



# Gender and performativity Theorizing Vijay Tendulkar's Kamala and Kanyadaan

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**Abstract**— This work explores the themes of gender and performativity in Vijay Tendulkar's plays *Kamala* and *Kanyadaan*, specifically how the playwright examines societal conventions and the dynamics of gendered identities. Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of performativity, the paper contends that Tendulkar's representation of women in these plays shows the performative aspect of gender, in which identities are produced and reinforced by social rituals rather than being intrinsic or natural. *Kamala* emphasises the devaluation of women and the transactional aspect of gendered roles, while *Kanyadaan* explores the connection of caste, class, and gender within the context of arranged marriage and societal responsibility. The study explores into how the characters' actions, both visible and internal, mirror patriarchal structure/codes and often contradictory demands put on women. By studying the conflict between societal expectations and individual agency, the research reinforces Tendulkar's assessment of how gender roles are enacted, reinforced, and resisted in Indian society. This dissertation contributes to a greater understanding of gender performativity in postcolonial Indian theatre, as well as its relevance to current issues about gender justice and equality.



**Keywords**— identity, Cast and Class, Social reform, Moral hypocrisy, Human nature, Women, individual agency

## Introduction

This work will examine the works of Vijay Tendulkar, a very creative dramatist who made a significant contribution to the theatre. We will examine his themes unique writing style, and impact on theatre industry. His mixture of uniqueness and simplicity in his writing has made him a highly influential author. He depicts Indian society in a way that highlights the issues that the country faces. He was a famous Marathi-language dramatist, screenwriter, and social critic. His plays often talk about social and cultural norms and focus on complex people. He used to write a little bit on stereotypes that are rooted in our culture. In addition, he was a political journalist and a television writer. His writings changed Indian theatre and stoked readers' interest in both the art form and his works. Tennessee Williams had influence on him in the way he used to write about social issues.

About his life: Renowned Indian dramatist, screenwriter, social critic Vijay Dhondopant Tendulkar (1928-2008) was renowned for his insightful insights into human nature and social dynamics. His childhood in Maharashtra and the political and social environment of his time had a significant impact of his life. Tendulkar was born in Kolhapur, Maharashtra on January 1928, into a family that placed a high importance on reading and education. His fascination in storytelling was sparked by his publisher father, who exposed him to literature and theatre at an early age. Tendulkar's lifelong interest in drama and social criticism began when he penned his first play at the age of eleven.

Tendulkar's life was defined by his intense curiosity for human interactions and society structures. He frequently discussed how his surroundings, especially the political and cultural changes he saw in early years, influenced his outlook on the world. His viewpoint and later projects were impacted by his experiences with social injustices and the



complex nature of human relationships. Tendulkar was known for his intellectual credibility and his bravery in facing challenges throughout his life. He was always open to discussing morality, fairness, and human nature and felt that it was important to challenge social standards. He had in-depth understanding of the complexities of society as a result of his contacts with people from all backgrounds. His dedication to understanding human nature and his intellectual curiosity were evident in his personal life. Tendulkar was renowned for his simplicity, humility, and ability to interact with people from all walks of life. He was respected by friends, coworkers, and family members because of his empathy and open-mindedness. Tendulkar won multiple honors for his contributions to the arts and society, such as the Maharashtra State Government's Lifetime Achievement Award, the Padma Bhushan in 1984, and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award. He was seen as one of India's most significant cultural icons, and his fame went beyond Maharashtra. On May 19, 2008, Vijay Tendulkar departed from this life. Beyond his writings, his life is a tribute to the value of relationships, critical thought, and observation. He is still regarded as a significant figure in Indian intellectual and cultural history because of his strong commitment to the truth and his compassionate knowledge of human nature.

**His Literary Works:** Vijay Dhondopant Tendulkar was a well-known Indian dramatist, screenwriter, and social critic who lived from 1928 until 2008. His socially realistic literature challenged accepted social mores and offered perceptive observations on human nature. One of Tendulkar's most well-known plays is "*Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe*" (1967), a daring criticism of inequalities between genders and societal hypocrisy. While "*Sakharam Binder*" (1972) challenged traditional morality with its thought-provoking depiction of relationships, "*Ghashiram Kotwal*" (1972) examined power dynamics and political manipulation.

He also wrote screenplays for influential movies including "*Nishant*" (1975), "*Manthan*" (1976) and "*Ardh Satya*" (1983). Tendulkar worked with filmmakers like Govind Nihalani and Shyam Benegal to popularize social themes including police brutality, rural exploitation and caste injustice. Tendulkar's topics often caused controversy due to their unabashed portrayal of societal injustice, gender inequality, and brutality. His work received worldwide recognition and critical acclaim despite of the criticism. Several high honors, including as the Padma Bhushan in 1984, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, and the Maharashtra State Government's Lifetime Achievement Award, were given in recognition of his literary and cinematic contributions. His plays are still produced all over the world and have been translated into many different

languages. Vijay Tendulkar is a legendary figure in Indian theatre and literature because of his work's honest study of social reality. Through his works, he usually tried to present an accurate picture of our culture. He talks briefly about the role that men play in our culture. The sociocultural and political realities of life for humans are portrayed in Vijay Tendulkar's play. He exposes the awfulness and masculinity of society in his drama. Tendulkar's play's philosophy depends on how society is viewed. He says in one of his interviews that neither of his characters are stereotypical; neither do I speak their language nor do they serve as my spokespersons. They exist and express themselves independently.

**Philosophical Inspiration:** One of the main sources of Vijay Tendulkar's philosophical inspiration, in addition to his interest in literature and critical thinking, is his exposure to the sociopolitical realities of his time. His writings demonstrate how his observations of societal injustice, power struggles, and the complexity of human nature have influenced his philosophy. His early exposure to social realism, existentialism, and Marxist ideas shaped his worldview, and he was influenced by writers who exposed social injustices and questioned the status quo. Authors such as Bertolt Brecht, whose theories on alienation and the use of theater as a vehicle for social commentary, and Anton Chekhov, whose research into human psychology and societal paradoxes, helped Tendulkar focus on the complexity of human relationships. Karl Marx's focus on class struggle and power dynamics, as well as Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism with its emphasis on responsibility and individualism, also had an impact on Tendulkar's developing viewpoint. Reading and thinking about these various philosophical schools gave him a more sophisticated understanding of human behavior and social structures, which enabled him to form a critical opinion regarding the effectiveness of social reform. Tendulkar uses his evolving philosophical viewpoints to critique social norms, exploitation, and the futility of idealistic attempts at reform in his plays, such as *Kamla*, *Kanyadaan*, and others like *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972) and *The Vultures* (1970). Tendulkar's exposure to social realism and humanist philosophy led him to study the exploitation of women in *Kamla* (1981), specifically how social structures oppress and commodify them. The play's denunciation of the moral hypocrisy of a society that claims to value women but still exploits them demonstrates his faith in the harsh realities of human nature and social structures. The play's somber portrayal of exploitation and commodification reflects his exposure to Marxist critiques of capitalism, which hold that individuals are the product of socioeconomic systems. *Kanyadaan* (1990) makes use of Tendulkar's evolving philosophical stance on social change, which reflects a



deeper existential understanding of the limitations of idealism. The play centers on a progressive family who, in spite of their belief that caste divisions may be resolved through intercaste marriage, eventually learn that their well-meaning attempts are powerless to overturn deeply ingrained social standards. Tendulkar questions the notion that social reform actions could genuinely bring about change in this manner. Here, he emphasises the difficulty of overturning long-standing prejudice and power structures, reflecting his growing dissatisfaction with simplistic solutions to complex societal issues. Sartrean existentialism, which emphasises how human agency is usually constrained by more potent structural constraints, is reminiscent of this. Additionally, *Ghashiram Kotwal* demonstrates Tendulkar's philosophical concern with the darker aspects of human nature and the misuse of power by examining the relationship between power, corruption, and human ambition through historical drama. The rise to prominence and subsequent fall of the play's title character serve as an example of the cyclical nature of exploitation and how the oppressed can become oppressors if given the chance. Tendulkar's philosophical development, shaped by his studies and ideas on humanism, Marxism, existentialism, and social realism, thus enabled him to approach his plays from a critical and often disillusioned perspective. In addition to offering a sobering critique of the limits of idealism and the persistence of oppression despite supposedly progressive efforts, his writings-*Kamla*, *Kanyadaan*, and *Ghashiram Kotwal* in particular-shed light on the complexities of relationships and societal institutions. Ultimately, Tendulkar's plays force audiences to confront harsh social realities and question whether quick fixes for persistent social problems are really effective. Vijay Tendulkar writes about a variety of subjects, including social injustice, power, and human nature. In plays like *Kamla* and *Kanyadaan*, he criticises the discrimination against vulnerable communities based on gender, caste, and class. Tendulkar examines the corrupting effects of power, as demonstrated in *Ghashiram Kotwal* and *Sakharam Binder*, where characters become oppressors after gaining power. Additionally, as *Kamla* demonstrates, his writings highlight human exploitation, particularly that of women. Tendulkar shows how symbolic measures, like intercaste marriage, usually fail to result in significant change in his analysis of the failure of idealistic changes. His characters grapple with moral ambiguity and challenging internal conflicts. Tendulkar addresses concerns of human relationships and societal structures from a critical standpoint.

**Thematic concern in Vijay Tendulkar's Works :** In his writings, Vijay Tendulkar explores topics such as human nature, power, and social injustice. He criticizes gender,

caste, and class prejudice, which marginalizes vulnerable communities in plays like *Kamla* and *Kanyadaan*. As seen in *Ghashiram Kotwal* and *Sakharam Binder*, where characters turn into oppressors after acquiring power, Tendulkar explores the corrupting effects of authority. His writings also draw attention to human exploitation, especially that of women, as demonstrated in *Kamla*. In his assessment of the failure of idealistic changes, Tendulkar demonstrates how symbolic actions, such as intercaste marriage, frequently fall short of bringing about substantive change. His characters deal with difficult internal struggles and the issue of moral ambiguity. Tendulkar offers a critical perspective on human connections and society organizations while addressing issues of violence, alienation, and the boundaries of social change. The plays *Kamla* and *Kanyadaan* by Vijay Tendulkar present strong critiques of patriarchal systems and social conventions while looking into the complex relationship between gender, identity and societal expectations. Caste, class, and gender inequality are topics covered in both plays, with an emphasis on how these structural factors influence and often restrict women's roles. *Kanyadaan* explores the intricacies of marriage, caste and gender in modern Indian society, whereas *Kamla* focuses on the exploitation of a tribal woman who is objectified and exploited by males. Gender is portrayed in both plays as a socially manufactured identity that is developed by repeated behaviours and performances that are imposed by social conventions, rather than as a fixed or natural excellence. This idea, which has received a lot of attention in modern feminist theory, argues that gender identity is something that is performed in conformity with social norms rather than something that is natural. The article will examine how Tendulkar's characters- especially the women- manage the roles that are given to them, questioning and occasionally reversed the performance aspect of gender through this lens.

**Ideological implications :** Vijay Tendulkar's personal convictions and life experiences had a significant influence on his writing, often reflecting his pessimism about society and the state of humanity. Because Tendulkar was born during a period of significant social and political change in India, he was exposed to the complexities of class, caste, and gender relations at a young age. His personal experiences, which included witnessing the struggles of the oppressed and disadvantaged, had an impact on the subjects and characters in his plays. By encouraging a critical viewpoint on social structures and human nature, Tendulkar's exposure to existentialist and Marxist concepts influenced his own philosophy. He believed that idealistic solutions to social problems were usually insufficient and that it was difficult to overcome deeply rooted systems of power and inequality. Plays like *Kanyadaan*, in which a



progressive family attempts to address caste inequalities through intercaste marriage but ultimately fails, reflect Tendulkar's dissatisfaction with simplistic answers to complex issues. In his autobiographical writing and philosophical reflections, Tendulkar discussed his experiences with literature and philosophy, his observations of human nature, and his struggles with social conventions. These thoughts have a big impact on his dramatic work, where characters usually battle with internal conflict, the failure of social change, and the consequences of repressive governments. In *Sakharam Binder*, for example, Tendulkar explores power dynamics and interpersonal relationships, reflecting his own critique of social norms and the complexity of human nature. Based on his personal views and experiences, Tendulkar used his plays to critique social structures, address the complexities of interpersonal

relationships, and make the audience confront challenging social realities. His writings reveal his distinct perspective on the world, as well as his belief that idealism has its boundaries and that human imperfections remain.

**Fluid Gender perception :** Tendulkar used his plays, which were based on his own opinions and experiences, to address the intricacies of interpersonal relationships, criticize social structures, and force the audience to face difficult social realities. His writings reveal his distinct perspective on the world, as well as his belief that idealism has its boundaries and that human imperfections remain. Butler's concept of gender performativity challenges the traditional binary view of gender-male and female-as distinct, biologically determined categories. Instead, the woman argues that gender is flexible and dynamic, shaped by social, cultural, and historical factors. According to the concept of performativity, gender is something that people actively create and enact-often unconsciously-through their speech, behaviour, attire, and other kinds of expression rather than just being a label or identity. This viewpoint places more emphasis on the norms and power structures that determine how gender should be performed than on biology. Butler contends that gender is something that is constantly created through conversation and repetition rather than a biological nature. This concept is relevant to the works of Vijay Tendulkar, particularly his plays *Kamla* (1981) and *Kanyadaan* (1990), which critique the inflexible social structures and gender norms that restrict individual freedom. In *Kamla*, Tendulkar tells the tale of Jaisingh, a middle-aged journalist, who, as part of a mission to "study" a prostitute named Kamla, invites her into his house. The play criticises the monetization of women because Kamla's gender is determined by the position society assigns her. Kamla is a tool for male dominance and consumption because of the demands placed upon her, which totally define who she is. Because she is confined to a role that is

prescribed by social conventions, her gender is performative in this situation. Similarly, by portraying himself as a strong, patriarchal man who represents his own gender, Jaisingh serves to further emphasise the power imbalance between them. Kamla's constant submission to her role serves as an example of how gender identity is socially created and preserved rather than innate. Kamla and *Kanyadaan* both demonstrate how gender roles are passed and perpetuated by social norms rather than being fixed. Jyoti's fight against her family and society's expectations and Kamla's acceptance of her status as a prostitute serve as examples of how social standards shape and limit gender. The male characters in *Kamla*, particularly Jaisingh, reinforce patriarchal institutions by using power and control to perform their role. Savitri's gender in *Kanyadaan* is influenced by her family's progressive beliefs, but she is ultimately constrained by the conventional roles that are expected of her as a woman .

Tendulkar's characters are locked in a loop of carrying out their gender roles in ways that conform to social norms, which can be explained by Butler's theory of gender performativity. According to these plays, gender is a socially constructed set of performances that people has to navigate rather than a fixed identity. Jyoti and Kamla are both torn between the constrictive duties that society imposes on them and their aspirations for independence. Tendulkar demonstrates how gender is both a site of resistance and a tool of control in these plays by criticizing the social conventions that restrict human freedom and the power systems that determine gender identities.

**GENDER AS PERFORMANCE** The idea of gender as performance has its roots in feminist theorists' work, especially that of Judith Butler, who questions conventional notions of gender as a fixed or determined by biology trait. Butler argues that gender is something one does rather than something one is born with. Repetitive acts, behaviours and performances that conform to social norms create gender identity. These performances serve as an instrument for the construction and maintenance of gendered identities rather than being manifestations of an underlying truth or essence. This gender performativity theory provides a framework for examining how people negotiate social expectations and how these performances affect their sense of self. Character experiences, particularly those of the ladies, are significantly shaped by gender performance in Tendulkar's plays. Both *Kamala* and *Kanyadaan* show how social norms and the roles that women are forced to play influence their identities. The title protagonist in *Kamala* is reduced to a sexual object, and the males in her life constantly mold and alter her identity, showing the close connection between gender performance and power dynamics. Similar to this, Jyoti in *Kanyadaan* finds herself



torn between her wish to live up to progressive ideals and the traditional gender norms that limit her freedom, particularly in relation to caste and marriage. The characters' identities based on gender in *Kamala* and *Kanyadaan* are fashioned by their ongoing struggle to balance their own wishes with the strict roles that society expects them to play. For example, Kamala gets caught in the expectations of others around her in addition to being forced to perform as a victim and sexual object. Her identity continually changes by the males in her life, especially the journalist, to suit their stories, which serves as a way to objectify her. Her failure to escape these gendered performances is the primary cause of Kamala's tragic journey, which eventually shows how deeply rooted social norms can restrict a person's agency.

In *Kanyadaan*, Jyoti also faces a deep internal struggle between her progressive beliefs and the gender norms that control her everyday life. She wants to question social norms, especially those related to caste and marriage, but she can't fully break free from drawbacks imposed on her as a woman. In addition to being a performance of gender with serious consequences, her choice to marry against family's wishes also becomes an act of rebellion. Jyoti's internal conflict and the social criticism she encounters highlights the complexity of gender as performance, where rebellion can sometimes strengthen the very stereotypes it aims to challenge rather than be free.

### CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF KAMALA

Nearly five years after writing his drama *Sakharam Binder*, *Kamala* was written in 1981. The drama in *Kamala* is genuine. Tendulkar highlights the irony of a younger generation that works for themselves rather than for others in this drama. Additionally, it depicts a male-dominated culture that treats women like slaves and prioritizes gender more than personal qualities, which is something that this society takes for granted. Tendulkar also reveals the career-focused Jaisingh Jadhav, one of the play's central characters, who most men in even modern society can identify with. In *Kamala* (1981), a moving study of gender, power, and identity by Vijay Tendulkar, Kamala, the main character, represents the ways in which women are objectified, exploited and limited to roles that are prescribed by male-dominated social institutions. The play centres on Jaisingh Jadhav, a middle-aged journalist who, thinking he is saving her from a life of poverty, buys Kamala from a brothel and takes her home. Tendulkar exposes how patriarchal standards limit women's identity and liberty by critiquing the roles that women are supposed to play through Kamala's experience.

Kamala's character loses her individuality as a result of being compelled to perform a gender role. Her role as a

prostitute defines her at first, and she is expected to take on the role of a wife after moving into Jadhav's house. But this change is simply the replacement of one repressive position with another; it is by no means a release. The conflict between individual identity and social expectations is reflected in Kamala's emotional battle to make sense of the past and her new life. Her personal desires, ideas and feelings belong to the role she must play in order to live up to society's standards of respectability, and her actions are influenced by the role she is forced to play as Jadhav's wife. The hero who saves Kamala from her background is Jadhav, who thinks himself a modern thinker. His "rescue", however, is filled with flaws. Despite his claims to be saving Kamala, he treats her like an asset. Instead of liberating her, his attempts to "redeem" her by making her a bride serve to maintain the patriarchal mentality, where males saw themselves as women's protectors, deciding their responsibilities and value, is reflected in Jadhav's portrayal of the kind male character. The level of detail of gender roles is highlighted in large part by the character of Sarita, Jadhav's wife. At first, Sarita is portrayed as a traditional lady who meets with patriarchal standards of marriage and family. Her devotion to Jadhav's choice to welcome Kamala into their home shows how women, even in patriarchal societies, are often involved in the upholding of gender norms. But over time, it becomes clear that Sarita finds Kamala's presence uncomfortable. Sarita's character highlights the social pressures women experience to maintain the limits of decency she struggles with the realities of living with a woman who was formerly a prostitute. Her internal conflict shows the conflict between one's own moral principles and the urge to live up to society norms concerning marriage and femininity. Kamala requires an awareness of Judith Butler's theory of gender as performance. Butler argues that gender is carried out through societal signs and repetition rather than being a natural identity. Kamala's transformation from a sex worker to a wife was completely influenced by outside norms rather than being an intentional choice. She feels obligated to play the part of the "perfect wife", even if this role fails to reflect who she is, because Jadhav's narrative controls her gender performance. Kamala's situation shows how gender identities are created by society, performed and imposed on others---particularly women---whose identities and voices are often ignored. In the play, Jadhav's approach to Kamala in private contrasted with his public image as a progressive journalist. The hypocrisy of the social system he seems to maintain is shown by the imbalance. When it comes to his relationship with Kamala, he returns to traditional gender standards despite his academic background and obvious progressive goals. Instead of viewing her as a living being, he views her as an object that he can "fix" and "redeem."



This dynamic highlights the ongoing imbalance between men and women in both the public and private areas, where women's positions are determined by men's expectations and desires. So, Tendulkar's *Kamala* shows how gender is an action accomplished under the influence of patriarchal standards rather than an innate characteristic. The limitations of these gender roles are brought to light by *Kamala*'s journey, which demonstrates how they deny women the freedom to define themselves and limit them to established identities.

*"Gender is not something that one is, it is something one does, an act... a 'doing' rather than a 'being'."* (Butler 25)

Butler contends that gender is performative rather than innate challenge the convention view of identity as fixed. The title character in *Kamala* continuously negotiates her identity through her relationship and activities rather than having it as an innate quality. From discreetly defying social norms to conforming to them, *Kamla*'s Actions reveal how she does gender in her day-to-day activities. Because thus performance is shaped by cultural expectations and. Conventions that define what it means to be a woman, she has little control over it. As *Kamala* navigates her social environment, these assigned roles both support and restrict her attempts to express her uniqueness.

*"There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results."* (Butler 25)

Judith Butler asserts that there is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; the very expression that are said to be its result performatively constitute that identity. This is evident in *Kamla*, where woman such as Sarita and *Kamla* are perceived through the lens of their respective roles submissive wife, voiceless victim or obedient wife instead of reflecting her true self, *Kamla*'s silence and obedience are shaped by social norms. Sarita is also aware that society acceptable behaviours not her own free will, have shaped who she is Butler argues that rather than being innate, there gender roles are produced through repeated expressions. The play critiques this performativity and shows how these gendered identity works.

### Critical analysis of *Kanyadaan*

Even though Vijay Tendulkar's play *Kanyadaan* revolves around the union of a Dalit boy named Arun Athavale and a Brahmin lady named Jyoti Yadunath Devlalikar, it is difficult to analyze the play as a play that simply addresses the issue of intercaste weddings. It has certainly sparked criticism from several kinds of social groups, and the reasons for the disturbance range from the stereotypical depiction of a Dalit youngster to the negative portrayal of Gandhian liberalism. Studying the play in the context of

father-child relationships is also necessary because it addresses a number of social issues, such as intercaste marriage, physical violence after marriage, neglect by parents of their children, the negative effects of patriarchy, parents forcing their beliefs on their kids, alcoholism, etc. *Kanyadaan* (1990), written by Vijay Tendulkar, explores the intricate relationships between gender, caste, and social expectations. The protagonist of the play is Jyoti, a young woman from an upper-middle-class, progressive family who decides to wed a Dalit man named Arun Athavale. The play's examination of norms of society and the repressive systems that control caste relations and gender roles in India revolves around this choice.

The standard responsibilities that women in her class and family are supposed to play are challenged by Jyoti's marriage to Arun, a man from a lower caste. Jyoti has fallen between her own wishes and her family's expectations throughout the play, especially her father, who is a strong supporter of social justice. Despite his outward support for caste equality, his strongly held beliefs about caste hierarchy and women's traditional responsibilities are on display when he finds it difficult to accept his daughter's choice of a Dalit marriage.

The central theme of the play is Jyoti's gender identity, which is influenced by the more general social conventions that specify what is suitable for women as well as the progressive values of her family. The limitations of gender performativity are revealed by her choice to wed Arun, whom society considers unfit for her because of his caste. Jyoti's gender is not only a personal issue in her life; it is also a social performance that must conform to caste, class, and family honor systems. Therefore, Jyoti's act of defiance can be seen as a performance of rejection in which she tries to express her own agency by rejecting the roles that are traditionally expected of her as a lady in an upper-middle-class household. Jyoti's personal rebellion against caste-based agreements is incompatible, despite her progressive ideals and desire to question the societal order. Her decision is ultimately influenced by the social forces she seeks to criticize, even if she marries Arun to show her independence. The conflicts between social pressure and personal agency are exemplified by her father's opposition to the marriage. Jyoti's interaction with males and the social performance of respectability continue to have a significant influence in shaping her identity as a woman. Her behavior is nonetheless influenced by caste and gender norms, despite her attempts to act in a dramatic departure from them. Arun was a cunning and nasty man who would beat Jyoti up, drink, and make a scene while accusing him of being a bad man. He loves her very much and wants to slash his hand. Arun would frequently declare his love for her, yet his words went against his words.



*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, I ....I 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.*

(taken from *Kanyadaan* by Vijay Tendulkar page no. 42)

From this, we can see he wants to pretend that he loves her a lot yet he used to beat her up even when she was pregnant. He used to beat and kick her cruelly, she used to have an internal wound in her stomach. Arun repressed his anger of the upper society, but he let it all out on his wife after they were married.

picture of society. Jyoti is a bright, independent woman. Even though Arun had slapped Jyoti before to their marriage, I believe her idealistic father forced her to wed him. However, Jyoti's father backed him and showed sympathy for the hardships he had faced. I believe that he failed Nath as a father and should to have ejected Arun when he came back to pick up Jyoti. Nath ought to have stood up for her daughter and stopped her from returning with him. Similar to earlier Tendulkar plays, this one depicts how a woman's life is destroyed by physical abuse. It also depicted the interaction between a man and a woman, as Jyoti tried to help Arun but he was a beast who would physically attack her. The fact that Arun simply suppressed and vented his rage at his wife strengthened his inferiority complex. *Kanyadaan* was also affected by the theory of existence, Industrialization, and the author's Psychology.

The play also critically looks at the ways patriarchal structures continue to affect women's identities. Jyoti's decision to wed Arun represents the intricacies of societal justice, familial duty, and gendered expectations rather than being a simple act of personal liberation. Although her choice is presented as an act of personal agency, the play emphasizes how socially imposed boundaries on women restrict even such options. It is impossible to completely escape the performance of gender and caste in a deeply rooted social system, as proven by Jyoti's attempt to transcend her given gender role. Tendulkar emphasizes in *Kanyadaan* the fragile nature of gender performance and the ways in which cultural norms influence personal identities. The difficulties of opposing patriarchal and caste-based

systems are made clear by Jyoti's journey, which also shows how deeply rooted societal structures limit even progressive acts. In the conclusion, the play questions the idea that gender is a stable, fixed identity and highlights how gender is constantly created and reshaped in a world where social norms and power dynamics rule society.

*"Gender is not something that one is, it is something one does, an act... a 'doing' rather than a 'being.'"* (butler 25)

Jyoti decision to marry Arun could be seen as "performance" of liberty or rebellion. Nevertheless, her attempt to reinterpret her identity through this act is still influenced by patriarchal norms and caste. Her doing of modernity and autonomy is complicated by violence she experiences, suggesting that social norms are hard to challenge.

*"The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of 'identities' cannot exist."* (butler 24)

Arun and Jyoti, an upper cast woman and dalit man, marry in a way that defies social and gender expectations. However society and even Jyoti's parents struggle to accept the identity, showing how certain forms of love or identification are incomprehensible within hegemonic.

*"Subversive confusion and proliferation of gender identities... open up the possibility of a failure of gender norms."* (butler 148)

The drama explores the failure of liberal idealism (through Nath Devalikar) and revolutionary wrath (through Arun). Caste boundaries cannot be broken or progressive ideals performed in order to achieve emancipation. Instead, its failure highlights the pervasiveness of violence and hierarchy in identity.

*"The construction of gender operates through exclusionary means."* (butler 24)

Butler's claims that "the construction of gender operates through exclusionary means"

Butler 24 is aptly reflected in the characters of Jyoti in Vijay Tendulkar's *Kanyadaan*. At first, Jyoti believes she is exercising her rights to autonomy when she marries Dalit Arun, but her experience in the marriage demonstrates how patriarchal, traditional norms still limit her gender identity. She can think that society has made her free, modern, and forward thinking, but only in a certain way. As soon as she breaks caste and gender norms, she faces resistance, violence, and emotional loneliness. By systematically reducing identities that don't fit the mould, gender stereotypes are maintained, as evidenced by the way she is excluded from the marriage and the subsequent lack of autonomy she experiences. Arun also symbolised a complex combination of caste and masculinity. His internalised oppression and theatrical aggression also show



how caste and gender are shaped by social exclusion. Butler's method clarifies how Kanyadaan questions the appearance of gender role choice within rigid cultural institutions and class hierarchy.

### Conclusion

The play Kamla and Kanyadaan by Vijay Tendulkar offer a scathing indictment of the gender reality of Indian society. When Butler's theory of gender performativity is applied to these texts, it becomes clear that gender is not a fix identity but rather a socially enforced performance that is repeated until it feels natural. The ladies in these plays Kamla, Sarita, Jyoti are not born into these roles rather institutional social, and cultural factors teach and compel them to perform them. Even apparently progressive households, subtle patriarchal influences are art plays, as demonstrated by Sarita's gradual realization on her own inadequacy in Kamla. Kamla's quite is not a reflection of who she is rather it is a result of her upbringing, which was shaped by systematic oppression. Both women are thus required to performed femininity in ways that that follow to patriarchal norms. One as wife other as commodity. Butler contends that rather than being a basic self, their identities are performatively created through social surveillance expectations and behaviour. In similar vein, Jyoti's journey from a strong idealistic young women to a submissive, abused wife in kanyadaan serves as an example of how gender identity can be dismantled and reassembled through the repetition of specific roles and actions even in the mindset of political idealism and cast consciousness, her gendered body becomes the site of ways that follow to patriarchal norms. Her father's failure to foresee the consequences of his philosophy further exposes the connection of cast and patriarchal structures, of which the woman's body and agency are often collateral damage. Butler argues that the same repetitious activities that established

Gender norms can also disrupt them, opening the door to potential opposition. Through

Sarita's disobedience and Jyoti developing consciousness Tendulkar seems to hint at possibility. Although the play do not offer clear answer, they emphasised that the first step forward resistance is nothing one's performance. The bolster Butler's argument that performative can be a catalyst for change despite its drawback. As a result, Tendulkar's play's effectively illustrate Butler's theoretical idea's they show how gendered identities are not expressions of inner reality but rather the result of social and culture conditioning. Through the emotional challenges of their female characters, Kamla and Kanyadaan illustrate how gender, caste, and class work together to enforce conformity and suppress agency. They also remind us that awareness of this

performance can result in short lived but significant disruptions to the structures that impose limitations on women

In the end Butler's theory not only helps us comprehend the psychological and social realities of the characters in these plays, but it also reinforces how literature and theatre can reveal and confront the performative aspect of oppression.

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