

## **Representation Of Women In India With Reference To The Play “Kanyadaan” By Vijay Tendulkar**

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### **Women: A critical role in the society.**

Women share the most critical role in the society. In some part of the country women celebrate freedom while in rest other parts of the globe are the women who are treated to be less important.

Why the freedom of women is still a debate in this 21<sup>st</sup> century?

There is no fair judgment in the authority of women and the overall power lies in the hands of male.

Have we made us to believe and accept the way it is there? In order to fabricate our inabilities we blame others. Are we tired of trying or have we not yet started with the grass-root level of the problems? We ourselves have become a problem which we are unable to see. It is easy to point out faults of others than seeing our own.

The play was written by Vijay Tendulkar. He has written several one-act plays as well as children plays. His plays often portray socio-political problems in his dramas. The play is explosive and disturbing. He was awarded with the ‘saraswati samman’ for his critical comments on the play. He has depicted the conflict between the upper-class and Dalit. This is a Marathi play written in 1983 where class-distinction is criticized on the basis of politics which is considered to be an evil.

Like every woman stories over the world, the story is about women who sacrifice her dignity, dreams and everything to fulfill the needs of her husband on demand. She probably, derives pleasure in pain while bitten by her husband without any mistake.

The title “Kanyadaan” deals with the theme of marriage. The problems and the consequences of the marriage were self-created. Later it is found to be solved by itself. Nath Devlalikar is head of the family and a MLA and his wife Seva is a social worker. Jayprakash is a M. Sc. student and Jyoti is an intelligent girl. This Brahmin family belongs to the upper-class.

The play is divided into two acts. In the first scene, Jyoti informs her parents about her decisions of marriage with Arun Athavle, a guy who comes from a dalit community. Seva is shocked to know about her decisions but Nath is relaxed and happy because he wants to remove the class-system which is his dream. He supports Jyoti to get married with Arun, whom she knew for the last two months.

Nath wants to experiment with this marriage, which is sort of a political act. In act 1 scene 2, Jyoti invites Arun her home, who looks tall and dark. Jyoti is very much interested in his poetry and his autobiography. Arun feels uncomfortable in “big houses” and gets nervous and finally leaves home. What Jayaprakash and Seva noticed most is Arun’s intention to brew liquor in order to survive, if not anything remain.

In act 2 scene 1, Jyoti arrives perplexed and looking unhappy. Later on, Arun follows her, rather drunk. He asks for Jyoti’s forgiveness as he had beaten her. Jyoti leaves with him again. At this juncture also, Nath does not want his dreams to be shattered before his eyes though he is aware of the plight of his own daughter.

In act 2 scene 2, Arun’s autobiography gets published in which he is dealing with the theme of oppression and miserable condition of the poor – the lower class. But the irony is that Arun himself exploits Jyoti and lives as a parasite on her. Though Jyoti is pregnant, he makes her work at home. His ill-treatment to Jyoti is a kind of answer back from the Dalits to the upper-class.

Arun asks Nath to deliver a public speech on his autobiography but he refuses to do so. But looking at the plight of his daughter, in the final scene of the second act, Nath gives a hypocrite speech by praising Arun’s autobiography against his will. Nath wants to prevent Jyoti from further annoyance, but Jyoti does not tolerate this and she leaves home for forever. At the end, Nath, the idealist is turned into Nath the realist. He says at the end in rage that the entrance of such dalit (Arun) has polluted his home. That is how the drama ends with Jyoti’s departure never to come back at the Nath’s home.

The end of the drama leaves a question in the readers mind as to what is the future of Jyoti’s marriage? The marriage does not succeed. It is suggested that the class-divide and the conflict between the upper-class and the Dalit would continue to remain, which is very sad.

#### The significance of the title of the play:

The title of the play “*kanyadaan*” is given on the perspective of an Indian father who is emotionally charged and is socially questioned under different social norms. His role of being a father justifies the title of the play. The theme of the play is important to understand how a father feels for his daughter. Even the most possessive and rigid father has the most soft corner for his affectionate daughter. Their daughter is meant to be their world and her smile is everything to him. Daughter share a special bond with their father which is the most prized possessions and nobody could understand the depth of the love of a father. Their bond is so close that the thought of just handing her over to someone else’s custody can be heart-wrenching. However, it is a fact of life that every Indian wedding must have a *kanyaadan*.

The play has been one of the remarkable works by Vijay Tendulkar in which the role of a woman is portrayed in a particular manner depending upon the societal values. The theme is set in the house of the Jyoti who has been the sole victim of abuse. The beginning of the play introduces the family of Nath as the broad minded upper class. The sole motive is to find out the distinction

of the true sense of humanity. Jayaprakash is the son of Mr.Nath who plays the role of a social activist.

In act 1 scene 1, the play is held in the drawing room where the family of Nath seems to be very busy .Each member of the play is found to be socially active, playing major roles in the society. The scene gives us the current idea of a modern family structure where each of them has differences in opinions yet they fill the gap of the lack. The impact of modernization is depicted in Nath's family. All of them are independent in accessing their opinions.

We have to come across with the several dialogue deliveries of Nath in Act 1 scene 1 to Jayaprakash.

“... He has given us a new name- the repairers of the world! You won't be able to understand. The visions we had of the future of this nation before independence! And what we are forced to see today! Disgusting. It hurts...” which clearly tells us about their broad thinking. They treat human in the basis of humanity. They want to eradicate the evils caused by the domination of upper caste people which has affected humanity by causing a split in caste and class division among the Indians.

Nath at another instance says, “celibacy has nothing to do with it, jay! It is a matter of educating the mind. We must have discipline...”

This very line reflects how the politics has poisoned the minds of the people and it is framed in such a manner where we live. We live in a system where our culture is indirectly affected by various norms of the society. He says that first of all we have to educate our mind to stay away from all prejudices. Our society is so biased and critically structured that, even if we are educated, we still fall into the prey of this framework. Our mind is already been structured in such a way that we cannot not do anything with it. We understand problems but we cannot run away from those structures. Throughout our life we just pretend to behave like an educated having different in our mind sets than others but in the deep reality we are the two faced hypocrites. We follow the same ideas veiled in a confined manner. We just fool others and call ourselves to be educated; the education without any value. And so as the revolution functions in the same way like a show off thing. The play is based upon certain principles that we face when we go through it.

### **Role of communication in the modern society:**

Nath's family shares rights of equality in taking decisions of their life which can be a serious threat to the impact of modernization in the play. The bond between the members of the family seems to be a weak. Where as a typical Indian family has to seek advices from the other elder members of the family. The family pattern seems to a nuclear where individual member has their own freedom and independency to carry a major action without the knowledge of the other. In the given line we see Nath saying to Jayaprakash, “...two weeks have gone by, and the hide-and-see continues...” This statement suggests that Nath's family face the direct affects of modernization and westernization of thoughts. Similarly in another statement, Nath says to his

son, "...sending messages to one another cannot be called marriage...this is all too much of rush, baba! ..."

Further in the same act we find Jyoti is eagerly waiting for both of her parents to discuss something important. Her mother is supposed to be absent in the house and she has gone out for social service. Jyoti is waiting for her to come so that she could tell something. During the wait, her father says, "...who stops you? We have a democracy in this house and we are proud of it. Democracy outside and dictatorship in the home, we don't know these two time-tricks..."

"... We never seem to be able to sit down with you children and talk...and that is bad..."

Seva, her mother returns with the luggage and finally meets Jyoti and her husband. During the conversation of Nath and his wife, at one point he says, "...the call of the nation is more important than the call of a wife..."

Seva, "... not the call of the nation, Nath, it is the craze for speech mongering!..."

Nath, "... you had total liberty to make your own decision! ..." "...Seva, our Jyoti here, she wants to tell us something... and we are simply never able to meet these poor children together. Therefore this girl has taken an appointment with us today...Fifteen minutes [to Jyoti] only fifteen, right...? ...."

These speeches reflect the complete principle of westernization of thoughts and life styles where one has complete freedom and liberty to think and act as s/he feels like to act. In the second context if we see, we find that this development of mindset has ruined the true love and bonding of a family and it seems to be completely scattered into pieces where every individual thinks himself to be the hero. There is no unity in thoughts and actions. And the family is not properly taken care of or nourished. In order to seek the social prestige and fame, both of the parents could not take care of the family where the children seemed to be neglected. And the priority seems to be shifted to others than the self. In order to fulfill the nation's need, their needs and stakes were neglected.

### **The importance of a woman in the Indian family vs. Jyoti in the play:**

The importance of Jyoti as a daughter plays a very significant role as she has her own stand, voice and right to choose her life the way she wanted to live without any objections. She holds the same esteem as a male child of her family holds. She belongs to an educated family and of higher caste. She was privileged being a daughter. She was given all rights to take her life decisions as an individual.

### **Father – daughter relationship:**

Both Nath and Jyoti shared a great bond as a father and daughter. Being a father of open mind he has given all freedom to choose her life partner. And being a daughter of such great thoughts and

openness she was privileged. Nath being such a father supported Jyoti's decision of life and marriage. Even if Jyoti has selected her match lower than her caste and the differences in caste conflicts and various social prejudices regarding marriages and other norms, Nath supported her decision fully. He was never found to be socially biased and his principles were seen in his home itself. Although Jyoti was not that much supported by her mother in the play, she was the one who was pampered by her father. He has the same belief as he did outside being an active supportive member in the revolution for the down trodden. His role was rightly justified being a father as well as a social activist and a political leader.

While the role of Indian parents used to be opposite since they play a very opponent role in such kind of decisions. Sometimes they become adamant in accepting such challenges. Jyoti's father was not only supportive but also assigning positive vibes time to time when Jyoti was not sure about Arun's character and behavior although she was in love.

### **The mother-daughter relationship :**

Although being an Indian mother, she was not that conservative in approach. Also she was not that supportive to her daughter in the play. And when she saw Arun being abusive during the home visit to Jyoti, she was completely against the marriage. This reflects her consciousness; concern and care of being a mother on one side and a complex Indian woman on the other side. She could understand the role of a married woman in the typical Indian society where she is shown down. She was not more or less different than the others in her thoughts but her role is such a complicated that it is assumed to be different. As the fighter for the untouchables, she is not a caste biased but when the things come into practice in her own house she hesitates to accept the saying. Later on, she supports her daughter when she faces the worst sides of inter-caste marriage as being a daughter of higher castes and cultures but not as a wife of the lower caste Arun.

The very line by Seva to her daughter, in Act1 scene 1 supports the ideas:

“My anxiety is not over his being a dalit...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. To erase or to change all this overnight is just not possible. He is different in every way. You may not be able to handle it.”

“Saying something is easy, but doing it is very difficult...and later there is no chance for a woman to hide or to run away.”

### **The role of caste and education:**

Although, Mr. Nath and his family tried to go beyond this practice and to happily greet the inter caste system on the basis of proving equality and humanitarianism, yet they fails in their approach which they wanted to built. It was more like political in approach rather than a humanitarian approach when we come towards the end of the play. The play begins with the misconception of the humanitarian approach but the end concludes to be the vice versa. Mr. Nath wanted to experiment the marriage productively more than effectively so as to set an example of his power. But when it rots, the true aggression comes into the floor and hence caste is proved to be the issue on the basis of culture and the society.

If we see on the other side of the play, then we can also assume that caste and class are the factors of social division on account of life styles, thought processes and behavior of a person which directly shows on Arun. He being a person of lower class has lower social values and the way he behaves reflects everything as a character. He has a low self esteem and does not behave softly like the upper caste family of Jyoti. He is very rude in his behavior.

Similarly in Act1 scene 2 when Jyoti brings Arun to her house to introduce him to her parents and brother, he feels very nervous and uncomfortable to sit in her house which seems to be a different world for him from the world he lives in. Arun's words here reveal his entire background. He says: "I feel uncomfortable in big houses...if you see my father's hut you'll understand. Ten of us, big and small, lived in that eight feet by ten feet. The heats of our bodies warm us in winter. No clothes on our back, no food in our stomach, but we felt very safe. Here, these damn houses of the city people, they're the bellies of sharks and crocodiles, each one alone in them"

"As for me, I feel safe on the street. The bigger the crowds, the safer I feel. My heart shudders when walls of cement and concrete surround me. I feel I must get up, run, and get lost in the crowd"

"No, men who sit and chat in the kitchen are pansies! We will sit right here...you sit here"

"...because that's my manner. A scavenger's manner..."

"Our grandfathers and great grand fathers used to roam, barefoot, miles and miles, in the heat, in the rain, day and night...till the rags on their butt fell apart...used to wander shouting 'Johaar, Maayi-baap! Sir-Madam, sweeper!' and their calls polluted the brahmin's ears"

"Generation after generation, their stomachs used to stale, stinking bread they have begged! Our tongues always tasting the flesh of dead animals, and with relish! Surely we can't fit into your unwrinkled Tin opal world. How can there be any give and take between our ways and your fragrant, ghee spread, wheat bread culture"

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, Jyoti, 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”

“...our life is not the socialist’s service camp. It is hell...”

“Sorry! Mood’s out! Happens often, but new to you. At times fire blazes- I want to set fire to the whole world, strange throats, rape and kill. Drink up the blood of the beasts, your high caste society. Then I calm down like a tantric when he comes out of his trance. Like a corpse, I live on...”

These words have a direct revelation of his low things which is indirectly based upon his backgrounds from where he comes. This might be the cause of his circumstances he has faced and the social agony he tries to put on Jyoti. He was fiery in his approach by the way he delivers his speech. Although he is literate, his struggle seems to be a never ending process for which he takes out the frustrations time to time. His love was not that welcoming. He has buried all those feelings which can break him more and make him weak. He stands out firm from his broken souls and bruised body with all cramps. Jyoti begins to weep uncontrollably. Later, Arun asks her sorry for being rude. Jyoti accepts and laughs.

Jyoti says: “I am not one of those delicate touch-me-not creatures. I belong to the Seva dal tradition”

When Jyoti is speaking that she is not touch me not girl he holds her arm and twists it violently. Jyoti 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. Without touching the tea brought by Jyoti leaves he that house.

Arun says to Seva: “No problem. We shall be brewing liquor- only you must know the technique”

Arun [to Jayaprakash]: “I was telling her about this matter of brewing illicit liquor. [With determined obstinacy.] so I was saying that this business is highly profitable. Secondly, it is fun for the man and wife. Can take it easy. If there are children, there’s work for them also, to wash glasses and plates, to fetch paan and cigarettes. And very good income in the tips. Many hands to work, and so many chances to rake in money. [ Arun is happy now seeing Seva’s unrest]” [Jayaprakash tense. Jyoti enters. It doesn’t take her long to guess at the state of things.]

When everybody in the house was opposing the marriage, Mr. Nath supported the decision of Jyoti and took her side.

He says: “I am on Jyoti’s side. It is natural that the boy should have rough edges since they are the product of the circumstances he has endured. In fact it would be surprising if these

peculiarities didn't exist. But just because he has them, it doesn't mean he's a bad fellow. He may not be a gentleman, but neither is he a scoundrel. As a human being he has potential. He has intelligence, drive and creativity. He has come so far despite his circumstances: this is not an easy matter. It is the result of his effort and dedication. You cannot imagine at what cost these people have made the little progress that they have. He is like unrefined gold, he needs to be melted and molded. This is the need of the hour. Who can perform this task if not girls like Jyoti? Of course it is difficult, but it needs to be done..."

In spite of Arun's strange behavior, Jyoti firmly takes decisions to marry him. The consequence is violence in the form of conflict which is hidden within him for ages. After marriage, Arun comes home every night taking alcohol and beats Jyoti. He behaves like an illiterate people of lower castes. Jyoti was unable to bear his torture and she comes back to her maternal home and decides not to go back to Arun. When her father tries to pacify her not to take such steps of leaving Arun, she refuses to do so. 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 Jyoti leaves the house with Arun to prevent further embarrassment.

In Act 2 Scene 1, Jyoti comes home late at night and Seva gets little irritated by seeing her late and accuses her saying it is not the proper time to come home. She seems not to be happy with Jyoti's behavior so she blames her saying everything.

Seva says: "After your marriage the atmosphere of this house has changed. And do you think you have remained the same, Jyoti? You live here like a stranger taking shelter in this house out of sheer necessity. You are no help to us, nor are we able to depend on you. You are lost in yourself. If you go out we don't know when you will return, and when you do return it is like this! Like a stranger..."

These lines refer the complete sign of disgust Seva has for her daughter's inter-caste marriage and the consequences they face after this. Jyoti. First of all she was not happy with Arun's improper and rude behavior.

### **Marriage is not a blind ritual:**

As we have seen in the play, Jyoti marriage with Arun was not seriously handled by Nath and the victim herself. This casual behavior of both caused a chaos in the family of Nath where each of the members suffers along with Jyoti. Nath as a politician also gave his daughter blind decision of marriage as a trial like Jyoti took her life to be at this point.

Finally it has to show a bad result. Both were unable to adjust with each other since they hardly knew each other as a person. The other problem which has to arise is the huge class difference both of them shared.



**The problem of inter-caste marriage:**

Grass is green when it is watered. Marriage is also like the grass; it grows and stays healthy if tried from both sides. If we see here, we find Jyoti and Nath tried to save the marriage for which Jyoti has to undergo huge plight and abuses. While on the other hand, Arun's behavior was no lesser than an animal who behaves like an anti social kind. He was casual in his approach. He has not taken Jyoti seriously nor the bond does he share. Nath as the father had tried to save her daughter's inter caste marriage.

**Marriage on political background:**

Marriage and politics are the two sides of coin. One is believed to be based on the logic of others. When two of them come together then it becomes a socio-political issue. Nath family was more politically inclined. He took his daughter's marriage as a political interest rather than a personal stake. His experiment on Jyoti's marriage was the result.

**The role of Jyoti and the society:**

Jyoti as the daughter of upper caste and well educated family enjoyed the freedom in every aspect in her life like decision taking and implementing it. Her urban upbringing was different than other girls who live in rural area. She has voice and choice of her own. She is shown to be a smart, strong willed girl of facing the situations of life and trying her best to resolve. She is not like other girls who will part in their ways.

As the wife, her character is shown to be the strongest of all as she faces all pains and sufferings given by Arun still she decides to be with him. She leaves her heaven to live in the hell; in such a society where a woman has no respect and voice. They are treated as an animal to breed and feed as per the situation demands. They are often abused and tortured by their men inside the four walls, yet they come out with all bruises and scars smiling without any complain. This is the culture where Arun belongs from and Jyoti shares it being his wife.

As time passes by, Jyoti becomes more strong and immune to the circumstances and bruises and she decides to reside over there forgetting her past. She believes that her world is no longer the past, but the present situation she faces and she should face it till she dies.

The very nature of Jyoti sounds typical in some point of view and in other point of view she was right if in case the upper caste hypocrisy of her family is shown in the end.

She could understand the two face of it better than anyone. She decides to leave her society forever from where she once belonged to live with her present.

**The conclusion:**

The conclusion is very depressing. There is the twist in the end. The more the play goes on the more it becomes complex. The message has both positive and negative sides for the reader.

Our society is so much politically driven that we relate everything in the hands of politics. The more you get the power the more you exploit the weaker sections, the less you have power to access the more you are exploited. Similarly, caste is the most exploited issues among all. It has been worked like chains of networks since past. The cause of such distinction, discrimination and division is wide and deep rooted. We cannot blame only politics but various several economic and cultural issues are also related with it. If we talk about the caste biased society then the upper caste people should be held for the sole victim of exploiting people of the lower caste for which the result is so atrocious.

The result might not be welcoming but if we see the history and the inner conflict of downtrodden we will not judge their behavior anymore. We are the one who has led them to such path and they became vulnerable and spoiled themselves more.

While the emotions and the suffering of Arun is suppressed. It is shown to be the negative role of the play. But the writer did not show any kind of justice for the poor ones who have been under the hands of British and now by our upper castes. The sole motive of the play is in support of the upper caste until Jyoti gave justice to her character by supporting the vice versa. The play ends dramatically.

Marriage is used over here as a tool to give more evidence against the lower castes. Indirectly, the writer may be trying to prove the thing which has happened in the past against Dalits was not really wrong if their behavior is taken on account. They are the one to be seated where they are meant to be and where they belong. And their behavior has no change even if they are given any privilege in the society.

The case may not be such if the writer would have experimented this in positive connotation. His piece of writing may not go in his favor but it is the national issue which one cannot ignore. Many writers and critiques have so far written articles and books rose on such issues. The issue over here has hit the board.

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