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# Restructuring the Concept of “Marriage” and “Home” in Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* and Vijay Tendulkar’s *Kanyadaan*

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**ABSTRACT:** The concepts of “marriage” and “home” in Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* and Vijay Tendulkar’s *Kanyadaan*, are discussed in this research paper. The methodology used in writing this paper is close reading and taking points from different research papers. *A Doll’s House* by Henrik Ibsen explores the study of “marriage” which analyses the viewpoints of feminist perspectives and women’s status in marriage. It throws light on the concepts of how women were oppressed, undergone objectification, and treated inferiorly. This play includes two sources of data: Secondary and primary sources. A primary source is the play itself and a secondary source is the articles and papers related to the study of this play. On the other hand, the study of “house” explores the stereotypical household roles allotted to women, such as how they should be working at their place. Being a rational dramatist, Tendulkar skilfully catches the imprudence of the Indian culture which is tormented by the hunger for power. Since society puts men in a higher position, they are moulded to consider themselves better than women and hold the ability to overwhelm and control them. This toxic mindset of society particularly of men is showcased by Tendulkar in his drama *Kanyadaan*.

**KEYWORDS:** Marriage, House, Inter-caste, Oppression, violence.

## I. INTRODUCTION

A renowned figure, Henrik Ibsen was a Norwegian writer. His works are praised for their investigation of perplexing mental subjects, social analysis, and creative sensational strategies. Ibsen's impact stretches out a long way past the lines of Norway, and his plays keep on being performed and contemplated around the world.

Vijay Tendulkar (1928-2008) was a powerful Indian dramatist, screenwriter, and social reporter known for his intense and provocative works that frequently focused on social problems with resolute genuineness. Tendulkar's journey as an essayist started during the 1950s when he began adding to Marathi theatre. His initial works mirrored the socio-political aspects of post- freedom India, tending to subjects like debasement, persecution, and imbalance. One of his most renowned plays from this period is *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe* (1967), uncovered the intrinsic predispositions and treacheries inside the Indian general set of laws.

Henrik Ibsen authored a historic play, *A Doll’s House* with the backdrop of the late nineteenth century. This play investigates the cultural limitations that are imposed on ladies, and the battle for individual personality and freedom. The play is partitioned into three demonstrations and rotates around the existence of Nora Helmer, a blissful spouse and mother residing in a working-class family. Toward the start of the play, Nora possesses all the qualities of being the best Victorian spouse, satisfying her obligations as a wife and mother while keeping a happy disposition. Notwithstanding, as the story advances, it becomes obvious that Nora is carrying on with an existence of duplicity and disappointment. She has secretly acquired cash for a tour to Italy to save her husband, Torvald's life, copying her dad's signature for the loan. Her mystery is uncovered by Krogstad, a displeased representative at Torvald's bank, who holds the promissory note. *A Doll’s House* ignited discussion upon its delivery because of its unashamed investigation of marriage and orientation jobs. Ibsen's depiction of Nora as a perplexing and multi-layered character tested customary thoughts of gentility and started discussions about ladies' freedoms and independence. This play is even relevant today as it convinces people, especially women, to self-realize their worth and their rights and freedoms.

Set in Maharashtra, India, *Kanyadaan* rotates around the existence of the Patwardhan family, especially focusing on their girl, Jyoti, and the cultural tensions she faces as a lady. The actual title, *Kanyadaan* means "giving away of daughter" in English, epitomizing one of the focal subjects of the book: the commodification of ladies in conventional Indian culture. The story unfolds as Jyoti, a brilliant and aggressive young lady, ends up caught in a trap of familial assumptions and cultural customs. Her parents, particularly her dad, Mr. Patwardhan is a firm believer in traditional



values and sees Jyoti more as a commodity to be sold than as an individual with her aspirations and desires. Jyoti's life is full of difficulties as she wrestles with the clashing powers of custom and advancement. She yearns for training and independence, but her dreams are crushed by the male-centric rules that govern her existence.

## **II. CONCEPT OF “MARRIAGE” AND “HOME” IN HENRIK IBSEN’S A DOLL’S HOUSE AND VIJAY TENDULKAR’S KANYADAAN**

Women in the Victorian era were considered unequal in the concept of marriage and society. Their position was lower than men and they were disadvantaged sexually and financially. Men had a higher position in society and got the full hold in homes and women. The rights of women were extremely limited in this era which led to a loss of ownership in the wages. Victorian women's rights and privileges were very much limited. This concept is very vividly shown by Henrik Ibsen in his famous play *A Doll's House*, where he focuses on the harsh realities of contemporary society that rigidly focuses on the lives of each woman during the Victorian era, through the character of Nora Helmer. The play shows not only the position of the women in society but also how they are treated as a “doll” in their home. Nora's only task in the novel was of a wife, a mother, and a woman, who behaved like Torvald's personal doll. He always kept Nora under him and considered her inferior to him. He even gave her different names like “doll”, “my little bird”, and so on. “My little bird must never do that again! A songbird must never sing false notes.” (Ibsen, 44)

This play talks about Nora Helmer who is married to Torvald Helmer, a lawyer who is appointed to take over the post of director of the Joint Stock Bank. Previously in their marriage, Helmer got seriously ill and was asked by doctors to stay in a more southerly climate. Since Nora was short of money, she had to borrow it from Krogstad, a lawyer who was also a student of Torvald's, to complete the trip to Italy with Torvald. To hide the secret from Torvald, she made up the story that she took the money from her father before his death and for security, she took her father's signatures for the loan. Torvald even disrespected Nora by not adhering to what she said. There is an instance in the drama where Nora asks Torvald to give Krogstad one last chance and keep him in the company, but Torvald denies her.

As the novel comes to an end, Torvald comes to know about this, he calls Nora a liar and says that from that day onwards, she will be denied the duty to raise his children as she would be a bad influence on them. These harsh words of Torvald triggered something in Nora. She realizes the fact that all these eight years, she was just a personal doll of Torvald's, who is just to be played with and admired. “I have been your doll-wife, just as at home, I was papa's doll-child, and here the children have been my dolls.” (Ibsen, 114-115) She even says that after so many years of marriage, they do not understand each other. She ends the relationship with Torvald.

A completely conventional marriage is represented through the characters of Nora and Torvald at the beginning of the play. She is very explicitly shown as a normal wife who looks after her children and house and also helps the family in their financial situation as well. Even the interactions which Torvald and Nora have indicated the inequality in marriage. To keep the marriage going and to be in the good books of Torvald, she even lies to Torvald about silly things such as eating macaroons, and about very big things as well, like taking a loan from Krogstad to go on the trip to Italy because of Torvald's ill health. When these lies are disclosed by Torvald, he distances Nora from himself as well as his children. Torvald is of a nature who controls his wife, which was also one of the reasons for their marriage to fall apart. Another reason for their marriage to go to pieces was Torvald's perceived right to control Nora. Torvald wants to take hold of every aspect of the household, even the keys of the letterbox to be with him. Due to these reasons, they could never develop an understanding and never came to be equal to each other.

The marriage in the play is additionally described by the oppression of women. Nora is being oppressed by her husband Torvald in the characters and activities displayed by him, for instance, by holding with her ears, and by using oppressive words when addressing her. This oppression of women also applies to them in the decision-making process, for instance, in the play, the women are denied to take loans without the consent of their husbands.

The concept of the “home” In Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* talks about the stereotypical norms of household roles for women. This includes the position and duties of women as a housewife and a mother. The concept of “home” is very keenly described in the play through the character of Nora. She only stays at home, does the household chores, looks after her children and so on. Ibsen has also mentioned “doll's house” early in the play. For instance, when Nora shows Torvald the dolls she bought for their children. She says that the dolls were cheap, but it does not matter as she would break them soon. This highlights that Nora is raising her children like herself, a doll. While playing with her children, Nora also refers to them as “my little dollies”. This concept comes to reality in the end when Nora tells Torvald that her father and he both have kept her like a doll.

Both the novels, *A Doll's House* and *Kanyadaan* are somewhat alike to each other. They both talk about the sufferings of

women in a patriarchal society based on the concept of marriage and home. Nora suffers oppression in society for being a woman and struggles for her freedom. She is looked down upon by her husband Torvald who treats her as an object and a doll. She is devoid of independence by society and is just restricted to her household chores, motherhood, and wife. Nora is a woman who stands for herself and fights for her freedom by leaving Torvald behind at the end of the play. On the other hand, Jyoti is a victim of sexual violence, patriarchy and ideological structural violence. Jyoti's sexuality serves as a platform for discussing caste and reforming it. Arun expresses his sorrow over caste prejudice via her physical appearance. Jyoti is bound up by her father's Gandhian ideologies due to which she marries Arun. She goes through physical and mental violence. Yet, she doesn't give up on her marriage and fights for herself because her father had told her that she has to manage her life by herself. So, she continues to live with Arun in his house and suffers violence each day. We see comparisons in both novels based on male dominance and patriarchy. The two novels differentiate based on women's rights and freedom. In *A Doll's House*, Nora speaks for herself at the end and fights for her freedom, but in *Kanyadaan*, Jyoti continues to live in Arun's home and take the violence.

However initially composed and acted in Marathi in 1983, *Kanyadaan* took off as a play when an approved English interpretation emerged by Gowri Ramnarayan in 2005. The achievement of *Kanyadaan* as a play likewise represents the capability of native Indian literary works, whose potential has for quite some time been subverted. Due to this play, Vijay Tendulkar was honoured with Saraswati Samman. The bigger discussion, eventually, is about our acquaintance with the continuous discussions and talks in the abstract native. In the marriage, "Kanyadaan" is a very important aspect which the father of the bride performs. It means giving away the daughter to the bridegroom. The title "Kanyadaan" strongly revolves around the concept of marriage. In the play, Nath's *Kanyadaan* is not common, rather it is a complete sabotage of *Kanyadaan* that is prescribed in the Hindu code of conduct.

*Kanyadaan* is a short play with two acts and five scenes. The Devalikar family aims to wipe out the system of caste discrimination in society. It trusts in following a religion which has no specific caste, instead which treats everyone equally. It depicts the struggles of Jyoti Devalikar, a Brahmin daughter of Seva and Nath, married to Arun Athavale, a manual scavenger Dalit. When Jyoti brings Arun home, he gets conscious and asks Jyoti not to leave his side. Arun compares the higher society with the lower-class society. He discusses the condition of the society he lives in and how he survived it. The words he uses to describe himself or his class are so filthy and downgraded. He also talks about Brahmins with hatred. Seva is an upper-middle-class Brahmin mother. Despite being a social activist, before marrying her daughter she enquires about, the economic status, caste, and occupation of Arun and warns Jyoti not to marry him because, in the end, it will be her who will have to suffer everything. Ignoring Arun's bad behaviour towards her family, Jyoti is adamant about her decision to marry him.

Her mother and brother Jayaprakash oppose this marriage but her father, Nath is in full support of her. Nath Devalikar has given the freedom to everyone for their decisions. So, he respects the decision of Jyoti to marry Arun and supports her. He even praises Arun for his poetry and physique. After marriage, Jyoti's life takes a drastic change. She becomes a poor, pathetic woman. Every night, Arun comes home drinking alcohol and beats Jyoti. This behaviour of Arun reaches its peak in the second act where Jyoti's body experiences physical violence. He even beats her brutally when she is pregnant. He starts kicking her on the tummy. Arun continuously insults her about her caste and her parents, abusing them for their high status. All this behaviour of Arun is for a reason. He has suppressed his anger toward the upper class for a very long time which gets a way out when he first visits Jyoti's home. There he brings all his emotions out and says foul words and rubbish about his caste as well as about the Brahmins.

Arun becomes aggressive as a result of the family's disputes. Such aggressive activities are having an increasingly negative impact on the conduct and thinking of young guys like Arun. There are different reasons for Arun's violent behaviour. One is through Arun's lens where he beats Jyoti because of his past suppressions and humiliations by the upper class, which he somewhere or the other faces even now. He even claims that he does not know the non-violent ways of Brahmins as he is the son of a scavenger, a barbarian by birth.

Another viewpoint of Arun's violence is shown through Seva. She says that he just wants to write his poetries and his autobiography but does not want to work and wants to be an idler. Instead, he sends his wife to work so that through her earnings, he can drown himself in alcohol. The third viewpoint is through Jayaprakash's lens, Jyoti's brother. He points out the reason for Arun's violence and concludes by giving the example of Jews that those who were humiliated in past and were victims of the perpetrator are now taking their revenge by becoming the perpetrators themselves and victimizing the higher class "Those who were being massacred are now indulging in massacres." (Tendulkar, 51) Additionally, he says, that the ones who are hunted derive great pleasure in hunting others when get a chance. These oppressors are thrilled with joy when they get a chance to oppress others.

Due to Arun's alcoholism, indecent behaviour, and foul mouth, their marriage became problematic. Jyoti is no longer



able to take this violent behaviour of Arun and decides to leave him and come back to her maternal home. Arun, fully drowned in alcohol, reaches for the door of his in-laws. He tries to convince Jyoti of his violent behaviour by blaming his past generation and the suppression they faced. He told them how his father would come home late and drunk every day and would beat his mother heartlessly and half-dead. He tells them that he became what he was surrounded with ever since his childhood. To these emotional words of Arun, Jyoti surrenders herself and Arun reclaims his wife. These words of Arun even move Nath who thinks that Arun regrets his behaviour and feels happy that his daughter is taking the marriage forward without any obstruction.

On hearing her father's speech on Arun's autobiography, Jyoti comes to criticize him for his hypocritical comments. She even questions him for coming to her home. Nath enquires to her who will be present at the time of her delivery and will take care of her, to which Jyoti replies that her husband is alive and will take care of her. She stresses on the fact that she is not a widow rather she is Jyoti Arun Athavale, a scavenger. She leaves her maternal home and says that she will never come back again to this home. In spite of being a well-literate girl, Jyoti is forced to accept her fate as Arun's wife, regardless she likes it. She comes to an agreement with the fact that it is not possible for everyone to change.

In a subversive insight, Jyoti accuses her father of constructing a false worldview for her, holding him accountable for her position. She questions her father as to why he raised her with such a viewpoint about society and with such Gandhian philosophies and ideologies, why he did not expose her to the real world. At the end of the play, the concept of caste grows so powerful that Jyoti accepts her weakness and inferiority as a woman, as well as a representative of a higher caste in a hierarchical social system, in front of Arun, a lower caste. Due to the torments, she begins to admit that she has transformed from Jyoti Yadunath Devalikar to Jyoti Arun Athavale, that is, from a Brahmin girl to a scavenger wife.

### III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the comparison between the two novels *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen and *Kanyadaan* by Vijay Tendulkar reveals important concepts of 'Marriage' and 'Home' in the Victorian era as well as in the twentieth century. Firstly, it shows the comparison of how women in the Victorian era were inferior to men in society and treated as mere objects, and how men in the twentieth century were again in some parts of the world considered less than men and were deprived of certain duties. They were also the victims of men's aggression, violence, frustration, and so on. The two novels differ depending on women's rights and independence. In *A Doll's House*, Nora speaks for herself at the end and fights for her freedom, but in *Kanyadaan*, Jyoti continues to live in Arun's home and accepts the abuse.

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