

## **SOCIAL AWARENESS & SUBALTERN PREDICAMENT IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S KANYADAAN & GIRISH KARNAD'S TALE-DANDA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Vijay Tendulkar's short play Kanyadaan deals with a sensitive social and political issue. As we all know Dalits suffer a lot many years in the hands of upper caste people of the society. Tendulkar in this play expounds entirely different aspect which shows the suffering of an upper caste woman and her family in the hands of a Dalit educated and uneducated young men. Like Vijay Tendulkar Girish Karnad also exhibits the aforesaid problem in his play Tale-Danda. In Tale-Danda Karnad has described the pangs of dalits due to exploitation in the hands of upper caste people. and Nath Devalalika and Seva in Kanyadaan know that there is nothing but marriage can dilapidate the pillar of the edifice of caste system as the institution of marriage is unique in the caste based society of India. Hindus give utmost priority to marriage. They take everything, for instance caste, character, occupation, economic status etc. into consideration. Of all these things caste of the bride and the bridegroom should be the same. If any one of the above is not good usually marriage doesn't take place. Tendulkar's Kanyadaan and Karnad's Tale- Danda evolve around the marriage of Jyoti and Kalavati respectively. Jyoti belongs to urban middle class Brahmin family and her father Nath is an MLA, who is a social worker, is always busy in social service. Jyoti has decided to marry Arun. Her father agrees at once because his dream is casteless society and for that he has been working. Her mother Seva is shocked. Even though she has been fighting against 'untouchability' ,she does not feel like going with her daughter's decision. Like Nath and Seva Kakayya and Madhuvarsa are excited to see their children in the knot of the marriage. Unlike them Bijjala and Basavana are conscious of the reaction of the upper caste people.*

*Karnad is very keen and sensitive in his observation of life, society and the universe has always a definite message to convey through his plays. Girish Karnad has raised lots basis burning questions related to the crisis of human values in the society. Individual's relations with individual, family, society and state have been examined. It is displayed through his plays that even in society there is no justice and quality. But being a social human being*

*everybody is bound to live in society and accept the social values no matter if these are unbearable and need changes. Sometime, we find that some honest social values remove all colour and joys from the lives of human beings. Consequently, not only does Basavanna's movement fail but also his followers emerge as a new caste as 'lingayat' after a few hundred years.*

**Keywords:** *lingayat, social resurrection, untouchability' pragmatism, Fundamentalism*

### **Introduction**

Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar have been observer of society and its ideals. Both sail on the same boat but with the little differences. Karnad has expounded that profound social awareness has crept into the community of down trodden. The marginalised section of the society is seen on constant search for identity and in doing so how they suffer is prime facie of Karnad's Tale Danda. Unlike Karnad's Tale- Danda Vijay Tendulkar's Kanyadaan highlights life of a Brahmin girls named Jyoti with her family in the hand of an educated Man named Arun. We get a glimpse of the psychology of Arun who represents an educated man of low birth due to meeting the predicaments in the way of his life. Tendulkar reveals his anger and protest against the Jyoti's family who represents the upper class of society. Arun experienced that people of the upper class tightly hold the social values and exploit them. In Tendulkar's Kanyadaan there are only seven characters but they have depicted the social and political concerns. Vijay Tendulkar obtained the Saraswati Samman for this play Kanyadaan. It is taken as anti-dalit play. The playwright met the anger of the audience in the form of Chappal throwing when it was staged.

The Present paper intends to highlight the social awareness among the marginalized. Tale-Danda describes the struggle of the sharanas who pine to bring change in the social values. Values are considered equipments of any society which help in attaining spiritual and material betterment of its people smoothly. Girish Karnad has genuine existential concerns. He has portrayed urgent human predicament, freedom of choice, selfhood, and search for identity, isolation, frustration and failures. He is very conscious to restore the dignity of man on the whole human relationship. The King of Kalyan Bijjala of Tale- Danda is a barber by caste, gives up his caste and becomes sharan. Dalits characters the king Bijjala himself, Sheelavanta, Basavanna etc. are well acquainted with the fury of the upper class people in their companies. Basavanna, Kakkyia , Madhuvarsa and other Sharanas in Tale-Danda are conscious of their existence and are adamant to remove the social obstacles due to those they are marginalised. Tale-Danda explicates how badly social deformity has shaken the society and human beings through the characters Bijjala and Basavanna as it is replete with social problems depicting the twelfth century communal struggle in the city of Kalyan in North Kanara. Massive social discrepancies are highlighted through the story of Bijjala, the king of Kalyan and Basavanna, king's officer. Both unite to eradicate the social deformity due to that

people are maltreated and treated superior and inferior. Being a grime social issue social deformity with its all perspectives is well dealt in Karnad's Tale Danda. The ugly scenario of the Caste system in India is exposed in this play. Most of people accept it and observe the customs that sustain it. Moreover state protects it with military force. Thus Karnad exposes the evil effects of social deformity at cultural, social, political and psychological levels by spreading social awareness among the marginalised people. Karnad says: "you can perceive deep irony, because, after all the martyrdom of the sharanas, when they re-emerged after three centuries of underground survival as lingayats, they were totally caste-redden" (76).

The king Bijjala, Sheelavanta, Basavanna, Kakkya, Madhuvarsa and other Sharanas in Tale-Danda are determined to bring social equality and healthy social system with little discrimination based on caste and religion. The protagonist Basavanna in the play Tale-Danda is in the favour of mingling of all castes. But as a foresighted person, he knows the consequence of breaking the caste system. That's why he floats his ideas of wedding proposal of Sheelavanta, a cobbler by birth with Kalavati, a Brahmin girl. Basavanna deliberately says to Madhuvarsa and Haralayya in serious way, "The orthodox will see this mingling of castes as a blow at the very roots of Varnashrama dharma. Bigotry has not faced such a challenge in two thousand years. I need hardly describe what Venom will gush out what hatred will erupt once the news spreads"(38). Basavanna wants to uproot such caste-system due to that they are bound to suffer immensely. Sharanas before being sharanas they have experienced the social hindrance in the way of their lives so they do not hold caste system longer, they treat equally. Sharanas believe in this. In the words of Kakkayya, "There is no caste among sharanas, neither brahmin, nor cobbler" (38). Following this religion Bijjala became King and marries with a Kshatriya girl Rambhavati. This incident has changed story of his entire life. Now he feels pride getting himself on the throne of the king. Being on the throne he is ready to give any sacrifice for sharanas with the help of whom he became the king of Kalyan. So he joins their hands in uprooting the patriarchal social system. Tale-Danda shows the need of new religion in which all should be treated equally and humanly. It will be apt to quote Tagore, his female character Prakriti of Chandalika (1933) says, "A religion that insults is a false religion" (Tagore: 154). Karnad gives new doses and fresh outlook to set beliefs and rooted religion faiths. Basavanna is well acquainted with the fact that sharanas' mission to eradicate caste system will meet furies of people of upper caste. He expounds:

*Some say this edifice of caste and creed, this poison- house of varnashram, will come tumbling down. Every person will see himself only as a human being. As a bhakta. As a sharana. That is inevitable. But we have a long way to go. You know the most terrible crimes have been justified in the name of sanatana religion. (38-39)*

Hence, above is more than sufficient to show the objective of sharana. Behind the whole story there are social discrepancies.

As far as obstacle and predicament in the lower class people are concerned, it can be stated that despite being competent they are deprived of opportunities to make their career which is prime and necessary thing to lead a meaningful life. But fact reveals that they are exploited and oppressed in the hand of people of upper class. All the old customs, discrimination regarding caste, class and gender have been the root causes of problems and pitiable condition of low class people. Exploitation and oppression have become a natural norm in our society as it has absorbed and observed individualism and competition. Consequently everybody takes inequality for granted. Steiner aptly points out, "The difficulty which we have in feeling equality with all other human beings is the result in part of our banal training in competitiveness and individualism" (187). He later talks about the dehumanizing effect of competition: "In our mad scramble to the top we forget how to love how to think, and we lose track of who we are and what we really want"(Ibid). Marx also comments on the evil effects of the division of labour and social deformity: "It proved, incontrovertibly, the disastrous effects of machinery and division of labour, the concentration of capital and land in a few hands: over-production and crises" (187). The social deformity of Hindu society has not changed for ages. Even in the modern age men of low birth are bound to face atrocities.

Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya in Indian English fiction, Badal Sircar and Mohan Rakesh in Indian English drama, Girish Karnad is concerned with social discrimination lying in Indian society and exposes the adverse effect of caste and class in his Tale-Danda. Despite being king Bijjala tolerates the blow given by the upper class people without protesting. He expresses her trauma to his wife being upset having seen the unprincely behaviour of Sovideva, his son. He says:

*In all my sixty – two years, the only people who have looked me in the eye without a reference to my lowly birth lurking deep in their eyes are the sharanas: Basavanna and his men. They treat me as- as what? - (Almost with a sense of wonder.) as a human being. Basavanna wants to eradicate the caste structure, wipe it off the face of the earth. Annihilate the Varna system. What a vision! And what prodigious courage! And he has the ability. Look at those he has gathered around him: poets, mystics, visionaries. And nothing airy – fairy about them, mind you. All hard-working people from the common stock. They sit together, eat together, argue about God together, indifferent to caste, birth or station. And all this is happening in the city of Kalyan-my Kalyan! (15)*

In Tale-Danda marriage is expounded as a prime cause of the ruin of Bijjala and Basavanna including other sharanas. Marriage of Sheelavanta, a dalit and Kalavati, a Brahmin girl is a significant event as in this context both psychological and social deformity are dexterously displayed. Sharanas' speculation prior to the marriage and their eagerness to live the life in accordance to principles of sharana are heart touching. Along with fear of Basavanna also it finds its shape. When he expresses his apprehension: "It's a question of life and death for

their children. From tomorrow the wrath of bigoted will pursue them like swarm of snakes. To strike as they pause to put up a roof or light on oven” (38). For the sake of sharana’s ideal Kakkyya and Madhuvarasa give their consent with the little hesitation. Both along with others can foresee the consequence of this knot. Even Basavanna and his wife Gangambika can feel the result of inter-caste marriage. But Madhuvarasa is so eager to dilapidate the edifice of caste system. When he finds that doing the marriage of her daughter Kalavati with a dalit boy Sheelavanta he can show his loyalty and dedication to sharana’s ideals, he thinks to accomplish soon. Basavanna exhibits the deepness of social system:

*Until now it was only a matter of theoretical speculation. But this- this is real. The orthodox will see this mingling of castes as a blow at the very roots of varnashrama dharma. Bigotry has not faced such a challenge in two thousand years. I need hardly describe what venom will gush out, what hatred will erupt once the news spreads.(38)*

Madhuvarasa is not happy with this inter-caste marriage and sacrifice word comes out of her mind, “Then let me say this: I shall not sacrifice my daughter’s life to forward the cause of our movement”. At his remark Kakkyya does not delay to take his step back, “The word ‘sacrifice’ strikes terror in me. Too long have my people sacrificed our women to the greed of the upper castes, our sons to their cosmic theories of rebirth. No more sacrifices, please” (39). Their conversation shows the status of social deformity. Deserted section of the society is too badly crushed to stand on their feet. Sheelavanata himself does not agree for this marriage. Reason, no need to mention. In the pathetic voice he says, “I don’t want to hurt her. Don’t want to ruin her life. They’ll tease her tomorrow, call her a ‘cobbler’s priestess” (40). Further adds saying, ‘No sir, no one. But –Kalavati can’t stand the smell of leather. I’ve seen her. Whenever she passes a cobbler’s shop she holds her nose. Will she spend her whole life like that?’. Sheelavanata’s opinion is worth to speculation as children are not for experiment. To satiate own ideology one should not stake their children. Finding Sheelavanata in accordance to her opinion Lalita too expresses her fear, “I have been silent all along. I can’t be any longer. Sheela is a gem. You won’t find another boy like him in all the Brahmin areas! But what he says is true”( 40). How beautifully Karnad has evinced the fear of the upper and lower class! To show the ferocious face of the social deformity Karnad has revealed the truth through his character Lalita that despite being rather talented and deserving creatures of low birth are not accepted in the society. It does not stop here, they are not permitted to live their lives on their own terms. Lalita takes Sheela as a gem but not ready to accept him as a partner to her daughter. Hence, Karnad has exposed the evil effects of social deformity at cultural, social and psychological levels.

Bijjala himself is aware of the social deformity but knows that inter-caste marriage will raise communal violence. Bijjala knows that the act will paralyse the life of Kalyan. So he manages for their security so that no bloodshed should happen. Finally in tight security marriage takes place. This marriage raises the anger of Hindus. Damodara Bhatta and

Manchanna go against their king and show their acceptance to Savideva as king in place of real king. Following the advice of Damodara Sovideva persecutes the sharanas violently and mercilessly. Unfortunately Basavanna was not with the sharanas and they lose heart and go helter-skelter. On the advice of Manchanna Sovideva gets all the sharanas decimated without any discrimination. Due to this incident Jagadeva and other sharanas are enraged. So they decide to avenge on Sovideva. They secretly enter the palace but do not find prince inside. In frustration Jagadeva along with the sharanas enter the inner temple of Lord Shiv where Bijjala embraces the 'Linga' to protect himself. But Jagadeva betrays him saying that they are sent by Basavanna. Hearing the name of Basavanna he comes out and Jagadewa stabs him to death and after killing him he kills himself. On this incident Sovideva's anger does not leave even Damodara. On his order his guard cut the cord of Domodara's life. Sovideva's instruction regarding the sharana depicts his detest towards them:

*Pursue them. Don't let them escape. Men, women, children-cut them all down. Set the hounds after them. Search each wood, each bush. Burn the houses that give them shelter. Burn their books. Yes, the books! Tear them into shreds and consign them to the wells. Their voices shall be stilled forever-(90)*

Second play to be examined is Vijay Tendulkar's Kanyadaan which exhibits social deformity indirectly and directly it describes the psychological aspect of lower caste man. The whole play evolves around the marriage especially inter-caste marriage. The institution of marriage is unique in the caste based society of India. Jyoti, the daughter of Nath Devalikar, an MLC, who maintains democracy at home, and Seva, a social worker, has freedom to chose the life partner on her own way. They belong to urban middle class Brahmin family. Nath is always on tour addressing the public, Seva is busy organizing women's camps and rallies. Both have observed the reality of low caste people, so they are seen pouring the fire against this rotten social system.

To bring the awareness among the down-trodden people they work day and night. Nath is sentimental and takes decision in hurry with little speculation on the negative side of his decision whereas Seva keeps balance between theory and practical. Her character resembles Gangambika and Madhuvarsa in Dale-Danda on the point of making decision. These female characters are well acquainted with the grim consequence of inter caste marriage. So they did not go with the supporter of inter caste marriage to bring social equality. In Kanyadaan Tendulkar has depicted the inter-caste marriage but shows the difficulties in bringing social equality at the psychological level. Despite being conscious of the changes regarding the upliftment of the position of low caste people, they could not change their psychology and protest. That is why this play is known as anti-dalit play containing feminism too whereas Tale- Danda is pure Dalit play. Kanyadaan advocates two modern trends –first feminism and second dalit literature.

Vijay Tendulkar highlights marriage in the play Kanyadaan. Hindus give utmost priority to marriage. They take everything as caste, character, occupation, economic status etc. into consideration. Of all these things caste of the bride and the bridegroom should be the same. If any one of the above is not fit usually marriage doesn't take place. If it happens, it will create problems and chaos to breakers. One critic Veena exhibits that the image of women in contemporary Indian literature has changed drastically she observes:

*No more is women considered or portrayed as a weak person, or falling at the feet of her husband or trying to pleasure him always... Modern writers have tried to transform this image of women as seen in the myths by portraying them in a more realistic manner. One such writer is Vijay Tendulkar. (Veena)*

Marriage changes the whole life of the human beings. She decides to be tied the knot of the marriage with Arun, who is a scavenger. Jyoti brings Arun to her house to introduce him to her parents and brother. He is dark complexioned but good looking. He is nervous when he enters Jyoti's house because the house is different and massive from his. He asks Jyoti not to leave him. Here the playwright artistically describes actual feelings of discomfort when Arun enters the house. Arun's words here reveal his entire background. He expounds:

*If you see my father's but 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)*

Through the character Arun The playwright has thrown light on the living style of low caste people in which they are bound to dwell. Arun becomes more eloquent in his expression on 'untouchability. His words against Brahmins are full of poison which is deposited since hundred years. He asks Jyoti thinking about her problems after getting married with him:

*Will you marry me and eat stinking bread with spoilt dal in my father's hut? Without vomiting? Tell me, Jyoti, can you shit everyday in our slum's village toilet like my mother? Can you beg, quaking at every door, for a little grass for our buffaloes? Come on, tell me. (17)*

These words reveal how inferior he is in his thoughts. Low caste people are used to such humiliation without little complaint owing to social ignorance. It may be because of his own circumstances he treats with Jyoti rudely. Jyoti begins to weep uncontrollably. Later Arun apologizes for being rude in his speech. Jyoti accepts and laughs when Jyoti is speaking that she is not touch me not girl he holds her arm and twists it violently. Jyoti feels the pain not because her hand is twisted but the rude behaviour of Arun. Seva sees this and does not reveal her displeasure.

This speech of Arun resembles with the famous poem of Heera Dom, written in Bhojpuri language. Which is titled as “Achut ki shikayat” and published in the magazine “Swarwati.” This poem is regarded as the first Dalit poem by dalit poet. In the forty lines of this poem the poet presents the condition and miseries of dalit along with religion government and people as well as the god. Jyoti comes to hear her father on Arun’s autobiography. She criticizes him for his hypocritical speech. She questions why he has come. When Nath asks her who will take care of her during delivery, Jyoti harshly replies that she has her husband. She emphasizes that she is not a widow. She firmly says that she is Jyoti Arun Athavale, a scavenger. She leaves the house saying that she never comes again. Talking about the play one of the critics says:

*Jyoti thus becomes mindless and surrenders to the situation. She like her father plays the Rescuer while Arun plays the victim. Her rescuing, at first, makes him behave more helplessly and then triggers his feelings of inferiority. Consequently, he sifts to the role of persecutor in order to feel powerful..... Jyoti goes down to the role of victim. Thus the Rescuer-victim transaction. This Drama Triangle make not only Jyoti but also Arun mindless to feel powerful. The unreal idealism of Nath and Jyoti reflects their favorite role of rescuing which impairs their perception of the reality.( Sarath 73)*

Jyoti, inspite of being educated girl, is forced to accept her fate as Arun’s wife even though she does not like it. She comes to know that it is not possible to change people. Thus Vijay Tendulkar remarkably explores the conflict between two different castes in Indian society. The married life of Jyoti and Arun is presented in dark light. An opportunity is given to a dalit boy to rise up in the society but Arun is shown incapable of utilizing that chance. He cannot escape from his Dalit mentality, and life style. Though educated, his wife Jyoti has become a mere thing for him on whom he can show his love whenever he is pleased and can show his anger by beating her if he is angry. Jyoti after months returns home and declares that she has left Arun forever. She is found saying that he would not enter that house. Because she has left him and she is going back to him again. She is fed up with him.

But it is argued that if a child gets only one-sided knowledge, if he is taught only the goodness, will he be able to cope up with the world in which he will have to live? The world is not good but full of vice and so he must be aware about it. In this manner, Mr. Nath has always taught only good lesson, faith in human being and under its effect the daughter has selected a Dalit to remove untouchability but her experiences has taught her different reality. She realizes that if she will live as a Dalit only then the distance will be crossed and her father’s experiment will be successful.



Jyoti appears as a scapegoat having plugged in the river of marriage being inspired by Gandhian theory and ideology preached by her own father. Going back is not easy . At one place she reveals her pangs with the realistic approach , ‘I am not Jyoti Yadunath Devlalikar now, I am Jyoti Arun Athavale, a scavenger. I don’t say harijan. I despise the term. I am an untouchable, a scavenger. I am one of them. Don’t touch me. Fly form my shadow, otherwise my fire will scorch your comfortable values

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