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KANYADAAN: A SAGA OF SUBJECTIVE AND PATRIARCHY IN CONVENTIONAL INDIAN SOCIETY

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Magnum opus *Kanyadaan* penned by Vijay Tendulkar, depicts feminine sensibility and female psyche in the highly patriarchal Indian society through the narrative of character, Jyoti. Vijay Tendulkar is known for writing realistic plays and dramas that represent the natural human traits. In *Kanyadaan*, also, he portrays the all the characters that show different demeanor in front of society and a different facet for their family. This can be seen directly from the actions of Jyoti's father who is an idealist for the society and a realist for her own daughter. Male chauvinism and patriarchy are the main themes in the work which can be observed in all the male characters – Jyoti's father as well as Jyoti's husband in this play through the scene of inter-caste wedding and ideas of liberation.

As bell hooks justifiably speaks out:

“Visionary feminism is a wise and loving politics. It is rooted in the love of male and female being, refusing to privilege one over the other. The soul of feminist politics is the commitment to ending patriarchal domination of women and men, girls and boys. Love cannot exist in any relationship that is based on domination and coercion. Males cannot love themselves in patriarchal culture if their very self-definition relies on submission to patriarchal rules. When men embrace feminist thinking and practice, which emphasizes the value of mutual growth and self-actualization in all relationships, their emotional well-being will be enhanced. A genuine feminist politics always brings us from bondage to freedom, from lovelessness to loving.”

Vijay Tendulkar wrote in Marathi language who has written all his twenty eight plays in Marathi language. Tendulkar was conferred with ‘Saraswati Sammaan’ intended for his play *Kanyadaan*. The word *Kanyadaan* means granting one's daughter away in marriage which itself is ironical as the daughter is given to the person who supports and loves her as a friend and life companion. Arun, Jyoti's husband, does not worry a bit about the caring and loving for her wife rather he becomes revengeful all the times to show his part as a dalit who

considers himself to be marginalized. He is aggressive and abusive towards Jyoti Devalikar, an upper class Brahmin. He used to beat her up daily and very harsh on her even in her pregnancy. Racism and casteism, and upper class showiness through sensibilities have been challenged. It is critique of straightforward liberal hypocrisy.

In the starting lines of the play, Nath informs Jyoti for the India and he says:

“The visions we had of the future of this nation before independence! And what we are forced to see today! Disgusting it hurts.” Nath is a diehard spokesperson in the present diplomatic setup who never hesitates and loses even a single chance to claim even his offspring to shine out his face value being as a communist. He says,

“Jyoti, I feel so proud of you. The training I gave you has not been in vain. If only I believed in God, then Jyoti, this is the moment I’d go down on my knees and pray for you”. (45)

Apart from it, Seva as per her name she has dedicated herself to the service of humanity, is also a social campaigner but realistic too at the same time as Seva is not in favour of initiating the idealistic practice at her own home. Seva declares,

“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 is not the issue. But your life has been patterned in a certain manner you have been brought in a specific culture. 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.” Jyoti, on the other hand, unlike her realistic mother and the same as her father, considers in Gandhian dogma and she imagines to see a positive change and improvement in the society. Jyoti Devalikar and Nath have conformism, “Charity begins at home”.

Arun Athavale’s utterance in poetry and memoirs attracts Jyoti highly as she reveals, “His poems and his autobiography have inspired me with complete faith in him.”

Jyoti is highly influenced by the moralizing teachings of Nath and she is not at all concerned about the hardships of her upcoming wedded life. She says,

“Arun said, you don’t think that I am an absolutely worthless fellow I said not He said, this is incredible, and added in that case let us get married. And I nodded.”

Jyoti came to realise by the words of Arun, her husband that her fancy and romantic

world is total different from the actual idealistic sphere that depicts the wretched predicament of Dalits. Jyoti's husband tells:

“Generation after generation, their stomachs used to the 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 Tinopal world. How can there be any give and take between our ways and your fragrant ghee spread, wheat bread culture?”

When Arun used to come to Nath's house to meet Jyoti before their marriage, he also, tortured Jyoti mentally as well as physically. Arun's tactic of appeasing her is also bizarre as he says in a queer manner with sarcastic tone, “Hasli re hasli, ek bamaneer fasli.”

Once, Seva, Jyoti's mother informs Arun Athvale about the expenditures and hardships of city living as it would be hard to arrange for facilities to family and Arun is simply a B.A. In a belligerent attitude he rejoinders:

“No problem. We shall be brewing illicit liquor. It is the first class profession for two persons. The man bribes the police and the wife serves customers and our children clean the utensils. People call her aunty. The more striking the auntie's looks, the brisker the trade.”

Seva asks Arun how he is going to manage the household expenditures as he has to earn more for his wife and offspring. Arun laughed at this question and told Seva that he will use Jyoti for earning livelihood as she can do prostitution. Seva was dumbfounded and dismayed to hear Arun's response and reaction. Then, Jyoti comes to settle the tension filled environment but Arun threatens her “You don't know a shit shut up.” As per the existentialist feminist approach by Simone de Beauvoir through *The Second Sex*, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” The same condition can be seen for Jyoti who is meek, docile and submissive in the hands of her family's males. But, Seva is not in favour of Nath and Jyoti as she seems to object resolutely:

“You ran your democracy. To me Jyoti's decision seems to be senseless and as her mother I cannot accept it. This is a home, not your party where you can impose your discipline.”

Jyoti suddenly comes back her father's home by declaration of leaving Arun always. She declares:

“He... He will not enter this house. Because I have left him... I’m not going back to him again... Never. I must tell you, Bhai. I must. I am fed up with him. Fed up! Fed up!”

Nath Devalikar invites politely Arun to dine out with his family instead of his ill behaviour with her daughter as he wants to show the society that he is a reformist and positive thinker. Arun responds to the invitation in a sarcastic tone: “No, I’m not fit to have dinner with people like you.”

When Jyoti left Arun then Seva wanted to know the reason of this tussel but Arun did not show any lament or sorry attitude to her mother-in-law, rather he said that beating up and abusing the wife is already in his lineage and everything is fine with this beating as she is his property now onwards after marriage. She had been kanyadaaned by you and he is free to do whatever he likes to do with his wife. There is nothing to worry about as he had seen her mother being beaten by his father. Thus, he says:

“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, see her cry heart-out. Even now, I hear the echoes of her broken sobs. No one was there to wipe the tears.”

Arun had observed thrashings, abuse and disgrace in the lives of his parent and other relatives. His drunkard father had beaten her mother up daily and she never questioned against him. Jyoti, in the similar way, being a wife, should bear all this. This is not humiliation for Arun. He says:

“What am I but a son of scavengers? We don’t know the non-violent ways of the Brahmins like you. We drink and beat our wives... We make love to them... I am a barbarian, a barbarian by birth. When have I claimed any white collar culture?”

Simone De Beauvoir says, “her wings are cut and then she is blamed for not knowing how to fly” After some months of her marriage, Jyoti is pregnant. Arun is unchangeable even by this news and by the naïve devotion of Jyoti. When someday, Nath and Seva visited Jyoti and Arun’s house to see her daughter, they found about Arun kicking on the belly of

his expectant spouse. It was unbearable as a parents. Devalikars bemoans:

“Such heinous behaviour by someone who wrote this beautiful autobiography? How can he? Here in these pages, he describes the humiliations he has undergone with extraordinary sensitivity... and the same man kicks his pregnant wife on her belly? How...”

Seva is a realist and she is not drawn by the creative writing of Arun but she poignantly remarks that he is a timewaster is dependent on his wife, Jyoti. She also says that she drinks and knocks his wife. She says:

“Doesn’t his wife belong to the high caste? In this way he is returning all the kicks aimed at generations of his ancestors by men of high caste. It appears that this is the monumental mission he has set out to fulfil.”

Jyoti invites Nath and Seva in the inaugural function of the launch of Arun’s autobiography. Nath is unwilling to show their presence as he now knows that Arun is an contender and charlatan as a beast. Arun prompts Nath that “with the trumpet call of idealism you got your daughter married to a Dalit. After hearing this taunt Nath really starts hating him. Nath says after Arun’s departure: His visit has polluted this drawing room, this house and this day...It stinks Seva you know you see I feel like taking a bath like cleaning myself, clean everything! This furniture, this floor...all this...he has made them filthy, dirty and polluted.”

But Nath rethinks over his opinion of refusing to attend the ceremony of Arun as his denial can trigger Arun’s ill intentions of torturing Jyoti. Thus, Nath unwillingly applauds the autobiography publicly but Jyoti knows her father when she came to know that his address was pretender and false. Jyoti comes to her parental home by announcing: “If she has committed any crime, it is this; she took her father’s words for gospel truth. She adopted her father’s value.” Nath chaired the session and laments to go and attend it as he himself is responsible to force her daughter for inter-caste and marriage to a low caste person. At last, Jyoti decides to leave his principled beliefs summoned by Nath and she wants to accept Arun with his vices. Jyoti says:

“Tell me where that beast I should drag out is and destroy, where is that God I should rouse from his sleep? Tell me...Arun is made of all these things bound together and I have to accept him as he is, because I cannot reject him.”

Currently, Nath considers deserted. All of his principles collapsing one by one before him. He is afraid of taking care of Jyoti during her delivery. Jyoti replies to this concern of father,

“I have my husband. I am not a widow. Even if I become one I won't knock at your door. I am not Jyoti Yadunath Devalikar now; I am Jyoti Arun Athvale, a scavenger. I am one of them. Don't touch me. Fly from my shadow, otherwise my fire will scorch your comfortable values.”(70)

Feminine sensibility in the highly patriarchal society is portrayed in this play, that women are always docile, submissive and the Other to the men in Indian society. Though, the resistance can be seen through the women like Jyoti and Seva but the fault lies with their upbringing from their childhood days, they are taught to obey males whether they are brother, father or husband. Women need to bring their desire and selves in front of society, so that they can combat with male dominance and be courageous enough to question the age-old rotten traditional beliefs that are made by the males to be in the limelight and centre. Men mould all the religious texts to their own benefit to oppress women.

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