

# Interrogating Liberal Idealism: Caste, Gender Violence, and Inter-Caste Marriage in Vijay Tendulkar's *Kanyadaan*

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**Abstract:** *Vijay Tendulkar, one of the pillars of modern Indian theatre alongside Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, and Mohan Rakesh, is renowned for his unflinching portrayal of social hypocrisies, power dynamics, and human frailties. His 1983 Marathi play Kanyadaan (translated into English by Gowri Ramnarayan) stands as one of his most controversial works, earning him the Saraswati Samman while also provoking outrage, including a shoe hurled at him during a Dalit literary conference.*

*The play's title, evoking the Hindu ritual of "giving away" a daughter in marriage, ironically underscores the sacrificial nature of an inter-caste union that exposes the fissures in liberal idealism. Through the story of an upper-caste Brahmin family's attempt to bridge caste divides via marriage, Tendulkar dissects the naivety of progressive reformism, the entrenched violence of caste hierarchies, and the gendered burdens of such experiments. This article interrogates how Kanyadaan critiques liberal idealism, revealing its limitations in addressing caste oppression, gender violence, and the complexities of inter-caste marriage in post-independence India.*

**Keywords:** Caste System in India, Gender Violence, Patriarchy