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### Inter-Caste Marriage and the Illusion of a Casteless Society: A Critical Study of *Kanyadan*

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#### Abstract

*Kanyadan* critiques contemporary social reality, which is prevalent as the burning concepts of the upliftment of Dalits and the creation of a casteless society through inter-caste marriage. It endeavors to reveal the hollowness of the idealist view of envisioning a caste-free society through inter-caste marriage and inter-caste dining. This study aims to demonstrate the complications caused by inter-caste marriage, exposing it as a means to take revenge against the high caste, a reminder of past humiliation and psychological torments, and highlighting the ongoing debates between idealism and realism. *Kanyadan* was selected purposefully for data collection and approached with qualitative textual analysis. Data on revenge from Dalits, psychological misconduct, and support for idealistic and realistic concepts were selected and coded, determining the categories to develop the broad theme of social commentaries concerning inter-caste marriage. Themes were analyzed, making connections among the categories and approaching with the theories of caste, hegemony, resistance, and subaltern, situating the primary data against the historical timeline to derive the resemblance of primary data with contemporary society, providing the commentaries on the then society, particularly the issues and concept on caste. This study demonstrates that the idealist view of a caste-free society does not contribute to the upliftment of Dalits but instead helps in revenge against the high class and reminds the past humiliation to Dalits.

**Keywords:** idealism, realism, inter-caste marriage, revenge, caste hierarchy, humiliation

### Introduction

Situated in the historical context of Maharashtra in the 1980s, *Kanyadan* deals with the debate on inter-caste marriage as a means to create a caste-free society. It includes both idealist and realist perspectives. This research aims to explore *Kanyadan* as the commentary on inter-caste marriage and its role in creating a caste-free society. The study further delves deep into exposing the consequences of applying idealist philosophy without projecting the consequences of inter-caste marriage. This article confines itself to studying the inter-caste marriage in relation to means of revenge for Dalit catharsis as the cause of reminiscence of the past shaping, psychological behaviors, and evaluation of idealism and realism, which results in the inefficiency of idealism to address the social reality.

Dalit movements are of significant concern in the decade of the 1980s (LoGiudice, 1989) in India, particularly in Maharashtra. The production of text is seen as the inspiration for the social reality of contemporary India, where Gandhi and Ambedkar's ideas were simultaneously at a crossroads. "In Maharashtra, the urban-based Dalit Panthers center their agitation around political and cultural issues .... Dalit leaders are mostly educated, urbanized people, whose aim is to foster a widespread consciousness of the oppressed (LoGiudice, 1989, p. 56)." As *Kanyadan* portrays the characters of Arun and Nath, they represent the contemporary social actors working for a caste-free society where Arun stands on the ground of being a victim of casteism, duly has aggression and revenge motive against the high Caste, and Nath, being an MLA guided by Gandhian idealism, advocates in favour of uplifting Dalit and creating caste free society through the unpractical measure such as inter-caste marriage. The impact of *Kanyadan* can be traced in Saxena & Saxena (2018) when they write, "It [*Kanyadan*] has unquestionably raised furries among different sections of society and the causes of the uproar range from presenting a stereotyped image of a Dalit boy to the portrayal of Gandhian liberalism in unfavourable colours (p. 192)" to situate the significance of the drama in the context of the history of casteism in India and particularly in Maharashtra.

To study the themes of inter-caste marriage as the means of revenge, the psychological impact of casteism, and the inefficiency of Gandhian Idealism, it is relevant to discuss the issues about caste and its evolution and Dalit. Banerjee (1969) clarifies the caste as "a segmentation of society into groups whose membership is determined by birth following a hierarchical system wherein generally the Brahmins are at the head of the hierarchy and others living on the periphery

(p. 21)". Banerjee (1969) defines caste as a group of segments of society that determines the hierarchy, restriction, and social relations. Sometimes, castes are determined by occupations that put Brahmins at the top. However, the physical existence of a group as a caste with different physical features has existed in the psyche in the form of perception and humiliation. Barman (2010) is in view that "caste is a matter of perception and practice (p. 207)". Guha (2013) puts it in a new dimension because he believes the term caste has "mingled emerging European notions of racial purity with Hindu notions of religious purity (pp. 19-20)" which paves the way for the beginning of the concept of caste. There is no uniformity in the views about the beginning of the caste system. Barman (2010) marks the beginning of the history of caste with the socio-historical theory, which believes that "the caste system began with the arrival of the fair-skinned Aryans from South Europe and North Asia in India (around 1500 BC) (p. 195)". On the other hand, caste is found connected with *Manusmriti*, which differentiates the caste system of domination-subordination creating Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras (Singh, 2019, p. 96). Irrespective of diverse perspectives on the beginning of caste, it gets prominence in India and Indian literature.

Since *Kanyadan* deals with the issue of Dalit upliftment and the creation of caste free society, it is important to discuss the notion of Dalit. The concept of Dalit, as viewed by Barman (2010), refers to those who are deprived of the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and are suppressed based on the belief of low birth, aligning them with hereditary occupations and treating them as impure (p. 196). He further argues that Dalits are synonymous with Scheduled Castes and people of lower class in the Hindu caste hierarchy, including "the Scheduled Tribes, lower class Muslims and Christians (Barman, 2010, p. 196)".

This research tries to figure out the attempts made to create a caste-free society through *Kanyadan*, connecting the themes of inter-caste marriage not as the solution but rather as a means of revenge for the Dalits due to the psychologically shaped long-rooted practice of humiliation and injustice on Dalits and the failure of unrealistic philosophy of Gandhi. However, immense studies have been carried out about the issues; this study explores the themes of revenge, psychological impact, and failure of idealism together on the backdrop of historical context, situating against the theories of hegemony, resistance, subaltern, and caste. This research provides a window to see the historical events of Dalit movements through the work of drama, *Kanyadan*.

### Literature Review

Numerous studies have concentrated on Tendulkar's *Kanyadan* with diverse perspectives to reveal the issues of the Caste hierarchy and its impact. These studies provide an understanding of the issues related to inter-caste marriage and the ideology to create a casteless society. Some of the significant pieces of literature discussed in what follows include the importance of reconciliation between the upper and lower Castes, meanwhile departing from idealism to dichotomy of the Castes accepting the difficulty of harmony and coexistence of the Castes demonstrating the brutal and humiliating impact of idealism in the form of inter-caste marriage providing prominence to traumatic experiences of the long-rooted Caste system.

*Kanyadan* raises the issues of harmony and reconciliation between upper and lower castes, advocating for creating a casteless society through the upliftment of Dalits. It is the idealistic view backed by Gandhi, who believes that the reversion of past practices of casteism can pave the way for a casteless society. Thakur (2014) views that Jyoti "agrees to marry Arun for ideals of a caste-free society and Dalit upliftment, not because of passionate love (p. 772)". Jyoti's decision seems to be guided by the imagination of an ideal casteless society. Her readiness to sacrifice love and status is quite remarkable. She is determined to uplift Dalit and create caste-free society. Her determination is properly guided by the carrier of Gandhi's idealism, her father, who psychologically manipulates his daughter and inspires her to marry the Dalit boy, Arun. Kumar (2019) beautifully captures the manipulation of Nath on his daughter as he puts, "Nath Devalikar, is not only dominating his house but his daughter's mind also. She agrees to marry Arun for ideals of a caste-free society and Dalit upliftment not because of passionate love (p. 772)". Inter-caste marriage is expected to provide justice and add a big and strong stone to the foundation of eradicating caste-related injustice and discrimination. Although inter-caste marriage itself is an example of transcending caste hierarchy, it is not the sole solution to end Casteism.

Tendulkar's *Kanyadan* portrays the contemporary idealistic views on Caste and a caste-free society. However, it provides immense critiques of the forceful idealistic approaches that stood to be fruitless in the end. Moreover, the effort toward harmony appears dichotomous as neither of the castes accepts each other. Dubey (2021) summarizes his views about Tendulkar's efforts to bridge the ditch, and argues why the inter-caste marriage could not bring the expected result but instead turned out to be the means of revenge against high caste. According to him, "Tendulkar intends to bridge the gulf between the upper and lower caste by advocating inter-caste marriages.

Casteism is ingrained in the blood of the two castes so much so that neither of the ‘Savarna’ nor ‘Shudra’ accepts each other (p. 477)”. The practice of caste is so deeply rooted in the hearts and minds of people that it seems almost impossible to dismantle. Not only the upper caste reject the harmony but also the Dalits are reluctant and sometimes aggressive to the past injustice. Despite Nath’s and Jyoti’s pure dedication towards caste-free society, Arun’s behavior adds bizzare point in caste harmony. He takes inter-caste marriage as the means to avenge against the upper castes. Arun uses Jyoti to pour his past bitter experience of discrimination and injustice. Yadav (2022) argues that “Arun starts his atrocities on Jyoti to take revenge against higher caste through beating Jyoti believing that it is the only way to reverse the power relations and maintain equality with Jyoti (p. 18)”. Arun intends to alter the power relations because he believes that the only way to maintain equality is through atrocities, as done over the Dalits before.

On the other hand, the psychological impact of deep-rooted humiliation and oppression can be discussed with various references. Vaishya (2017) argues that “Since it was already in his mind that how Dalit people were humiliated and exploited by these upper-class people for centuries that is why he always wanted to take revenge by humiliating Brahmins (upper class) anywhere. It appears when Jyoti becomes the victim of his frustration (p. 511)”. Although he has a love for Jyoti, the shadow of humiliation and discrimination covers him; consequently, he behaves rudely and tortures Jyoti because the impact of injustice has stayed deep in his psyche, which is adequate to generate the psychological impact. Yadav (2022) puts further that consciousness of caste is the thing that shapes Arun’s psychology, which inspires him to threaten, abuse, and exploit Jyoti in the name of high caste (p. 18).

Simultaneously, although *Kanyadan* deals with the advocacy for the ideal social relation and harmony among the castes, it makes a departure from idealism to realism. *Kanyadan* primarily focuses on the dualism of idealism and realism. Idealism is backed by the ideas of Gandhi, whereas realism by Ambedkar. This drama is characterized by the failure of Gandhian philosophy in the decade of 1980s and the rising popularity of Ambedkar’s philosophy. Exposing some of the inherent social circumstances, Kumar (2023) views *Kanyadan* as the failed portrait of the idealist philosophy of Gandhi in the contemporary social structure rather than the vivid portrayal of Dalit surroundings (p. 2294). The idealist views do not get practical significance because of their distance from reality. In the drama, Nath is an idealist who takes inter-caste marriage as the means to create a casteless society. He guides his daughter through his idealist views. Moreover,

sometimes, it brings unpleasant consequences. Kumar (2019) views in the same vein that sacrificing one's own daughter for setting an example and founding the base of a casteless society stands fatal at the end of the drama.

At the end of the play both Nath and Jyoti realize the wrong philosophy. Karmakar (2014) furthers her argument that "Jyoti arrives at her true womanhood rejecting her father's wrong philosophy and accepting life as it is (p. 34)".

The literature discussed above reveals the diverse perspectives of *Kanyadan*. They expose the significance of reconciliation between higher and lower castes on the part of idealism, which advocates for the casteless society through reversion of the previous practice of caste through inter-caste marriage. On the other hand, the dichotomy of caste has been presented as almost impossible for reconciliation even through the change in mindset on the side of the upper class and the social practices such as accepting inter-caste marriage, which results in brutality and humiliation against the upper class by the Dalits. However, a long-rooted practice of Casteism, which is adequate to shape the traumatic experience, has got minimal prominence to explore the themes of revenge through inter-caste marriage, failure of idealism, and internalization of realism. This study aims to explore the reasons behind the persistent conflict on the basis of caste even after the efforts made by the activists for harmony and reconciliation in the altered social scenario, which consequently manifest the themes of revenge, psychological impact, and failure of idealism keeping inter-caste marriage at the centre and provide a vivid picture of social commentaries in contemporary society. The research paper explores the psychological and traumatic causes behind the revenge, resulting in the inefficiency of idealism and the impact of caste hierarchy. To achieve this, the research deals with the questions such as what the commentaries are that *Kanyadan* tries to dig out in relation to the issue of inter-caste marriage in the society and how long-rooted Casteism shapes the motive of atrocity and humiliation as revenge?

The research article is organized into seven sections. Among them, the first section deals with an introduction, which sets the background and significance of the study. It introduces the concept of caste with its evolution, the concept of Dalit relating it to the consciousness of Dalit along with the Dalit struggle against the injustice based on caste. The second section provides the literature review and the research questions, including the organization of the study, moving ahead from the literature review, and finding the gap to set the direction of the study. The third section sketches a map of the methodology, including the data collection method, sample, approach, and

analysis, which will provide the plan and procedure to search for the answer to the research questions. The fourth section concentrates on inter-caste marriage as a means of revenge for the Dalits. The fifth section revolves around the psychological impact of long-rooted humiliation and oppression based on caste. The sixth section evaluates the concepts of idealism and realism and provides the way forward with the realization of the inefficiency of idealism resulting in unexpected consequences. The fourth, fifth, and sixth sections are the thematic analysis approached with the theories of revenge, hegemony, resistance, and caste situated with historical texts and events. The final section includes a conclusion, which is followed by references at last.

### **Methods and Materials**

To study the multifaceted drawbacks of inter-caste marriage for cementing the caste hierarchy with its commentaries on inter-caste marriage from the perspectives of revenge, psychological manifestation of humiliation and disillusionment, and hollowness of idealism, a qualitative approach was adopted combining textual analysis because textual analysis enables the researcher to understand the ways of human beings from diverse cultures and subcultures helping them to generate the meanings out of it, along with insights from theories of revenge, hegemony, resistance, subaltern, and power along with situating the primary data against the historical texts. Vijay Tendulkar's *Kanyadan* provided me with the primary data for the study of commentaries on inter-caste marriage. For analysis, I selected the data suited to the themes of revenge, psychological humiliation, and hypocrisy of idealism. Data was analyzed based on the theories of power, hegemony, resistance, caste, and revenge, making striking connections with the historical events from historical texts. In the context of the application of theories, the Gramscian concept of hegemony, and the postcolonial concept of subaltern and resistance play an important role. Singh (2019) views as:

When viewed from the Gramscian perspective the Dalits may be located within the non-hegemonic/oppressed group, also termed as the subaltern by Gramsci and some postcolonial theorists. It is when these subalterns become aware of the indignities and conscious of their self-esteem that they rise in protest at the outrages and abuses to avenge the oppressor. (p. 97)

Rao (1996) clarifies the concept of resistance and how it is made possible. He argues that subversion, damaging property, asserting rights, and defiance of traditional norms are significant ways to express resistance concerning the upper caste in the context of casteism (p.216).



Proper consideration was given to the ethical guidelines for literary research, ensuring the respectful treatment of the source text with proper citations.

### Results and discussion

#### Inter-caste Marriage as the Means of Revenge Against Caste Hierarchy

*Kanyadan* manifests a striking theme of revenge from a Dalit man, Arun, against a high caste girl, Jyoti, as a symbol of revenge from Dalit against the high caste. Even after the inter-caste marriage, Arun does not feel the change in the caste hierarchy that he bears since his childhood. Nath and Jyoti represent the society of a changed mentality, whereas Arun represents the figure inspired by revenge for what he had to face in the past.

Before the marriage, Arun commences to revenge with taunts, accusations, rumours, and physical violence. Rao (1996) presents the scenario in the new situation as “it is the turn of the Dalits to be arrogant. They can be found shouting or abusing upper caste persons anonymously as they walk in the streets. Occasionally, upper caste elders are confronted on the street (p. 215)”. He expresses his deep dissatisfaction with the humiliation and oppression of Dalits that he had to face in his childhood with Jyoti, Nath, and Seva. Tendulkar picturizes the revenge in the form of taunts by Arun:

Arun: Will you marry me and eat stinking bread with spoilt dal in my fathers hut? Without vomiting?... Can you beg, quaking at every door, for a little grass for our buffaloes? ...There is good money in brewing liquor... It is a first class profession for two persons...People call her aunty. The more striking the aunty's looks, the brisker the trade... [*Arun is happy now seeing Seva's unrest*] (pp. 513-517)

It seems as if he is expressing his past bitter experience caused by casteism. However, he is taunting simultaneously, which he has used as a means of revenge. Taunting can be verified with the perception of Seva as she feels constantly taunting “her [Jyoti] about her parents, heaping foul abuse on them for being highborn (p. 545)”. In response to Seva's concern about work and income, Arun says that they [He and Jyoti] can earn through brewing because there is good money in that work. Moreover, he taunts more, saying that the attractive look of women causes the rise of trade as well. In taunting, he enjoys.

Arun does not confine himself to taunting; he goes ahead with beating and torturing. “**Jayprakash:** there were tears in her eyes, **Jyoti:** twisted my arm, **Nath:** mark on your shoulder (p. 523), **Seva:** internal wound in her stomach... he beats her and even kicks her (Tendulkar, 2003,



p. 543)” are some of the evidences of torturing Jyoti by Arun.

Arun makes fun of his mother-in-law as well, calling her procuress or girls supplier from Seva Dal to Socialist leader and Nath not being Jyoti’s father. He moves on to blackmail Nath to chair the redemption of his autobiography. Tendulkar (2003) presents:

**Arun:** If you don’t come, all sorts of rumours will float... silly reasons will be fabricated...Other gossip will have it that the rise of the son-in-law could not be endured by the father-in-law. The rise of the dalit son-in-law to literary height caused heartburn in the upper caste, socialist father-in-law. (Tendulkar, 2003, p. 551)

Arun always “feels tortured in his whole existence, and he always wants to revenge against higher caste people by beating Jyoti (Yadav, 2022, p.19)”.

As the theme of revenge can be materialized through *Kanyadan*, it provides opportunities to situate the text in revenge theory. The basic human instinct to cause harm to others is caused by the natural human reactions and experiences of the past. Singh argues that “The most common, or one may even say, the most natural reaction of human beings is anger against any harm or injury done to them or their loved ones. One may, in fact, say that vengeance as a response to some hurt or harm is one of the basic instincts of human nature, which possibly is rooted in the idea of retribution or ‘setting the balance right.’ (Singh, 2019, p.2)”.

*Kanyadan*, published in 1983 for the first time in Maharashtra, reflects the historical and social reality of Maharashtra from where the dramatist comes. LoGiudice (1989) states that “the decade of 1980s was the growing mass mobilization of Dalits for the eradication of hitherto practice of oppressions on Dalits (p. 56).” *Kanyadan* captures the moment of Dalit mass mobilization and the rise of Dalit literature, delivering the reactions against high caste people as revenge. “Dalits are no longer ready to accept the apmaan (insult) that has been their lot. Social inequality is being questioned, and attempts are being made to bring about social equality on an everyday level without institutional help (Bhatia, 2006, p. 54)”.

### **Psychic Revelation of Deep-Rooted Humiliation and Oppression in the Name of Caste**

*Kanyadan* can be characterized from the perspective of psychic revelation of long-rooted oppression and humiliation based on caste hierarchy. Arun is a victim of a society where the deep-rooted practice of discrimination based on caste is prevalent. However, the situation has changed. As a result, he studies B.A. and can write poetry and autobiography; the oppression and humiliation he faced during his childhood remain in his deep psyche. Inter-caste marriage and

support from Jyoti and Nath do not make any changes in his behaviors. Instead, he gets reminded of the past experiences of caste-based oppression and humiliation; consequently, he submerges in drinking and beats Jyoti. It is the revelation of his humiliation shaped by psychology. Singh (2019) argues that “it is a response to an earlier humiliation that upsets personal and/or social order and is thus also seen as a retributive attempt to set right the lost mental, emotional, social and ethical balance (p. 1)”. Tendulkar visualizes the impact of previous experiences of humiliation, shaping the present behaviors through the character of Arun.

**Arun:** I feel uncomfortable in big houses... my father's hut... Ten of us... in that eight feet by ten... The heat of our bodies to warm us... No clothes of our back, no food in our stomach... these damn houses of the city people... are like the bellies of Sharks and crocodiles...what if building swallowed me up ...I feel safe on the street...My heart shudders when walls of cement and concrete surround me. I feel I must get up, run, get lost in the crowd. (Tendulkar, 2003, p. 512)

Arun had a bitter experience in his childhood withstanding extreme poverty and humiliation caused by caste hierarchy. Even in the stage of being a grown-up man, he cannot relinquish the bitter experience of his childhood. He does not feel comfortable in Jyoti's house because he feels that the cement and concrete houses, like sharks and crocodiles, are likely to engulf him. The childhood experience has rooted deeply in the psyche of Arun because “it [mental or emotional response] also functions as an unseen tyrant controlling and shaping our thoughts and actions (Chauhan & Hlpert-Hamir, 2019, p. 1)”.

Nath also confirms the psychological condition of Arun as he says that Arun has been brought up in poverty and hatred; it is canny to have a different psychological makeup (Tendulkar, 2003, p. 523). Reading Arun's autobiography, he comes to know the humiliation Arun faced is the root cause of his extraordinary sensitivity (Tendulkar, 2003, p. 543). Arun cannot control himself, although he loves Jyoti because he is reminded of past humiliation, which gets manifested as:

**Arun:** I want to set fire to the whole world, strangle throats, rape and kill. Drink up the blood of the beasts, tour high caste society. Then I calm down like the taantric when he comes out of his trance. Like a corpse, I live on. I've made you suffer, I am sorry...*[Arun sits in his place, restless and nervous... stays silent... continues to be restless... Arun is fed up now shakes his head to say 'no']*. (Tendulkar, 2003, pp. 514-516)

Arun presents himself as a dreadful criminal exposing his feelings when he sees the high caste people. However, he confesses that he calms down like the tantric when he sees Jyoti. When Arun visits Jyoti in her house for the first time, his restlessness becomes obvious and he twists her hand as well because it is psychologically driven. “Many of those who actively avenge themselves, especially by inflicting physical harm, usually fail to convince themselves completely about either its need or desirability (Singh, 2019, p. 1).”

*Kanyadan* deals with the idea that humiliation and discrimination in childhood shape the entire life. Despite our attempts to escape from it, the deep-rooted experiences follow and manifest in the form of aggression, violence, and revenge.

### **A Journey from Idealism to Realism**

The plot of *Kanyadan* revolves around the vicious circle of hollowness and hypocrisy (Rajkumar & Muthusamy, 2018, p.172) and the disillusionment of envisaging an ardent and egalitarian society through the inter-caste marriage to establish a casteless Society to realism. Nath, an MLA belonging to the Socialist Party, is obsessed with the idea that charity must begin at home. Accordingly, he is motivated to substantiate the long-carried Gandhian ideology by sacrificing his own daughter. When his daughter, Jyoti, tells them about her decision to marry Arun, instead of diving deep into reality about Arun and his family, he goes on to encourage Jyoti to set an example for constructing a casteless society. Tendulkar visualizes:

**Nath:** Democracy outside and dictatorship in the home, we don't know these two-timing tricks... I know... But if my daughter had decided to marry into high caste, it wouldn't have pleased me as much... Well, I'm telling you the absolute truth. 'Break the caste system' was a mere slogan for us... But today I have broken the caste barrier in the real sense. (Tendulkar, 2003, pp. 500-519)

It manifests that Nath characterizes himself and his family as the democratic pillar, and there is no space for dictatorship at their home. He is determined to present himself as an idealist, arguing that Jyoti's decision to marry a high-caste man would not please him as much as her decision to marry a Dalit man. Nath romanticizes the idea of marriage and endeavours to substantiate egalitarianism through inter-caste marriage.

Jyoti, being the craved and upbrought product from the cradle of romantic idealism, is no less committed to materializing the end of caste dichotomy, offering herself to the blaze of casteism. She discloses the reason and the decision to marry Arun dramatically. Tendulkar puts:

**Jyoti:** Arun asked me, isn't the very idea of marrying me dreadful to you? I said, what is dreadful about that? Arun said, you don't think that I am an absolutely worthless fellow? I said no! He said, this is incredible, and added, in that case let us get married. And I nodded... He is complex. Human beings are complex. It is possible that his complexity has been generated by his circumstances. (Tendulkar, 2003, pp. 507-525)

Jyoti is emotionally guided and decides on marriage very lightly. She manifests that the decision to marry can be made without understanding each other and based on conversation and proposal. Being guided by the idealist philosophy of his father, she insists on marrying a Dalit man, Arun. She believes that the strange and aggressive behaviours that Arun shows are the outcome of circumstances that he faced as a Dalit. Moreover, she normalizes the strangeness of Arun, taking into account the complexities of human nature and characters. She is far more determined for inter-caste marriage.

Nath and Jyoti represent the idealist section of seeing society while Seva, wife of Nath, and Jayaprakash, son of Nath, represent the realist section. Seva and Jaya are not the starkest against the inter-caste marriage; however, they oppose the way Jyoti makes decisions, and Nath inspires her to make his dream come true. They believe that marriage is not the thing to be emotionally motivated. It is a lifelong bond between husband and wife. So, the decision to marry in haste can deviate a person and make them fall into lifelong misery and remorse. Tendulkar puts the idea vividly:

**Seva:** Jyoti, decisions about one's life must not be made so lightly... Jyoti, in my opinion you are acting in haste. Not even two whole months have passed since you two got acquainted you don't have a clear and complete understanding of the man.

**Jayaprakash:** Marriage afterall, is a knot tied for lifetime. (Tendulkar, 2003, p. 507)

Arun is found beating Jyoti after marriage indulged in drinking. Despite being tortured, Jyoti conceals the treatment of Arun with her family. However, Seva and Jayaprakash have eyes on the torture and tears of Jyoti. Although Nath comes to know about the pathetic condition of Jyoti, he still is in favour of saving the marriage of Jyoti and Arun because he believes that he and his family have set an example to establish an egalitarian casteless society. Tendulkar (2003) exposes "**Nath:** Seva, let not this wonderful experiment fail! This dream which is struggling to turn real, let it not crumble into dust before our eyes! We will have to do something. We must save

this marriage (p. 507)."

The inter-caste marriage is an experiment and dream of Nath, which he intends to save even at the cost of bearing torture on his daughter. It shows Nath's hypocrisy and disillusionment in setting an example of inter-caste marriage for caste harmony.

However, at the end of the drama, the Devalikar family unanimously comes to the point of realization of the reality that intercultural marriage cannot provide the solution for the eradication of the caste system and upliftment of the Dalit community (Karmakar, 2014, p. 31). Tendulkar vividly presents the hallucination of Nath deriving the historical event from the Holocaust of Hiller and torture done on Jews and Jews turning to be murderous to people from Palestine to symbolize the once oppressed and discriminated in the name of caste turning into oppressor through the arguments of Jayaprakash.

**Jayaprakash:** Hitler's Nazi troops had inhumanly decimated the Jews... And today the Jews have become the murderers of Palestinian women and children... Just this, that those who were being massacred are now indulging in massacres... The oppressed are overjoyed when they get a chance to oppress others. (Tendulkar, 2003, p. 507)

Arun reminds Nath of idealism when he invites his father-in-law to a chair and delivers a speech on the occasion of his autobiography's redemption. He presents the difference between being a well-wisher of the Dalit and being a real Dalit. There is a vast difference between speech and action; for understanding the actual condition of Dalits, one should have first-hand experience. Tendulkar (2003) demonstrates:

**Arun:** you were a well-wisher of the Dalit community...you launched a Satyagraha for that cause. You deliver socialist address at the State Assembly, with the trumpet call of idealism, you got your daughter married to a dalit. (p. 552)

Nath's realization of reality is shocking. When Arun returns and invites him in, he feels his house is polluted and tells Seva to clean everything. Tendulkar writes:

**Nath:** his visit has polluted this drawing room, this house, and this day...This stinks...Clean everything! ... I was a fool then. (Tendulkar, 2003, pp. 553-556)

On the other hand, Jyoti realizes that his father's liberal philosophy guides her idealistic orientation. However, it is too late to realize because what happened cannot be undone. She accuses Nath of keeping her in a quandary, feeding with the capsule of idealism, which, she feels, deviated

her to lead to inter-caste marriage. “Nath’s idealistic views on human life, society, politics, and cultural values have been their guiding force since their childhood (Yadav, 2022, p. 17)”.

Tendulkar visualizes:

**Jyoti:** Tendencies! 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 evils. They must be transformed. Completely uprooted and destroyed. And then, the earth will become heaven. It is essential to awaken the god slumbering within man...’ All false, vicious claptrap! The truth...man and his inherent nature are never really two different things. Both are one, and inescapable...You made me waste twenty years of my life before I could discover this. (563)

Kumar (2023) argues that Nath, being guided by Gandhian philosophies, inspires his children to produce an ardent world; however, later on, he comes to realize that his essential perspectives cannot lead him to accomplish his desired ardent world in the context of societal uprising in India (p. 2295). *Kanyadan* sets the journey of idealism to realism through the characters Natha and Jyoti, which can be justified even from the historical texts of the Caste and Dalit movements. Judge (2012) categorizes idealism as Gandhi's philosophy and realism as Ambedkar's philosophy. He further puts forward that Gandhian idealism accentuated reform within the system. In contrast, the philosophy of Ambedkar focused on redemption by moving out of the system since there was no hope from within the system (Judge, 2012, p. 269). It is relevant to derive the idea of Ambedkar (2014) to substantiate the idea of the journey from idealism to realism.

The real method of breaking up the caste system was not to bring about inter-caste dinners and inter-caste marriages but to destroy the religious notions on which Caste was founded... To agitate for and to organize inter-caste dinners and inter-caste marriages is like forced feeding brought about by artificial means. Make every man and woman free from the thralldom of the *Shastras* and he or she will inter-dine and inter-marry, without your telling him or her to do so. (n.p.)

### Conclusion

*Kanyadan* reflects not only the social reality of the 1980s Maharashtra but also the commentary on Inter-caste marriage as a means for casteless society. The findings suggest that

idealist perspectives of creating a caste-free society through inter-caste marriage and inter-dining prove to be a mere illusion because such hollow idealism results in a nightmare for both the upper caste and the lower caste people. Instead, it is important to destroy the religious ideas on which casteism is founded. The research explores Gandhian idealism and its failure to address the Dalit upliftment philosophy, which accentuates seeking reforms from within the system, such as inter-caste marriage and inter-caste dining, but instead provokes violence and deliberate revenge. The long history of humiliation and discrimination confines the Dalits in unpleasant memories, resulting in psychological problems in their speech and deeds. This study brings out the historical reality through the drama *Kanyadan*, focusing on creating a caste-free society through inter-caste marriage due to the motive of revenge, psychological problems, and failure of the manifested idealistic way.

However, this study is concerned with Caste, particularly the notion of inter-caste marriage, which unwillingly brackets the exploration within the motivation of revenge from Dalits, psychologically shaped misconduct from Dalits, and failure of application of inter-caste marriage in the practice of creating a caste-free society. However, the analysis of the role of gender and class in relation to the maintenance of casteism can further the understanding of its multifaceted impacts.

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