

KANYADAAN: A TALE OF TOPPLED TURRET OF LOVE, LIFE AND DREAMS

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ABSTRACT

The Constitution of Independent India has conferred upon equal rights to men and women. It is unconstitutional to make any type of discrimination on the grounds of religion, caste, colour and sex. However, when we see through practical point of view, we noticed that people of lower caste as well as women are not treated with equality. Like ancient period their life is not protected in this age also. Day by day the incidences of violence and criminality against women and the oppressed are rising. A play 'Kanyadaan' can be considered as a fictionalization of the real life saga of most of the Indian people. Through the character of 'Arun and Jyoti' Vijay Tendulkar successfully exposed the masochistic, hypocritical behavior of the society. The present drama is an exact document of social, cultural and psychological aspect of human life. The central theme of the drama is man-woman relationship which has its own colour, dimensions and struggles. Now a days this subject becomes an object of exploration and the writer successfully attracts our attention towards the increasing sensibility in society and loss of human values. A male dominant society has imposed certain restrictions on Indian women in the name of ethics and ideology, which later on turned to put fetters on her social status and freedom.

KEY WORDS: Vijay Tendulkar's Drama, Man-Woman Relationship, Caste Discrimination, Patriarchal Bullying, Exploitation.

INTRODUCTION

A disproportionate social status of man and woman and the problems of women life arising due to the disparity are intensively assessed by Tendulkar through his social vision. The existential predicament of a woman is such that Jyoti, the female character of the drama willingly surrenders herself to the macrocosm of exploitation, oppression and inhuman treatment by Arun. A distressed and organized purport is the distinctive feature of this drama. We see the glimpses of philosophical realization of life in this distinction. The writings of Tendulkar are human-centric. Through his works, he tried to bring forward anguish and sorrows of the oppressed of Indian society. In India in post independence period, a process of social and cultural interaction got accelerated. In the same period, Indian society witnessed a tornado in the field of

literature. It is assumed that an artist willing to produce literature should be sensible to realize human life and their perceptions because literature is blended with social life and social reality. Marathi drama gave a prosperous tradition of dramatists. One of the most renowned names in the tradition is Vijay Tendulkar. He is the first who painted a picture of people condemned by social system and insolence due to power. Through his dramas, he presented a perfect picture of power politics, patriarchal bullying, and violence against women, obscenity, grotesqueness, cruelty and mangling of human emotions. The present drama is a manifestation of the strong and tender emotions of human mind. When man is stricken with conflict of his mind, he becomes helpless, agitated and to break the shackles of this labyrinth; he scoops out a weapon of revolt. Thus revolt, refutation and struggle are the purport of his drama. Human relationship is always at the centre of his story. A main purpose of 'Kanyadaan' is to present the conflict between upper castes and Dalits, and also between men and women. The play is divided into two Acts.

The theme of the play centers on the most delicate subject of marriage. Jyoti is a young woman born in a politically and socially strong Brahmin family. Her father Nath Devlalikar is an MLA while her mother Seva is a social worker. Her brother Jayaprakash is a M.Sc. student. Born and brought up in such a family, Jyoti decides to marry Arun Athavale, a Dalit from a village. Arun, a B.A. Student is poor but talented. Nath who is an idealist gives his consent to the marriage of Jyoti and Arun. Seva opposed it on the ground of his caste and occupation. She warns Jyoti of the consequences saying:

"You have been brought 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". (13)

Jyoti however, tries to convince her and bring Arun to her house.

In scene II Act I we see Jyoti introducing Arun to her family members. Arun is a dark-complexioned but good looking. Being a poor; Arun feels uncomfortable in a comfortable house of Jyoti. He doesnot want Jyoti to leave him alone. 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 by ten feet. The heat 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". (16)

The characters seem to believe in the transformation and refute tradition. They are shown struggling against the caste system, the exploitation and social disparity. An artist willing to produce literature should be sensible to realize folk life and their social perception because literature is blended with social life and social reality. Revolt, refutation and expectation of social transformation are the chief features of his stories. In writings of Tendulkat we find a picture of social awareness in the present age. On the subject of untouchability, Arun openly express his hatred for the rich upper castes specially Brahmins. He describes their exploitation by the upper castes on the basis of cast. He describes how they live in a hell. He tells:

“Our life is not the socialists’ service camp. It is hell, and I mean hell. A hell named life”. (18)

Story revolves round the vicissitudes of Human relations. The dramatist intertwined the story by portraying sentimentality of man-woman of different strata. Using various images he put before the reader a stark reality of society based on caste division, exploitation of depressed class as well as woman stress, restlessness, violence made the atmosphere more mysterious and eerie. It makes a psychoanalytic study of character. He portrayed the life and attitude of people living in cities and metros. Arun revolted against the exploitation and refuted the customs and conventions. He does not lose his courage due to torture, injustice but faces the situations bravely. The reality of society to which he belongs is very horrifying and monstrous. From his birth he witnessed and experienced misery impoverishes slavery, humiliation and deterioration. It was not only the sorrow of his life but his entire people who were yoked ruthlessly under the shame and snobbish tradition of caste system. He becomes frenzies like a storm and revolted against the inhuman practices. Instead of fondling his sorrows and humiliations, he surmounts it and become actuated for struggle. The Dramas is a comment on revolt, it also makes us introvert. As it tracks down the inner instincts of Dalit social life, it also touches to the anguish and sufferings of woman.

According to Beena Agrawal:

“The horrors of caste discrimination are such a situation that generates the feeling of helplessness and it subsequently transforms into hostility ‘towards’ people and ‘against’ people”.¹

Nath is pleased by Arun’s appearance. He believes in a casteless society. He tells his wife:

“Seva, until today, ‘break the caste system’ was a mere slogan for us. ...but today I have broken the caste barrier in the real sense. My home has become Indian in the real sense of the term. I am happy today, very happy...” (23)

However, he shows displeasure on Arun’s rude behaviour and advises Jyoti to rethink her decision. When Jyoti tells that her decision is final; Nath bravely stands by her. He says:

“I am on Jyoti’s side. He (Arun) may not be a gentleman, but neither is he a scoundrel. As a human being he has potential. He has intelligence, drive and capacity. He is like a unrefined gold, he needs to be melted and moulded. This is the need of the hour”. (31)

As they belong to different class, we see a deep gap between their cultures. After marriage a tender soft spoken girl gets transformed into a hardened Dalit girl. She becomes a victim of physical and mental torture. Through her dialogues the writer unraveled gently her helpless disabled minds situation. He gives a vent to the conflagration of massive anguish surging up in her mind. He also unfolds anomaly of human relations betrayed of her trust, marital discord, and breach of love. A well-educated woman becomes a victim of domestic violence, mental harassment. Unable to endure the pain, she returns her father’s home. After some time, Arun enters fully drunk for begging Jyoti’s pardon. He takes out a knife saying that he will cut off his

arm with which he beats Jyoti. The hold of parochial humor, sarcasm, derision, contradiction and compassion made this literature prosperous. His story reflects the contemporary reality more vividly. It also analyzes minutely the conflicts troubling the inner soul. In most of his work we find poetic and emotional manifestations of women's soul, tenderness of her mind, adjustment with the situation, agitations of love memories, and her endurance etc. are prominently presented in the most appealing way. To prevent the embarrassment, Jyoti returns back to Arun's house. Nath is a representative of a political diplomat who does not hesitate to stake even their siblings to shine their image as a socialist. He feels proud for Jyoti's decision. He says:

"Jyoti, I fell 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)

A simple narration directly reveals the intention through matured, ideological language and a glimpse of two cultures through dialogues. Vivacity of characters and explicitness in the portrayal of incidences are some of the chief features of this play. Caste system is prevalent in India and a conflict among Dalits and upper caste has been in practice since ancient period. Mutual caste malice and wickedness resulted into a creek of degeneration. In post independence period some writers started portraying the socio-economic and cultural exploitation of the exploited factors of the society. A captivating description of social disparity, human mentality is effectively given. By portraying Arun's contempt in society for having been a Dalit and Jyoti's indignity due to having been a woman, her helplessness, the writer phrased an exclamation of humanity.

Karen Horney defines the horrors of discrimination as:

"a 'basic anxiety' as a 'feeling a child has of being isolated and helpless in a potentially hostile world'".²

Dominance is so strongly imprinted on her mind by the age old tradition that she cannot overthrow the blows; but surrenders to the problems and endures silently. After marriage she witnessed a devastation of all her hopes and aspirations. All her dreams get shattered. Love is replaced by ego and selfishness. Humanity is replaced by savagery and feelings of compassion, understanding to sympathy are replaced by cruelty. She becomes a victim of atrocities and torture inflicted on her by her husband. Here Tendulkar tries to show the patriarchal attitude that being a woman; she has no existence no voice and that she should be treated as a dumb animal. As an untouchable he endured inordinate torments, humiliations, pains and sufferings from his childhood. It is a rule of nature that the strong dominates the weaker. After marriage he tries to take revenge and finds his innocent wife to settle an old score. She is the victim of patriarchal mindset and he, the victim of caste system. This is the situation where we see suppression of the victim by the victim. Jyoti is a victim of caste discrimination as well as a victim of patriarchy.

As Beena Agrawal comments:

"The idea of claims of civilization is confined not only to woman but also to the humanity as a whole".³

In scene II, Act II, Nath receives a phone call requesting him to chair a function on Arun's autobiography. He refuses the offer as he discovers Arun a hypocrite, an avenger. At this juncture, Arun visits with two others to invite his father-in-law as a key speaker. He feels proud that he is a celebrated writer. However, Nath politely refuses to go. After their departure, Nath gives vent to his uncontrollable anger. He bursts:

“Scoundrel; he wants to blackmail me. As though I'd overlook my daughter's misery and shower him with superlatives. Seva, he ...his visit has polluted this drawing room, this house, and this day. It stinks....Why did I have to come into contact with a man like this?” (57)

Although Nath is a socialist, he hates Arun. Jyoti is not an idealist but she is a true humanist. She understands Arun and expresses her resentment against the inhuman tendencies. She knows that Arun is good but there are certain propensities towards evil. She gives him opportunity to dispense out the best of his violent behaviour. She discovers the real self of Arun behind his savagery. She challenges:

“Tell me, where is that beast I should drag out 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 accepted him as he is, because I cannot reject him”. (68)

Seva believes that her husband's presence at the programme would save their pregnant daughter from further atrocities. Thus Nath goes to the function to deliver a hypocritical speech. His speech brings him more praises. But dislikes his attitude and confronts him with question, “Why did you come to the meeting today?” (65)

Nath tries to convince her that the book is really a masterpiece, but Jyoti knows that he lying. She continues to batter him saying that his speech was a hireling's speech. He attended the meeting against his wishes and praised the book only save his daughter. Her words sting Nath. He feels helpless. He sees all his ideals crumbling before him. Like a defenseless father, he admits that he did all for the love of his daughter because he fears that there will be nobody to take care of her during delivery. To this Jyoti harshly retorts:

“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 Devalalikar now; I am Jyoti Arun Athavale, a scavenger. I am one of them. Don't touch me. Fly from my shadows, otherwise my fire will scorch your comfortable values” (70)

Saying this she departs the house not to return back. Nath feels totally defeated. All his ideals, image seems to be crushed. The play ends here leaving the audience dumbstruck.

According to Agrawal:

“To accept the position with them who are marginalized is a more convincing solution to provide relief to those who are the victims of the discontent of civilization. The neglect of identity of a single Arun contains the seeds of the annihilation of the entire edifice of social structure”.⁴

The play won the dramatist the Saraswathi Samman. The story is an example that gives vent to a deep rooted malaise in the society.

CONCLUSIONS

By erecting a series of events, Tendulkar has presented a tragic but real life story. It becomes significant for its ardent purport and abstention in presenting the blistering reality. The Drama appears as an example of the practice of keeping the boundless tradition of mental repression intact. It is easy to grapple with others but how can a heart tilled with tender love make struggle against her man? Although all her dreams of happy married life get shattered, she decides to confront the future bravely. A realistic portrayal of life underlined on the multifaceted level of purpose is remarkable. Through medium of character the dramatist become successful in presenting various facets of human behaviour. The writer sowed a new thought based on an extensive social change. So we can look at it as a script that moulds a social mind and a social structure.

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