mrs. Gandhi declared Emergency on 26 June 1975. (Tendulkar 44-45). Mrs. Gandhi declared Emergency on 26 June 1975. So, that enables one to locate the action with some precision. The story is, thus, set at a time when politics was the order of the day and also an intellectual fashion. Jyoti has to discuss the question of her marriage--a matter of life and death to her--in fifteen minutes, as the father has a bus to catch, which will take him to his speech-making tour and the mother has just returned home tired after a rally. This, in its own way, as Madge observes, is a comment on the quality of the family life these two social reformers have been able to give to their children, despite their observance of democratic norms. In fact, the children are seen not as individual with their own aspirations, but as mere extensions of their parents' social experimentations (155).

Jyoti informs her parents and brother that she has decided to marry Arun, whom she met in the socialists' study group. He is poor but eloquent. Her father agrees at once because his dream is

casteless society and for that he has been working. Seva is shocked. Even though she has been fighting against 'untouchability', she thinks as caring mother. Seva speaks about possible consequences:

"My anxiety is not over his 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. You have been brought up in a specific culture. To erase or change all this overnight is just not possible. He is different in every way. You may not be able to handle it" (p.13).

Nath is so over-idealistic so that he thinks Jyoti's marriage, his dream is coming to an end, he wants to save it, not for the sake of his daughter's life, but for the success of his ideological experiments. As Nath says, with passion, that: Seva let not this wonderful experiment fail! This dream which is struggling to turn real let it not crumble into dust before our eyes! We will have to do something. We must save this marriage. Not necessary for our Jyoti's sake . . . this is not just a question of our daughter's life, Seva, this has . . . a far wider significance . . . this experiment is a very precious experiment. (Tendulkar 41)

Jyoti tries to clarify her mother's fears by saying that she can manage. Seva's character pictures like a traditional mother who takes caste, background, attitude, character, economical position of the bridegroom. Seva and her son oppose at first but they also agree for the marriage. Arun calls barbarism his traditional way of life. He is not ready to change. He is very stubborn. He says, "I am what I am . . . and shall remain exactly that" (Tendulkar 44). Here, Tendulkar is giving an idea through his character Jayaprakash, who says, "Everything changes. Those who are able to adjust to the changing conditions survive. This is the law of life" (34).

Jyoti brings Arun to her house to introduce him to her parents and brother. He is dark in color but good looking. He is nervous when he enters Jyoti's house because the house is different from his. He asks Jyoti not to leave him. Here the playwright artistically describes actual feelings of discomfort when Arun enters the house. Arun's words here reveal his entire background.

He says: If you see my father's but you'll understand. Ten of us, big and small, lived in that eight by ten feet. The beat of our bodies to warm us in winter. No clothes on our back, no food in our stomach, but we feel very safe. Here, these damn houses of the city people, they're like the bellies of sharks and crocodiles, each one alone in them (p.16). , Arun becomes more eloquent in his expression on 'untouchability'. His words against Brahmins are full of poison. He asks Jyothi:

"Will you marry me and eat stinking bread with spoilt dal in my father's hut? Without vomiting? Tell me, Jyothi, can you shit everyday in our slum's village toilet like my mother? Can you beg, quaking at every door, for a little grass for our buffaloes? Come on, tell me."(p.17)

These words reveal how inferior he is in his thoughts. It may be because of his own circumstances. Jyothi begins to weep uncontrollably. Later run apologizes for being rude in his speech. Jyothi accepts and laughs. When Jyothi is speaking that she is not touch me not girl he holds her arm and twists it violently. Jyothi feels the pain not because her hand is twisted but the rude behavior of Arun. Seva sees this and does not reveal her displeasure. She asks about Arun's education. when she asks for economical stability to be free from problems, to her astonishment he replies that for troubles illicit liquor is used. Nath enters and emphasizes the need for breaking the caste system. Arun without touching the tea brought by Jyothi leaves that house.

In spite of strange behavior of Arun, as Jyothi is firm in her decision she gets married to Arun. The consequence is violence in the form of conflict which is hidden in him for ages. After marriage Arun comes home every night taking alcohol and beats Jyothi as illiterates do in the backward society. Unable to bear this torture Jyothi comes her maternal home from Arun not to return to him. When her father tries to pacify she replies that she has left Arun and she is not going back to him. Nath wants not to break the relationship so he asks that both stay in his house but that was rejected by Jyothi saying that she never be with Arun. Arun comes to say sorry to Jyoti. Seva asks him the reasons for his beating. He replies that he is the

son of a scavenger. He doesn't know the non-violent ways of Brahmins. He also says that he loves his wife but drinking wine and beating are common to them. Watching all this Jyothi leaves the house with Arun to prevent further embarrassment. We can find wife and husband relationship between Hindu and Dalit families in a famous dalit critic, Kanchallaiah's words,

Man-woman relations among Dalit bahujans do not go beyond natural relationships. For those who not come in touch with letter, for these whose spiritual wisdom is primitive but natural because it has not acquired the character of manipulation and exploitation, the human touch is still retained in these societies, begemonic relations in the forms that are visible among the Hindus are absent. Here even sexual intercourse is an organic need of the body but not a pleasure of the heart. This undefined love retains its naturalness among the Dalit-bahujans. Among the Hindus the man-woman relationship always conditioned by manipulation and receptivity. Dalit bahujan relationships on the other hand are based on openness 1.

The principal aim of Tendulkar is to show man – woman relationship and their social problem. The play is purely based in Indian society because caste conflicts we can observe only in India. The play is fruitful and powerful work that expresses social change and conflict between two different races.

Very soon, Arun Athavale comes to invite his father-in-law in his book launching ceremony. The way he invites his father-in-law in boastful manners is highly indicative of Arun's selfishness, bestiality, who wants to aggrandize on elite sympathy to cater his personal needs. His language is that of a first-rate blackmailer with potential threatening. After Arun's left, Nath becomes enraged and bursts out on Arun's hypocrisy.

His hysterical cry "I was nauseated by his overweening arrogance. And he's the same man who wrote that autobiography....his visit has polluted this drawing room ,this house, and this day...It stinks....This furniture, this floor...all this ...he has made them filthy, dirty, polluted! Why did I have to come into contact with a man like this?"

Here Arun, who represents the character of dalit community 'emerges as a 'Machiavellian character eager to capitalize on the high tide of Dalit sympathy both in personal and intellectual fronts.' Jyoti's mother, Seva Devalikar who does not support Jyoti's marriage with Arun and bearing all pains silently still requests Nath to preside Arun's book-publishing ceremony. Her desire as a mother to see Jyoti as a happily wedded girl drives her here, because she is more practical. Her active participation in women's causes has made her mature. Following her advice, Nath attends the inaugural ceremony of Arun's autobiography and delivers speech which is nothing but hollow, rhetorical outburst. Nath confesses before her wife and son that what he has done, done only to save her daughter's life. He knows well '...this kind of hypocrisy marks a rank opportunist. That book is no autobiography; it is pulp fiction based on half truths. Not all dalits can be like that. Nath goes through tremendous mental anxiety and a hopeless, disillusioned father, makes his son cautious not to follow his father's idealism' Jayaprakash, do me a favor. Reject your father. Learn to see through his naivete and idiocy. Don't ever rely on his wisdom.'

Jyothi comes to hear her father on Arun's autobiography. She criticizes him for his hypocritical speech. She questions why he has come. When Nath asks her who will take care of her during delivery, Jyothi harshly replies that she has her husband. She emphasizes that she is not a widow. She firmly says that she is Jyoti Arun Athavale, a scavenger. She leaves the house saying that she never comes again. Talking about the play one of the critics says: Jyoti thus becomes mindless and surrenders to the situation. She like her father plays the Rescuer while Arun plays the victim. Her rescuing, at first, makes him behave more helplessly and then triggers his feelings of inferiority. Consequently, he sifts to the role of persecutor in order to feel powerful..... Jyoti goes down to the role of victim. Thus the Rescuer victim transaction. This Drama Triangle makes not only Jyoti but also Arun mindless to feel powerful. The unreal idealism of Nath and Jyoti reflects their favorite role of rescuing which impairs their perception of the reality. (Sarath 73)

Nath becomes more pathetic than Seva as he compels Jyoti to go with Arun. His daughter becomes painful and miserable for having sincerely adopted his scale of values on the path of humanism (Prasad 100), while rejecting her mother's and brothers rational arguments. Towards the end of the play, her father also implicitly suggests to her to give up the ideals, but she rejects it for she thinks it cowardly to succumb to circumstances. She opines that, ". . . one must not turn ones back upon the battlefield." Jyoti has changed from a simple, sensitive girl into an assertive, determined lady. She cannot reject Arun, as "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" (Tendulkar 68)

The play ends with the charge that her father has rendered Jyoti mentally crippled by his false, hollow idealism. She says to her father that, "Someone said these people kidnap little children, break their limbs and make them cripples. Bhai, forgive me for my words, but you have made us . . ." (Tendulkar 69- 70). Thus Jyoti accuses her father of being failure in his duties towards his children. She leaves her father's house with a firm decision never to return and to accept life as it comes to her, as she says: I am not Jyoti Yadunath Devlalikar 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. Don't touch me. Fly from my shadow, otherwise my fire will scorch your comfortable values. (Tendulkar 70) Drained of life, Nath breaks down and buries himself in the sofa. He feels defeated and confused. The scene of father's helplessness reminds the reader of Shakespeare's famous lines from King Lear: "Pray, do not mock me. / I am a very foolish fond old man" (qtd. in Wadikar 66). Tendulkar portrayed his characters as the victims either of their inherent evil nature or of hostile circumstances. Nath's kanyadaan has turned out to be a sacrifice of his daughter on the altar of his socio-political ideology. Nath and Jyoti become mindless in playing the progressive role of reformers and Arun becomes mindless in his effort to overcome his awareness of low-class origin. Thus, it can be concluded that the play, Kanyadaan, is not

the story of a victory; it is the admission of defeat and intellectual confusion.

Jyoti, inspite of being educated girl, is forced to accept her fate as Arun's wife even though she does not like it. She comes to know that it is not possible to change people. Thus Vijay Tendulkar remarkably explores the conflict between two different castes in Indian society he also presents violence against a woman in spite of her good education and high caste.

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