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Theme of Violence in Vijay Tendulkar's *Kanyadaan*

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Abstract:

*Vijay Tendulkar is perhaps the most prolific and controversial among the Post-Independence Indian playwrights. He is an icon of the avante-garde Indian theatrical movement of the modern era. Over the last few decades he has captured the life-world of the contemporary Indian in order to identify the sources and nature of violence. His plays have created storm in society. Though his eyes are focused on the middle class and its suffocation, his chief targets are the human mind, the way of life and the complexity therein. Vijay Tendulkar writes his plays to account the disillusionment and aggressive violent reaction of young educated generation against his society. He is associated with the Marathi Experimental Theatre, presents his plays on the lives of educated lower class graduates, who become misfits in the society due to unemployment. Their disillusionment reminds them of their traditional suppression by the upper caste and reacts violently to avenge the troublemakers. His play, *Kanyadaan* depicts the problem of untouchability in the Indian society and the violence and disillusionment of the Indian youth. The play focuses on the contemporary social problems associated with domestic violence between the spouses, which is generated out of the class differences of spouses. *Kanyadaan* shows Arun's violent and aggressive reaction to the upper class. It results from his disillusionment due to his undesirable living conditions and poverty.*

Introduction:

Vijay Tendulkar was born in 1928 in Kolhapur. He was from a Bhalavalikar Saraswat Brahmin family, where his father held a clerical job and run a small publishing business. The literary atmosphere at home encouraged young Vijay to take up writing. Vijay Tendulkar was a leading Indian playwright, movie and television script writer, literary essayist, political journalist and social commentator primarily in Marathi. Tendulkar's early struggle for survival and living for sometimes in tenements in Mumbai provided him first hand experience about the life of the urban lower middle class. He brought new authenticity to their depiction in the Marathi theatre.

He is perhaps the most prolific and controversial among the Post-Independence Indian playwrights. He is an icon of the avante-garde Indian theatrical movement of the modern era. His plays are at once disturbing, moving and provocative. His greatest quality is to simultaneously involve and distance himself from his works. Over the last few decades he has captured the life-world of the contemporary Indian in order to identify the sources and nature of violence. His plays created storm in society. Though

his eyes are focused on the middle class and its suffocation, his chief targets are the human mind, the way of life and the complexity therein. He noted for criticizing the hypocrisies, promiscuity, dishonesty and such other vices existing in the society.

Vijay Tendulkar was influenced by Tennessee Williams in presenting the social problems in the contemporary society on the stage. He was inspired by some foreign writers and modeled his plays on their themes. He selected what he wanted from their work, handled it in his own manner, shaped and designed it and made it his own.

Vijay Tendulkar writes his plays to account the disillusionment and aggressive violent reaction of young educated generation against his society. Vijay Tendulkar, associated with the Marathi Experimental Theatre, presents his plays on the lives of educated lower class graduates, who become misfits in the society due to unemployment. Their disillusionment reminds them of their traditional suppression by the upper caste and reacts violently to avenge the troublemakers. His plays realistically depict the problems of the young men in India and their violence.

Violence: concept, modes and sources:

Violence, in fact, is usually a symptom of personality disorder, a neurotic condition, a psychosis or a toxic state. Violence is a complex expression. Though man is rational by nature, no one is certain when he will be violent. Frustration, inner and outer conflicts lead to a breakdown of organized human behaviors and as a matter of self defense the person becomes violent. Violence occurs in a variety of forms such as social, psychological, economic, cultural, historical and domestic. Violence seems to be the most integral part of modern life. Man becomes violent under specific psychological stress and pressures, which are varied and numerous in the modern world. The international Encyclopedia of Psychiatry, Psychology, Psychoanalysis and Neurology says that "Violence, in fact, is usually a symptom of personality disorder, a neurotic condition, a psychosis or a toxic state." The word 'Violence' has the same Latin root as 'Vehemence', means "excessive use of force."

Violence occurs in various forms such as domestic violence, emotional abuse, physical abuse and economic abuse. Marital demands and expectations may cause violence if one is not prepared for the responsibilities of marriage. The expected demands are not fulfilled which brings disillusionment. Basic conflicts between marital partners, financial and other problems may lead to domestic violence in the family. Personal disappointment, hurt, generation gap, class difference, the feeling of insecurity and instability may also lead to domestic violence. Extramarital love affairs and illegal sexual relationships too may cause violence in the family.

The reasons should be sought of the man's violence. Basically there is a hidden military hysteria in man's mind. This military hysteria is exposed, when he comes into the community. Sometimes the law and social system becomes powerless before community and man becomes fearless to the punishment. Sometimes the role of media which communicates to the ordinary people is complementary and nourishing to the sense of violence. The Medias such as Television, Cinema, Novels and Stories seem to keep the ideals of violent heroes before society. They give the overdose of violence to the society. The wild forms of violence are shown in it. These constant attacks of violence on

man's mind through these mediums make him senseless. Violence becomes the entertainment. The various techniques of violence are shown under the name of creativity and innovation in the Cinema.

The social violence becomes the most widespread part of our society during this post-modern period. The violent acts are used to challenge the authority, to enforce the authority and to achieve power. More and more people are taking interest in politics. They are greedy for power and money which resulted later in their use of violent means in achieving their aims. Criminals use violence in robbing and on raping their victims. Violence is sometimes used as an instrument to obtain a desired goal. It is also used to attack what we fear or dislike. It is found in schools and families to ensure obedience and to revolt against it. Addiction to alcohol and drugs results in violence. Greed, frustration and dangerous situations are the causes of violence.

Disillusioning materialistic values have left man bewildered, confused to find any enduring faith or develop a satisfying philosophy of life. The twentieth century man suffers from existential anxiety, turmoil and conflict, feeling of isolation and loneliness, loss of identity, feeling of futility and meaninglessness of life produce complex result and prove destructive. Such conflicts of the contemporary life tear us apart and lead to violent behaviour.

Kanyadaan and Violence:

Kanyadaan depicts the problem of untouchability in the Indian society and the violence and disillusionment of the Indian youth. Vijay Tendulkar's other plays such as *Silence! The Court is in Session*, *The Vultures* and *Ghashiram Kotwal* dealt with the theme of violence. He also handled in his plays the subjects such as the complex relationship between man and woman, cruelty and wildness of man and his alienation in the modern world. He tried to focus the real nature of man and his hypocrisy. Vijay Tendulkar has focused on the contemporary social problems associated with domestic violence between the spouses. He mostly concentrated on violence as one of the major themes of his plays.

Vijay Tendulkar is particularly interested in showing the domestic violence of spouses, which is generated out of the class differences of spouses. It means Social disparity of spouses is responsible for the violence in the family. *Kanyadaan* reflects the social disparity in the Indian society. In Indian society, the caste system is a typical traditional social system and supposed to be the blot on the Hindu society. The history of the origin and development of caste system in Hindu society has a long tradition. It is said that the caste system in Hindu society is gifted by *Manusmruti*. Hindu society is subdivided into castes and sub-castes to such an extent that the entire social life of Hindus totally depends upon caste system and its customs. The vedic culture divided the Hindu society into four groups or classes known as *Chaturvarnas* based on the merits and social duties of a class or varna. Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya were superior varnas to the Shudra varna in every respect. In the course of time, the shudra was treated as the lowest varna and it was its duty to serve the other three varnas. They were denied the basic human rights and were deprived of dignity and necessities of life. So they remained

backward both socially and economically. The violence generated in *Kanyadaan* is only due to caste system in Hindu society.

The play *Kanyadaan* is mostly related to the domestic violence in the family, within which the two great biological differentiations of culture interact. The violence is generated in between Arun and Jyoti. Family is the place where the origin and form of aggression is found. Arun becomes too much aggressive with his wife, Jyoti. There is a close relationship between intimacy and form of violent behaviour, which is found in the family. Violence reaches its greatest intensity at two opposite extremes. Males become the dominant aggressors in society. Generally in the structure of family men have certain rights upon women who make women to suppress. It is universal in the society.

The play is about the intercaste marriage between Arun, a lower class man and Jyoti, a Brahmin girl, resulting in Arun's violent reactions to her and her parents, which is an offshoot of his traditional suppression in the hands of the so called upper classes. Arun hates the upper class people who are responsible for his miserable condition. He thinks that his life is not the socialist service camp. It is a hell, a hell named life. He wants to set fire to the whole world and strangle throats of the upper class people. He wants to rape and kill them. He wants to "Drink up the blood of the beasts" (K 18) such as high caste society.

He keeps his constant onslaughts on everyone belongs to the high class. He does not even spare his mother-in-law. He calls Seva, "a procuress who supplies girls from the Seva Dal to the socialist leaders". (K 49) He too abuses Jyoti's father. He says that Nath is not the real father of Jyoti. "Like gurujian eunuchher real father....." (K 50)

The Play deals with various aspects of man's personality such as his cruelty, violence, brutality and his hunger for revenge, which are found in Arun's character. Arun's disillusionment and suppression makes him to react violently against his wife and her parents which give him sort of psychological relief from the suppressed feelings.

The various forms and types of domestic violence are common in the society. Physical abuse is one of the types of domestic violence which is reflected in the play. It is the act or conduct which is of such a nature as to cause bodily pain, harm, or danger to life, or health or development of man. Arun beats Jyoti and abuses her. As a result Jyoti leaves Arun and goes to her parents. As Arun does not bear this separation he comes drunk in Nath's house, regrets over his act and requests Jyoti to come to home. He says:

Hear that? Jyoti doesn't want to see me. My Jyoti doesn't want to see me. My Jyoti is telling me to go away. It is not her fault, not her fault at all. It is I who am at fault. I am the offender, a great offender in her eyes. Whatever I do, I will not be forgiven. Never can I be forgiven. I am a great scoundrel, rascal, motherfucker, II beat her, with these bloody hands. I beat her badly, with these very hands I beat her up. I beat Jyoti. I make her suffer. I behave worse than an animal. She will never forgive me, I know it. Jyoti, you are not destined for me, this is the truth, Jyoti. After all scavengers like us are condemned to rot in shit. But Jyoti, I loved you from the heart. My love is not false, Jyoti, it is true. With these hands I hurt you... I must break them, throw these fucking hands away. (K 42)

He wants to make her believe that his love towards her is true. He tries to cut his hands by which he has beaten her. He again and again accuses himself and calls himself a wretch. He says:

Give my knife back – let me tear my hands out – at least let me do this much for my Jyoti. Let me die.... I am a wretch Jyoti ... I am not fit to clean your shoes.....My sins cannot be washed away. Kick my face as punishment. Not that it can be any compensation. (K 43)

Arun beats Jyoti when she is pregnant. She is severely injured by him. Seva admits her in Dr. Khare's Nursing Home to avoid further complications. Seva is informed by Jyoti's neighbours about Arun's violence to Jyoti. About this Seva says :

....He had come home drunk as usual. Jyoti didn't say anything much. She said it was no big matter. There is internal wound in her stomach. The neighbours told me not to allow the girl to stay there. They said, take her away, he beats her and even kicks her. (K 47)

The play reflects Arun's verbal and emotional abuse to Jyoti which includes insults, humiliation and insult of any person who is closely related to her. Arun insults Jyoti's father and mother and tortures her emotionally.

Arun has suppressed his anger against the upper class for a long time. But this suppressed anger bursts out when he goes to Jyoti's home for the first time. He brings out all his emotions and feelings. He cannot control himself and compares his poor condition with that of Jyoti's upper class living style. Economic disparity between husband and wife makes Arun to burst out angrily.

Marital demands and expectations may cause violence if one is not prepared to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage. Before marriage Jyoti expects something good from Arun and judged him only after listening his poems. But Arun does not fulfill the expectations of Jyoti that leads to the conflict of the play.

Generally young men of Arun's temperaments are violent and aggressive. Arun gives importance to class conflict, economic inequality and strong piousness against the humanitarian attitude. Mostly whole society seems to be violent nowadays. It is impossible to keep together the law and good social system. Man may become violent if he is frustrated in his love affairs and family conflict. Arun so becomes violent due to the conflicts generated in the family. The influence of such violent activities is increasing day by day in the behaviour and thinking of young men like Arun.

The violence shown in *Kanyadaan* is both in its physical and verbal form. The violence in the play seems to be brutal and wild. Arun makes the upper class responsible for his miserable condition and expresses his deep anger against his upper class wife. Resultantly, he beats her and abuses her in her pregnancy.

The reasons should be sought of the Arun's violence. Basically there is a hidden military hysteria in Arun's mind. This military hysteria is exposed, when he comes into the contact of the upper caste community in the form of Jyoti.

The reasons of Arun's violence are found in his past humiliated memories and suppression, his poverty and his exploitation by the upper classes. He himself gives the reason of his violence and says:

One is not tempered. Gets a little drink too. She says something then I say something. The fight begins. I can't bear it. I lose control over my hands... (K 43)

He claims that he is the son of a scavenger. He does not know the non – violent ways of Brahmins like Seva and her family. He drinks and beats his wife. He also makes love to her but the beating is what gets published. He calls himself as a barbarian, a barbarian by birth.

Seva too gives the reason of Arun's violence. She says that though Arun has written such a wonderful autobiography and many lovely poems, he wants to remain an idler. He wants his wife to work. And with her money he wants to drown himself in drink, and have a hell of time with his friends. She further says:

He wants to kick his wife in the belly. Why not? 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 fulfill. (K 48)

Jayprakash, Jyoti's brother becomes angry for Arun's behaviour with Jyoti and his parents. He points out some reasons of Arun's violence and draws certain conclusions about Arun's behaviour and concludes by saying that "those who were being massacred are now indulging in massacres." (K 51) He further says that, "perhaps those who are hunted derive great pleasure in hunting others when they get an opportunity to do so. The oppressed are overjoyed when they get a chance to oppress others." (K 51)

Conclusion:

Social disparity, class-conflict, mental and physical suppression, lack of enthusiasm, doubt and despair in the contemporary world may lead to react violently. Most of the time, violence is expressed only upon the inferiors for their lack of response to it. Arun expresses his anger only upon his wife who seems to be inferior to him. He is sure about the neutrality of Jyoti and her lack of response to his violent activities.

The continuous hammering of violence makes the man more violent and aggressive. The decline of human values results in the frustration of new generation. Morality is lost. The new generation has to pay the emotional cost of the result of violence. Class conflict, religious conflict and finally the national conflicts are growing day by day. But it should be remembered that violence is not the answer to the social disparity and exploitation.

A good number of pressures and tensions in modern life are originated from educational, occupational and marital demands, widespread depression, unemployment, occupational problems, and worker's displacement by automation, which lead to increase in certain type of abnormal behaviour.

The contemporary Marathi literature is influenced by Freud's Psychoanalysis, Industrialization and Existentialism. It is also influenced by the political, social and

economic movements in the world over in the sixties. Though man is basically aggressive and violent, today our society has become more violent than ever before. Today hatred, anger, retaliation and violence are the striking parts of the society. The twentieth century Marathi theatre has presented such life with brutality, violence, cruelty and sexual excesses and perversions on the stage.

Though the government thus attempts to stop such kind of domestic violence, man continues to be violent. The roots of man's violence are found in his blood which cannot be uprooted with the help of rules and regulations or with legal authorities. The feeling of violence is a natural instinct of human mind. It can be controlled but not totally destroyed as shown in *Kanyadaan*.

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