

CASTE AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S 'KANYADAAN'

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The present paper is an attempt to unravel the hidden dim lit domains of complex human behavior. External as well as internal factors leave imprint on human psyche in general. In India, social evils like gender discrimination, caste hierarchy; social and economic inequalities etc. have impaired the progress of the society. These diseases have eaten the soul of one of the ancient civilisations of the world. Though in modern India, changes are being felt in each field and every aspect of life, but old age customs, traditions and practices have not allowed hollow pores in hardcore stone relations of different sections of the Indian society. Vijay Tendulkar's *Kanyaadaan* is also about such complex and tangled relations of the members of the different sections of the society.

The main character Arun is suffering from the internal pain, agony and turmoil so much that when Jyoti, his wife and daughter of one M.L.A., comes in contact with him, she gets flares of his internal combustion. One point, his internal combustion comes out in total frustration as he says to Jyoti:-

ARUN: Sorry ! Moods out! Happens often, but new to you. At times a fire blazes- I want to set fire to the whole world, strangle throats, rape and kill. Drink up the blood of the beasts, your high caste society. Then I calm down like the taastric when he comes out of his trance . Like a corpse, I live on. I,ve made you suffer, I,m sorry. What am I but a troublemaker... (Tendulkar 18)

Caste mania in society has spread its wings from centuries and it is present in one or another form in modern lifestyle also. Though this is the age of fashion, glamour, technology and development, and man has acquired high proficiency and knowledge of every atom and molecule of human existence, but at the surface level, man is still barbarous, uncivilized and untrained human being. Man has become Prophet at water level, but is unable to hide his hypocrisy at the surface level. The man has made theories to regulate himself, but in practice he himself violates all social codes and norms to liberate his soul. In reality, man is a hypocrite, always keeping a difference between theory and practical. The gap between ideal and real, fills the heart with bitterness. Arun, the sufferer with such difference makes his life hell, while trying to oppose and reverse the strong order of caste society. His marriage with Jyoti, an upper caste girl, results in total fiasco in reality. Jyoti becomes a victim of his father's idealism and his

husband's realism and finds herself crushed and twisted in layers between these two. She sacrifices her life to make his father's experiment successful and her husband's love fruitful. She becomes so obliged to her father's experimentation and her husband's realism that at once she marries Arun. Nath sacrifices his daughter's life to make his idealism a reality in which Jyoti has to prove herself, because she loves him deeply, and because she is deeply embedded in her family's idealism. Seva Nath, s wife and Jyoti's mother questions the same when she says:-

Seva: Does it mean that my daughter's life is to be used for an experiment? Is that what you are saying? You may have your views. I cannot accept them. I am her mother. If you ask me I will say that Jyoti can never be happy with that man....If you like take it from me in writing. (Kanyadaan 28)

As a mother, though she warns Nath , but Nath ignores everything, to prove his supremacy. Supremacy of male dominance does not allow his ego to filter the matter, to solve the unsolved mystery and ultimately patch up the torn minds. The patriarchal dominance favours the other male and his complexities, instead of delicacies of female heart. Nath says her:-

Nath: After all, how long was here? On the strength of what you learnt in that short ime, you want to pass judgement on him? Seva, you acting in haste...(Kanyadaan 28)

Jyoti loves Arun in a dilemma, because when her father asks him about his appearance and impression to give a thought to her marriage. Jyoti becomes so confused and perplexed that she is unable to understand the intensity of her love for him and her objective assessment to marry him. The depth of her love does not allow the pores of Arun's character to fill. The voids of his hard personality hit her harshly and she bleeds, sobs, cries, but becomes silent to listen his voice. She is so much firm in her decision of marrying him that she does not allow any second thought to occupy any corner of his mind. She does not allow anyone to discuss any part of Arun's personality. She says to Nath:-

Jyoti: (Diffident, immersed in thought.) Bhai, I told you at the outset...I don't know much about him. The little I know of him is through his poems . He asked me, I said yes, quite spontaneously. To tell you the truth, I have been learning something of him only since then....(Kanyadan 28)

She loves him so intensely that if her family wouldn't have allowed her marriage with Arun, She had become rebellious. Even after getting some repulsive traits of Arun's character, she is not concerned that she has made a right or wrong decision, but for her commitment to him, and the same decision is given a strong layer by her father. Arun, a sufferer of hypocritical idealism of high caste society, finds himself torn between his true love for his beloved and wife Jyoti and his hatred for false showoff of upper caste people and ultimately his bleeding soul finds a solace by avenging revenge on his most dearest wife. Arun wants to correct the wrongs done by caste masters, he has no control over social thinking, but he uses his personal scepticism to satisfy his burning ego. When love dominates, everything becomes bearable, comes under the power and capacity of us, but when rationality and reasons dominate, then love tries to fill the voids, aroused through clash between love and reason. Jyoti sacrifices everything for Arun, and Arun wants to sacrifice everything to satisfy his male dominance and caste stigma.

From ancient times casteism has produced havoc effects on the psyche of lower caste people, and they were forced to suppress their body and soul under the stigma of brutal caste system. The same sacrilege and pain is revealed by Vijay Tendulkar in his successful play 'Kanyadaan'. The play is a complex series of different aspects of human behaviour. Different characters expose different shades of complex and complicated human nature. All the basic

instincts find full expression through dialogues of various characters of the play. Sometimes, one tries to be ideal for one or the other reason, but the hollow pores of imbibed values does not allow to happen so. In case of Arun, he reflects and gives back, what he and his forefathers have received in general. It is also human nature to suppress and subjugate the weaker one. Arun receives anger, shame and humiliation from the society, and in revenge, he pours the same on Jyoti whenever he gets a chance. He has to avenge the societal norms and its caste hierarchy, but he is helpless before the society because he cannot alienate himself from the same. He cannot uproot himself to get set a new order. But in upper caste Jyoti, he finds a medium to give outlet to his suppressed and depressed feelings. He beats her because he has seen his father, beating his mother. At one point, he says to Jayaprakash and Seva-

ARUN: When have I claimed that I am civilized and cultured like your people? From childhood I have seen my father come home drunk every day, and beat my mother half dead, seen her cry her heart out. Even now I hear the echoes of her broken sobs. No one was there to wipe her tears. My poor mother! She didn't have a father like Bhai, nor a mother like you... (Kanyadaan 43)

One new aspect comes to the surface when Arun expresses his anguish and insecurity; he has seen his father overpowering his mother, and his mother again serving his father after the harsh treatment. Somewhere he feels insecure from high caste mentality of Jyoti. He wants to dominate from caste point of view and also as a husband of a high caste society girl. When Jyoti wants to raise her head against his male ego, he hits her hard, and in such a mood, he beats her like a slave. The double phobia makes his life a hell and in revenge he makes Jyoti's life a big hell. He uses tactics and tricks to persuade her when she comes to her parental home. No doubt, he has got scars but he leaves no chance to give the same to others also. The character of Arun is like a journey into an obscure psyche. Here Tendulkar drives us deep into the inner recesses of human character and explores its pathos and plights. His character Arun, and his struggle for realization and afterward agony, bring out the defenselessness of his social and family life. His poems are expression of his supreme innovation and creativity as a result of his progressive mind, and on the other side, the cruel and barbarous act of beating his innocent wife to avenge the harder aspects of his social life, are two different aspects of the human nature. No doubt, a few members of society are able to give better than what they have achieved. One side is Nath, Jyoti's father, who is an upper caste, but cares to bring the real change by bringing the marginalized sections of the society into the main stream of society. He sacrifices his own daughter to set an example and to turn his dream into a reality. In a bitter argument with his wife Seva, he says-

NATH: later. Seva, until today, 'Break the caste system' was a mere slogan for us. I've attended many intercaste marriages and made speeches. But today I have broken the caste barrier in the real sense of the term. I am happy today, very happy. I have no need to change my clothes today. Today I have changed. I have become new... (Kanyadaan 23)

Nath has to turn his idealism into realism, and Arun has faced realism up to the extent that idealism has no place in his real life. It comes in one form or another, but his bitter experiences do not allow him to compromise. In between these two characters, Nath and Arun, Jyoti's life becomes twisted like a sandwich. She finds herself unable to reveal her own desires and dreams, she bears many things because she loves Arun more than his father's moral values. Here Tendulkar reflects and tries to bring out dilemma, tension, agony, frustration, silent miseries and defenceless of her woman protagonists. She allows others to trespass her, to make new ways

and path for others, and she did it not because she liked it, but because she was taught to do so for her silent survival. As said by Simon de Beavoure-
“The woman has no value or identity by herself-she is defined in relation to the man. More precisely, she is defined as what man is not.”(Nair 87)

After a long journey from exploitation to emancipation, a female is not able to understand herself fully and thoroughly. She desires only what her family allows her to do so. If she dreams something undesirable, then she feels herself guilty, for not following social and familial codes. No doubt, Jyoti marries Arun and gets full support of her father, but in reality when she faces contradiction in what she desired and what she achieved, she becomes the sufferer. Even in the worst situations, she tries to compromise and says to her father-

JYOTI: [With certitude] No. When I come here I begin to hate my world. I want to ignore that truth which I have to perceive, though rather late in life. I want to blind once again. Hereafter I have to live in that world, which is mine...[Pausing.] and die there. Say sorry to Ma. Tell her none of you should come to my house... this is my order.(Kanyadaan 70)

Nath is extremely ideal and he had ignored the hard reality of Arun’s life, the surface of his societal and family life. All through he has faced humiliation and insult in the streets of upper caste people. Nath has enthused good and moral values in his children and his kids have been brought up with a list of do’s and do not’s, while on the other side, Arun has faced the violation of such social and moral codes openly and harshly. It is difficult for a person like Arun to put on the label of goodness which he has not received anywhere. Nath encourages Jyoti to find the positive aspect of Arun’s behavior, that positive aspect which was never on the surface level. No doubt, Arun has soft heart to write poems, but he is hard enough to beat his beloved wife, Jyoti. His character is a mixture of imagination and reality, and between these two traits, Jyoti is entangled. Her anger bursts when she comes to see her father. She becomes hard in behaviour when she says-

JYOTI: You analyze it in detail, with a cool head. I don’t have the time, nor a cool head. I have to go and get on with the struggle. Come on and watch Arun at night when he staggers home roaring drunk, if you have the guts. There is a savage beast in his eyes, his lips, his face...in every single limb. And bestiality is something which cannot be separated from him. In the beginning, like an idiot, I used to search for that Arun who is above and beyond this beastliness, I used to call out to him, take him in my arms. Hard experience taught me I would always fail. Arun is both the beast, and the lover. Arun is the demon, and also the poet... Tell me, where is that beast I should drag out and destroy, where is that god I should rouse from his sleep?... (kanyadaan 68)

Jyoti becomes a victim of patriarchal and caste- ridden society in the true sense. If she had not loved Arun and would have married in upper society, then she would have felt safe and had not faced the inferior complex of her husband. What is her fault, if she wants to embrace her father’s idealism and her husband’s practical caste complexity? She is forced to live a sandwiched life between these two important men of her life. Alfred Tennyson, in his poem “The Princess”, echoed the universally prevailing attitude to women when he wrote:
“Man for the field and woman for the hearth. Man for the sword and for the needle her, Man with the head and woman with the heart; Man to command and woman to obey. All else confusion.” (Mundra & Mundra 29)

Many a time, we do things which we do not want to do, but we do to please others. We strangle our throat and its thoughts to give support to others. We all do it knowingly and deliberately, not for our pleasure, but for pleasure of those, whom we love, appreciate and value

more than ourselves. Same is the case of Jyoti, who values her father more than herself and loves her husband more than her life. She analyzed-

“Self-revelation is a cruel process. The real picture, the real ‘you’ never emerges. Looking it is as bewildering as trying to know how you really look. Ten different mirrors show you ten different faces.”(Deshpande 1)

Often our moods of love and anger, makes us abnormal in normal situations and normal in abnormal ones. Many a time, the fear of social stigma and prestige compel us to live life even in averse conditions. More so happens in case of Jyoti, who hates her world, but makes a mind to live in that. Perhaps she feels- She felt, as said by Simon de Beavoure-

“A woman is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,”(Nair 88)

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