

VIJAY TENDULKAR'S *KANNYADAN*: A JOURNEY OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract :

The aim of this paper is to critically examine how the journey of social transformation begins in the play about caste discrimination. Tendulkar exposes the burning issue of inter-caste marriage in a very realistic and naturalistic way. He also exposes the exploitation and violence against Jyoti on the issue of caste discrimination. The purpose of this paper is to show the social reality of modern India where caste discrimination takes place and Jyoti and Arun become victims of it. She is an educated and modern woman, but she suffers a lot due to class conflict and caste discrimination. She asserts her nonconformity to the traditions. The play shows that there is strong caste discrimination, but she is a more determined woman and she wants to bring real social change and transformation in society by accepting the grim reality of marginalized people.

KEY WORDS : social transformation, conflict, proletariat, marginalized, scavenger, bourgeoisie

Vijay Tendulkar is the first dramatist who has transformed the regional theatre into the national theatre. Arundhati Banerjee pointed out, "Vijay Tendulkar has been in the vanguard of not just Marathi but Indian theatre for almost forty years."¹ Drama has been considered the oldest and most authentic expression of human sensibility. Vijay Tendulkar has used this instrument to introduce social and ethical changes and also to make people conscious throughout all ages. Vijay Tendulkar is a firm believer in the drama, which forces the audience to consider pressing issues. He hopes to bring about some changes in the human mind. *Kanyadan*, the play is condemned as anti-Dalit. It has provoked anger and protest, particularly in the Dalit community. The play moves around the conflict between Brahmin family and the Dalit family. The play deals with the issue of caste discrimination. The research attempts to find the journey of social transformation in the play.

Social transformation is defined as the process of change in institutionalized, norms, values, relationships and hierarchies over time. It is the custom and way in which society changes due to social upheavals, modern thought, science, technological innovations, economic growth, and war or political upheavals. Social transformation not only affects people's thoughts but also changes their interactions and lifestyle. Regarding individuals, social transformation refers to the process of altering the social status of one's parents to resemble their current status. During this process of transformation, one moves from an approved status to an achieved status.



The institution of marriage is prioritized in the caste based society of India. Due to the four Varna systems, Hindus give utmost priority to marriage, and they marry their son or daughter into the same caste. They consider everything, for instance, caste, character, occupation, economic status, etc. Usually, marriage doesn't take place if any one of the above is not suited to them, usually marriage doesn't take place. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar states his vision, "The real remedy for breaking caste is inter-marriage. Nothing else will serve as the solvent of caste."² He accepted that social transformation would not happen in one day, but that it would require effort and time.

In the play '*Kanyadaan*' marriage of Arun and Jyoti is a crucial event that exposes the journey of social reformation and social transformation. The title advocates that the play revolves around marriage. It means giving the bride to the bridegroom. Jyoti is a young, beautiful, and educated girl. Jyoti is the daughter of Nath Devalkar and Seva. This family belongs to the urban middle-class Brahmin circle of relatives. Nath being MLA, he is busy man. Seva, who's a social worker, is constantly busy in social service. Jayaprakash is son, who is studying for an M.Sc. They have a well socio-cultural background, we come to know that parents do not spend lots of time with their children, but Nath is always on tour addressing the public; Seva is busy organizing girls' camps and rallies.

Arun Athavale is the protagonist of the play as a scavenger by caste. He exposes anger and suppressed emotion through his rebellious poems. Jyoti met him in the socialists' study group. Though he is poor, has eloquent quality. He appears as a sadist and rebel. His resentment born out of caste discrimination and spoils his intelligent and grace. He loses faith in relationships, social justice and the existence of human life. But he develops a relationship with Jyoti. She also loves him. This love relationship between Jyoti and Arun unveils the journey of social transformation. Nath is a social reformist and wants to uplift the lower section of society. Here we find Nath exploits his daughter to get fame in the society by permitting her daughter to get married with Arun.

Jyoti decides to marry with Arun and informs her parents and brother. This is remarkable event which shows real nature of Jyoti. She is modern woman who breaks custom and tradition and makes herself for marriage with Arun. Nath accepts and agrees at once because his dream is casteless society, but reaction seems to be different that shows caste discrimination while he emphasizes on "Is he Brahmin"? Nath is delighted on the decision of his daughter but marriage of Arun and Jyoti is matter of pride rather than a matter of sentiments and social relation for her father. On the other hand, Though Nath takes this decision to show the people how he is a great man. Seva is shocked by hearing marriage. Seva as a social worker is fighting against 'untouchability' but here as caring mother. Seva expresses her worries strongly this marriage and states:

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).



Jyoti also hesitates to tell about Arun's background. It points out that she also knows caste is not negligible factor for getting married. But she gathers her confidence to expose the profile of Arun and opposes her mother by saying that she will deal with raising problems. Seva is modern thoughts woman but here we understands that she considers Arun's caste, background, attitude, character and economical position. At the beginning Seva and her son oppose but they also agree for the marriage. But the Brahmin family doesn't accept Arun wholeheartedly and socially, which is the root cause of the conflict between two families. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar asserts in his book *Annihilation of Caste: You cannot build anything on the foundations of caste. You cannot build up a nation; you cannot build up morality. Anything that you will build on the foundations of caste will crack and will never be a whole.*³

Direct conflict and confrontation finds the issue of the relationship with Arun in the second act of the play. There is direct encounter on issue of caste discrimination in the meeting. Arun's consciousness is influenced by the feeling of otherness when he reaches the Bungalow of Nath. Though he loves Jyoti, he cannot subdue his suppressed rage. Arun projects his insecurity in the family Nath. His agony expresses:

If you see my father's hut, you'll understand. Ten of us, big and small, lived in that eight feet by ten feet..... Here these damn houses of city people each one is alone in them (16).

Arun wants to expose that state of the horror of social reality. He can never be a part of the psyche of high caste society. The pathetic cry in his speech Arun, suggests the Tendulkar wants to eliminate the difference of reality and dream through serious social purpose. The encounter of Seva with Arun are arranged to give an insight into caste discrimination and the power of hegemony. Seva approaches and treats Arun not as a mother's but others and distant observer. She estimates and evaluates Arun as a sweeper's son. The playwright exposes the mental crises both in context of caste and class conflict. Seva humiliates Arun on the ground of caste.

Arun is also victim of caste discrimination. He also beats Jyoti after getting married. He is also conscious for his sentiments for Jyoti. His remorse and repentance indicate that even Dalit can conceive the spectrum of life at the higher plane where the binarism of caste discrimination becomes a mockery of human relationship. He confesses his guilty.

I behave worse than an animal. She will never forgive me. I know it. Jyoti you are destined for me, this truth Jyoti. After all scavengers like us are condemned to rot in shit.... My love is not false Jyoti, it is true.... I must break them... (42)

Jyoti is the real Indian womanhood and works as an instrument of social transformation. Her life is a great witness and she admits that social transformation requires lot much patience. She does not like her father's comment on the book of Arun. She realizes a real cause of violence burning within the mind of Arun. In the sympathy of Nath, her own self-respect distorts and gradually in the silent fury. She shatters her own identity as a daughter of a Brahmin and accepts as a wife of Arun Athwale. She announces, "You know very well to whom I belong. I belong to someone who makes your clean and pure soul impure by his touch" (66). She now

understands that her father only creates chaos and maintains hatred for Arun. She generalizes the nature of human will is magnificent. She exposes her bitterness against social structure and caste discrimination. She declares:

No man is fundamentally evil, he is good .He has certain propensities towards evil. They must be transformed. Completely uprooted and destroyed .And then, the earth will become heaven .It is essential to awaken the god slumbering with man...Putting man's beastliness to sleep, and awakening the god head within is an absurd notion.(67)

Actually Jyoti plays a vital role in the play. She has remarkable patience and provides opportunities to Arun to discharge the best of his violent and beastly behavior. His anger and resentment comes on the surface and it gives cathartic relief. She gets to know the real cause of Arun's violent nature. She discovers the real Arun and defends, "Arun is the demon and also 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" (69). She admits that it is difficult to bring out the change in society without understanding subaltern.

She is ready to lose her own identity to bring her husband in the mainstream. She gets the awakening if a woman is expected to accept her husband, why she is encouraged to negate the identity of Arun who is Dalit. She confesses, "I am not Jyoti Yadunath Devalikar now; I am Jyoti Arun Athvale, a scavenger. I don't say 'harijan'. I despise the term. Don't touch me .Fly from shadow, otherwise my fire will scorch your comfortable values". (70) Her confession proves that she has transformed herself and accepted her husband as a scavenger.

Conclusion :

The journey of social transformation begins in the play when Jyoti makes her mind to get married with Arun comes to an end when she accepts wholeheartedly Arun as her husband. The end of the play in which Jyoti in spite of her ethics of bearing pain with her silent resistance presents her patient a true nature of woman. The play shows that accepting the position of marginalized people is a solution to bring social transformation rather than making discrimination in the society.

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