



# INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

( Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal )

DOI : 03.2021-11278686

ISSN : 2582-8568

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.71 (SJIF 2021)

## PSYCHOPATHOLOGY AND DALIT SENSIBILITY: A CRITICAL STUDY OF VIJAY TENDULKAR'S KANYADAAN

**Tanushree Das**

Ph.D Research Scholar  
Department of English,  
Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol (North), Dist. Burdwan,  
SACT, Department of English,  
Michael Madhusudan Memorial College, Durgapur, Paschim Bardhaman (West Bengal)

DOI No. [03.2021-11278686](https://doi.org/10.2021-11278686) DOI Link :: <http://doi-ds.org/doi/10.2021-11278686>

### Abstract:

*We think of psychopaths as killers, alien, outside society. These people lack remorse and empathy and feel emotion only in a shallow manner. In extreme cases, they might not care whether you live or die. Are they really outside of society? Or rather we can say socially constructed? Manipulative, aggressive, exploitative psychopaths and insensitive, self-centered, conceited solipsists are taking over the world. In this project an effort is made to explore the problematic psychopathology and Dalit sensibility of post colonialism in Vijay Tendulkar's explosive play "Kanyadaan". In this play, he opens his reader's eyes to social problems such as class differences, discriminations, unequal power relations. Frantz Fanon, writing in the 1960s in the context of Algeria and its French colonial occupation, has been an influential figure in postcolonial theory. Fanon deals with the psychopathology of colonialism, as colonial paints the native as evil, pagan, primitive and over a period of time the native begins to accept this prejudiced and racialized view as true. The black man loses his sense of self and identity. In "Kanyadaan" Arun Athawale, a dalit from Mahar caste, considered himself as devil, he lost his true self and turned into a devil because he can only see himself through the eyes of the elite class and he turned into a psychopath.*

*Vijay Tendulkar in the play "Kanyadaan" draws attention to approaches like issues of gender, of class, of inter-caste marriages. This play reflects Tendulkar's interaction with Dalit panther Movement, Gandhian Hindu Reformism. To judge "Kanyadaan", we have to understand these issues and their relation to each other, and also study if some vital issues are missing in the process of interpreting, re-reading and critiquing the play "Kanyadaan".*

**Keywords:** Psychopathology, Post-colonialism, Inter-caste marriage, Hindu reformism, Dalit Sensibility, Caste discrimination, Psychoanalytic criticism.

### Introduction:

Vijay Tendulkar, the most influential dramatist, not only in the world of Marathi literature and theatre but also in the Indian theatre as a whole, was awarded with the 'Saraswati Samman' and he received Prestigious awards such as the Padma Bhushan, the Vishnudas Bhave Memorial Award and the Kathachudamani Award for successfully raising social issues in his play.

In his 'After words' to the English version of "*Kanyadaan*" he wrote, "I have written about my own experiences and about what I have seen in others around me. I have been true to all this and have not cheated my generation... they contain my perception of society and its value and I cannot write what I do not perceive."(Tendulkar 71)

In this short play Tendulkar tells us the story of an inter-caste marriage between Arun Athawale, a Dalit belonging to the Mahar caste, and Jyoti Devlalikar, a Brahmin. But this marriage turned into a disaster. Arun's alcoholism, his ill-mannered and foul-mouthed behaviour quickly escalates into physical violence after marriage. But despite this suffering Jyoti chooses to remain with her husband, not out of love, but purely for the principles of duty and sacrifice. Tendulkar depicts a Dalit character who is exploited by the society or neglected and who wants equality or rights in the society. But Arun Athavale, a young Dalit boy is able to get married to a Brahmin girl of upper class, and treats her as an object of revenge against all the persons of higher caste & class. Here, instead of Dalit person, a girl of higher strata, suffers humiliation, and tortures at the hand of a Dalit boy. So many critics believe that instead of arousing sympathy for Dalit, this play produces anti-Dalit feelings.

*Kanyadaan* is a play with two acts and five scenes. It is naturalistic play. The interesting thing about the play is that though the play explores serious issues of caste divide, coexistence and idealism yet for its presentation variety of scenes are superbly omitted. It is the dramatic art of Tendulkar that the whole action of the drama is presented only in the drawing room. The play is set throughout in the drawing room of the Devlalikars adorned with typical high-caste urban antique furniture with a picture frame of Mahatma Gandhi.

This play is not just about the husband and wife. This play is about the beliefs of Nath Devlalikar, Jyoti's father, who is a "Gandhivadi" democrat MLC. He is not only preacher of Gandhian philosophy to public but practices it in his own family and observes democracy at home. In fact, Nath Devlalikar is even more excited about the marriage than the couple themselves. When at the beginning of the play Jyoti announces her decision to marry Arun, a Dalit, Nath excitedly exclaims, "Marvellous!...if my daughter had decided to marry into high-caste, it wouldn't have pleased me as much."(8)

Nath went against his wife Seva and son Jayprakash in this matter. Nath's concern with Gandhian Hindu Reformist influenced Jyoti and at the end she accuses her father for rearing her as a "guinea pig" for his "experiments".(69)

About the genesis of "*Kanyadaan*" Tendulkar writes, "All my creative writing begins, not from an idea but from an experience, mine or somebody else's which then becomes mine. It was such an experience of another to begin with, that provided the starting point for *Kanyadaan*. (Mahida 311)

Nath Devlalikar serves as Tendulkar's mouthpiece. Tendulkar himself wrote that, "Nath Devlalikar, the protagonist of *Kanyadaan* is me and many other liberals of my generation whom I understand completely. The pain of these peoples today, the defeat they have suffered, the fundamental confusion and naivety that has led to their pain and defeat, these form the theme of *Kanyadaan* and I wrote about it because it came so close to me." (312)

Nath and his daughter Jyoti, do not believe in the wrong notion that castes are fundamentally different. In fact, Nath defenced the bad behavior of Arun by saying that whatever he is, he is so because of the culture he was brought up in. He says that Arun is like "unrefined gold" who only needs to be "melted" and "moulded". (Tendulkar 31)

And, along with Nath's and Jyoti's disillusionment with the Gandhian Hindu reformism, they both seem to undergo a radical change in their beliefs when they begin to believe that maybe different castes really mean different people. Towards the very end of *Kanyadaan*, Jyoti confronts her father with,

"I grew up listening to such talk day in and day out- 'Hatred, not for the man but for his tendencies. No man is fundamentally evil, he is good. He has certain propensities towards evil. They must be transformed. Completely uprooted and destroyed'...All false, vicious claptrap!...Man and his inherent nature are never really two separate things." (67)

The word *Kanyadaan* itself, as defined by Manu of the Manusmriti fame, means the gift of the father to the husband. The desires of the daughter herself are meaningless. This fact is demonstrated most visibly when we see that only in India there was a need to come up with the term "love marriage", a term used in a derogatory sense by the orthodox. To know why they hate "love marriage" so much just have a look at the term; love appearing before marriage is still considered a scandalous oddity by them. Love assumes the autonomy of the woman and requires her to be in control of her own sexuality and these are two things that are directly at odds against patriarchy.

The women in inter-caste marriages could end up being the double victims, both of caste and of patriarchy, and Tendulkar has tried to show this in *Kanyadaan*. If a Dalit man were to marry a Brahmin woman, she could be labelled by the Dalit community as a 'vishkanya', the poison-spewing seductress who lures the man away from his obligation to the community.

Jyoti, along with Arun's violence, is also subject to her father's domination, even if the purpose of this domination is reverse. Nath urges Jyoti to marry Arun to fulfil his own ideals. By putting his cherished ideals ahead of everything else Nath undermines Jyoti's autonomy. She is the ultimate victim of *Kanyadaan*.

For the white man, the native is always the negative, primitive other, the very opposite of what he and his culture stands for, Frantz Fanon develops a psychoanalytic theory of colonialism where he suggests that the build up of this sense of inadequacy and inferiority in the colonized's

psyche results in violence and this inferiority created in Dalit's psyche by upper caste results in violence as we find in the words of Arun,

"I'll cut these hands that beat you....What I am but the son of scavengers (Mahars). We don't know the non-violent ways of Brahmins like you. We drink and beat our wives...we make love to them. But the beating is what gets publicized" (44)

For him the beating of the wife does not mean that he hates her. He loves her too, but according to him it is never appreciated but they are evaluated by their negative sides only.

Rudyard Kipling's 'White Man's Burden':

'Take up the White Man's burden  
Send forth the best ye breed –  
Go bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need;  
To wait in heavy harness  
On fluttered folk and wild –  
Your new-caught sullen peoples,  
Half devil and half child.'

Replace "white man" with "high-castes", "captives" with "untouchables/Dalits", and that's the cudgels of Gandhian Reformism. So, in the Gandhian view it is taken as granted that Dalit men by default will be lazy, aggressive, uncivilized, and ill-mannered. In *Kanyadaan*, when Nath is told of Arun's rude behavior towards Jyoti, he quickly rationalizes the situation thus "It is perfectly natural that the boy (Arun) should have rough edges; they are the product of the circumstances he has endured. In fact, it would be surprising if these peculiarities didn't exist." (30)

The Dalit world is entirely absent in *Kanyadaan*; all we have is the flattened character of Arun. The marriage in *Kanyadaan* fails not because of the usual problems faced by an inter-caste couple (boycott or harassment from family or society) but solely because of Arun. Thus, given the stereotypes of a caste personified by him, one is left feeling that the marriage fails not because of the caste system but because of a single caste.

The play aimed at criticizing the narcissism of some misguided liberal. It is times like these when the following lines by Arundhati Roy come to the mind: "Sometimes, quite often, the same people who are capable of a radical questioning of, say, economic neo-liberalism or the role of the state, are deeply conservative socially – about women, marriage, sexuality, our so-called 'family values' – sometimes they're so doctrinaire that you don't know where the establishment stops and the resistance begins. For example, how many Gandhian/Maoist/Marxist Brahmins or upper caste Hindus would be happy if their children married Dalits or Muslims, or declared themselves to be gay? Quite often, the people whose side you're on, politically, have absolutely no place for a person

like you in their social, cultural or religious imagination. That's a knotty problem... politically radical people can come at you with the most breathtakingly conservative social views and make nonsense of the way in which you have ordered your world and your way of thinking about it... and you have to find a way of accommodating these contradictions within your worldview.”

So the play explores the issue of Dalit's psyche in the post independent India. They are not ready to mingle with the main stream of the society. They want to maintain their Identity of Dalit. The genuine concern of the higher class people appears to them merely hypocrisy as they cannot forget their intolerable past. The suppression of them in the past by the “savarna” haunts them and this reality is presented through Arun's character. Tendulkar wants to suggest that if this is the reality how can the gap between the savarna and shudra be bridged? The idealism of few people to mingle with them will never work so the situation demands new means to overcome the gap between the upper class and lower class.

In order to present this reality Tendulkar has to depict the character of Arun with negative shades. So the play raises anti-dalit feelings. When the writer Meghna Pethe told Tendulkar that Dalit writers were angry about his misrepresentation of Dalits, the playwright observed testily that he pointed a gun at a wholly different target. What can he do if something else falls dead. So “*Kanyadaan*” had fired at its salvos not at Dalits, against the hypocrisy of secular liberals, “People of my generation” who refused to face realities, and adopted easy solutions for complicated issues. Such illusions were bound to end in disaster.

## References:

1. Ananth, M.K. “*Educated caste Hindu youth campaign against inter-caste marriages*”, published in ‘The Hindu’, 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2012. Accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2016.web  
URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/educated-caste-hindu-youth-campaign-against-intercaste-marriages/article3644332.ece>
2. Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester University Press, 2010. Print.
3. Karthikeyan, D. “*Survey of inter-caste marriages tells different tale*”. 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2013. Accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2016.web URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/survey-of-intercaste-marriages-tells-different-tale/article4473409.ece>
4. Kipling, Rudyard. “*The White Man's Burden*”. 1899. Accessed on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2017.web  
URL: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/kipling.asp>

5. Kumar, Raj. *Dalit Personal Narratives Reading Caste, Nation and Identity*. Orient Blackswan, 2010.Print.
6. Limbale, Sharankumar. *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature*.Translated from Marathi By Alope Mukherjee. Orient Blackswan .2004.Print
7. Mahida, Beena. “ *A Critical Study of Vijay Tendulkar’s Major Plays*”. pp, 303-356 . Accessed on 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2016.Web URL: <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/7301>
8. Nayar, Pramod K. *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory: From Structuralism to Ecocriticism*. Dorling Kindersley, 2010.Print
9. Tandon, Neeru .ed. *Perspectives and Challenges in Indian English Drama*. Atlantic House ,2010. Print
10. Tendulkar, Vijay. *Kanyadaan*. Translated in English by Gowri Ramnarayan. New Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks.1996. Print

