

Social Consciousness Towards Kinners in Sanjay Johari's Play *Kinner Maa*

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ABSTRACT

Sanjay Johari is the newly sprouting figure in the field of Indian English literature. He is the spokesman for his country's doubts, emerging issues and deteriorating condition of the people. In his first play, *Kinner Maa*, he tries to awaken social consciousness towards kinners who live a life of aloofness in the contemporary world. Generally, people think that kinners are uncounted persons of the society where nobody shows one's sympathy for them. The leading cause of this belief is that they are counted as neither male nor female, but it does not mean, they are not a part of society. They have the same passion and humanistic feelings as others have. We have no right to think they are invaluable persons in society. The humane outlook of Sanjay Johari makes the reader realize how to show sympathetic behavior towards them. Though the problem of gender discrimination is rapidly taking a step in the contemporary world. So many writers also express newly emerging problems like gender issues LGBT, homosexuality, transgender marginalization etc. in their works. Shobha de, Mahesh Dattani, Arundhati Roy etc. wrote many plays on these problems. Sanjay Johari has also tried to draw a picture on his Canvas of writing, and he has given different shades of people on it. Thus, Sanjay Johari tries to evoke human consciousness for such a community through this play. His only purpose is to highlight the realistic picture of the society in which people have automatically divided themselves into different categories. In fact, they are living in the 'Superiority Complex' where there is no place for such a miserable community. The truth is that the people of contemporary society are living in illusion, and perhaps they feel happy, and they are indifferent towards the subalterns and marginalized people.

Keywords: *Sprouting, emerging, marginalization, deteriorating consciousness, aloofness.*

Sanjay Johari is one of the perceptive writers of the postmodern era. He is a provoking writer. His sympathetic and submissive behavior is seen in his first drama, '*Kinner Maa*'. In this drama, He presents the gruelling life of Eunuchs or hijras or kinners in human society. He tries to focus on the dilapidated condition of Eunuchs or Kinners. The indifferent behavior of human beings towards them makes them crestfallen. They do not know how to recover from this agony. Through the character of Lali, Sanjay Johari shows the mirror to society to peep into their lives. They also have heart, feelings, and emotions, but they are neglected disdainfully in human

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Received 14 Dec 2022; Accepted 22 Dec. 2022. Available online: 25 Jan, 2023.

Published by SAFE. (Society for Academic Facilitation and Extension)

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society. Jatin Prasad, an industrialist, is the mouthpiece of this play who grapples with adverse circumstances in which his own children are included.

The main motive of Sanjay Johari is to do something for the upliftment of such communities as kinnars or eunuchs. At the beginning of the play, we see that Lali has left Mr Jatin Prasad's house and the children, Samiksha and Aniket whom she brought up. Aniket and Samiksha argue with their father about why he concealed Lali's identity from them. They are not ready to accept her as 'Mausi' after knowing her reality. It is very strange. How is this possible? Before disclosing her identity, both Aniket and Samiksha loved her very much and called her 'Mausi'. As she is explored as a kinner, how suddenly their behavior changed. Even for a short while, they never bothered her. They stand against their father and frequently begin to argue with him. They easily forget their human relationship with her. Mr. Jatin Prasad tries to convince them that she is your mausi, but both ignore her. Aniket abruptly says, "A Kinner can never become our relative." (Kinner Maa 2) Lali reared them as a mother does. But they have no feelings for her. Even Samiksha is not ready to call the pronoun 'Her' for Lali and says, "Why are we calling 'she'? This is clear now 'It' is a suitable word." (Kinner Maa 3). It is very strange that both are not infants now and do not want to think of her services, unselfish duties, and cares and affection. As they know the reality, they immediately change their opinion about Lali.

Sanjay Johari focuses on the feelings of kinnars from different angles and tries to show social consciousness towards them. Every character has a particular fascination for analyzing the problem of the eunuchs. Baldev, the employee and close friend of Jatin Prasad, shows his disgust as he knows the reality of Lalil. He does not feel any compassion for Lali. The first time, when he meets Jatin Prasad in the office, he says:

Baldev: Naturally, such persons like Lali do not deserve respect, social status and social gatherings. (7)

Only Jatin Prasad has kind feelings for Lali. He does not want to hurt Lali. He does not think about society. When Baldev says to him to think like others, like society, he bluntly says:

Mr Prasad: Society! What is society? We make society and when we are in trouble, the people of this society come first to make fun. (Kinner Maa 7)

When Lali leaves the house of Mr. Jatin Prasad and lives in her own community with Paro, Jhanak, Chandrika and even her own mother (In kinnar relation), Khajuri tries to convince her not to think about that family. Lali is unable to reconcile the situation. She remembers her children, Aniket and Samiksha and tells Paro that she brought them up. Paro laughs mockingly

and tauntingly and says to Lali, "Paro: We are kinner. We have not blessed such things. When did Kinner start becoming a mother? We'll always be deprived of such blessings"(Kinner Maa 13).

Through the character of Lali, Johari points out the hollowness of kinner's life. Outwardly, they show they are happy and make fun of and become a subject of ridicule in society, but nobody knows how they torture inwardly. The following speech of Khajuri clears this point:

Khajuri: our life is not blessed, bete. We are inborn cursed. We are not like them as they are. We only come into their lives to make a fun for them, to bless a couple or to be blessed newly born child. They tolerate us on such occasions in their families. It does not mean that we are part of their society. (Kinner Maa 44)

From the speech mentioned above, Sanjay Johari explains that kinner are called on such occasions; otherwise they are not allowed to talk to somebody. On the other hand, Lali's opinion is different from other kinner. She is not satisfied with this imposter. She says:

Lali: Why have we to suffer? Nobody realizes our inner vacuity, the hollowness of inner life. We have all the qualities that a human being has, still we are not accepted. (Kinner Maa 29)

The main important issue is focused on here, the role of marginalized people through the character of Kammo, the maidservant in Mr. Prasad's house. She is an ordinary woman living in poverty, but as soon as she learns the reality about Lali, her behavior converts into a superior complex. She also begins to hate Lali. She forgets that she is only a maid and Lali was the landlady of the house. When Mr Jatin Prasad says to her to behave politely, she says peevishly, "I know very well. My place. My rank is better than Lali." Not only, the upper-class people see kinner with humiliation, but also the lower community does not tolerate their presence in the society.

The dramatist has presented Lali in a distinguished way to create human sympathy for the kinner like Lali. Lali possesses all human qualities. She is a perfect mother who cares for her children without any selfish motives. She is an ideal wife who is always conscious of her husband's reputation. Even though she knows how-to live-in harmony in the reputed society, she doesn't want anything for herself. She left the house for the reputation of Mr. Jatin Prasad, but she is worried about her children, Aniket and Samiksha. Jatin Prasad tells Baldev about her caring nature and feels regretful.

Mr Prasad: She was devoted to my family. I think she possesses all qualities of a good mother. (panting) but it's regrettable that my children hate her, forgetting everything (Kinner Maa 31).

Lali's passion for Jatin's family makes her realize that kinnars also have feelings and emotions like we have. Lali says in the following lines:

Lali: A kinnar is a cursed person whether male or female. It is cursed by God but nobody's to realize the inner vacuity of kinnar how we feel when people make fun of us. People have feelings for one another but no feeling for us. Why ? They have animals. They rear them and show their affection towards them but they have no affection for kinnars. (Kinner Maa 56).

Sanjay Johari presents the real emotions and sentiments of the Kinner community. His dramatic narration points out each and every crisis of kinnars' life. Kinnars' deprivation from society makes them wounded, and any kind of ointment can never cure these wounds. Lali expresses her anguish in the following lines when talking with Samiksha. Her speech is not only for her but shows the whole community:

Lali: (Emotionally) Yes, I am Kinner but I want to ask you, Kinner has no right to live a life according to her own choice. We are also emotional and have feelings as you have. We feel anguish when you curse us (Kinner Maa 61).

The dramatist presents different characters like Jatin Prasad. We can see that Jatin Prasad is the mouthpiece of the dramatist who tries to make us aware of the life of kinnars. How a gentleman of modern society has the same passion for the kinnars who are ignored by the society. When Mr Nagar and other people oppose Lali and talk about reputation, Jatin Prasad says:

Mr. Prasad: No, a kinner has a soul like us. I observed her feelings, her sentiments. She is not differ from us. Physical disability does not mean to blame. we should have to sympathize with such people(Kinner Maa 50).

But the prestigious people of the society do not like what he says and laugh at him. They think it is useless to talk to such people. Mr. Jatin Prasad always favors Lali in any crucial situation. He does not care for his own prestige. In fact, he had a soft corner for such a community. Therefore he is adamant despite his children's opposition. He always tries to convince them but in vain. On one occasion, we see his strong fever for kinnars like Lali when he was invited as the chief guest in a debate competition. Someone ridicules him by saying he has kept a kinner in his house. In this situation, a reputed person thinks about his own reputation. However, he doesn't distract, faces the situation boldly, and answers that person bluntly.

Mr. Prasad: How is society spoiled? I can't understand. To have sympathy for her, means to spoil the society. (pause) and I don't care about the society. I don't believe in such a society where a miserable person cannot live her life in her own way. It is contemptuous (Kinner Maa 38)

On the other hand, the community of kinnars has no hope for their survival. They are frustrated to see the disdainful behavior of the people towards them. In fact, they think this is their lot

where there is no need for any hope of getting status. Paro, another Kinner points out to Lali by saying this:

Paro: A kinnar is always a Kinner. The world goes on as usual. There are so many changes in the creation of the world but life of a Kinner has no change. It is completely flat and monotonous and creeping as usual. It has no boon, no blessing and no means of happiness, a blank paper on which nobody can write one's name. That's the truth. (Kinner Maa 46)

The dramatist penetrates into their heart's core and discovers their passion for this world, the human being and society. He presents Khajuri's past incident, showing that they have feelings and passions like us.

Khajuri: Yes, bete. What is going on in your life, it happened in my own life. When I was a young girl. A handsome boy loved me passionately. (Kinner Maa 46-47)

Khajuri's passion for young lad is as natural as other human beings have. The same is the case with Lali. Lali anyhow loves Mr. Jatin Prasad, but like an Ideal Indian woman, she never tries to take advantage of it. She never wishes to become his wife. Even when Jatin Prasad, unknown to her reality, proposes to her. She does not accept his proposal and keeps silent. She keeps her feelings for him in her heart silently.

Mr. Prasad: That's right. My heart was written in love for her. One day I indirectly told her my feelings but she became stunned and went away. I couldn't understand then (Kinner Maa 25).

Lali, a kinnar, is only for a name. But she possesses all the qualities of a girl, a woman that is seen in society. When it is not disclosed that she is a Kinner, everybody praises her, but as soon as it is known, the people's opinion suddenly changes. How is this possible? Sanjay Johari shows the mirror to the society how they look in reality as soon as reality dawns. Lali defends herself in the following lines:

Lali: Then your society will not pollute. I want to ask all of you, what is my fault if I am a Kinner? You only think of me as a Kinner but it is natural, created by God. I showed disrespect to all of you when I was living here. Only one thing changes your opinion (Kinner Maa 67).

Despite her kind gesture towards Lali, society does not want to keep her there. The notable persons have no human feelings for kinnars like Lali. They are adamant about showing their superiority. Their conscience never pinches their soul at what they are doing. They never bother for a short while about how this community feels. Nobody is ready to heal her wounded soul except Jatin Prasad. He says:

Mr. Prasad: What a problem if she is a Kinner. She has the right to live as others have. It is our duty Mr Sharma to pay regards to them so that we make sooth their heart. (Kinner Maa 76)

Perhaps the broadmindedness of Sanjay Johari impels him to write something about kinner and awakens human consciousness for them. They should be treated as human beings, not like unwanted persons. Though their living standard is different from others, this is their personal outlook. In fact, Sanjay Johari points out in the play in one speech that we are responsible for their plight. The following speech of Mr Jatin Prasad is remarkable in this concern:

Mr. Prasad: All of us are responsible for their miserable condition. Now the time is going to change. A Kinner can become a Mayor of Maharashtra. A inner can present her dance on the Reality Show and the audience appreciated her dance. So why can a Kinner not live in our society whether we know her nature very well? (Kinner Maa 65)

Human consciousness towards the hijra community is also shown by the great intellectual Indian English dramatist Mahesh Dattani in his play, *Seven Steps Around The Fire*, Anarkali is the victim of the prestigious human society without any crime. She is punished, and nobody has sympathy for her. Uma Rao, the research scholar, tries to voice against this, but she has to face a critical situation. The same is the condition of Mr Jatin Prasad, who has to suffer a lot to defend Lali, who is innocent like Anarkali. Dattani presents class discrimination in this drama. In the same way, Sanjay Johari also finds out about this problem through the speech of Jatin Prasad. He says:

Mr. Prasad: Class discrimination is the product of our own mind. God made us equally. He has no difference so we have no right to do against His rule. A Kinner is not a bad person. She has the same rights as we have. We have no right to change the rule of God. If we respect them, they will remain helpful to us. (Kinner Maa 77)

If we talk about human consciousness, we cannot ignore one of the greatest Indian English novelists, Mulk Raj Anand. His novels are replete with human concern. Bakha in 'Untouchable' and Munnoo in 'Coolie' are the marvelous creations of Anand. Through these characters Anand sought to evoke human consciousness towards the downtrodden and the underdogs. Indeed in the drama 'Kinner Maa', Sanjay Johari also sought to evoke human consciousness towards the discarded community of hijra or Kinner. Through the characters Mr Jatin Prasad and Lali, Sanjay Johari tries his best to make us aware of their hidden emotions and sentiments and penetrate into the inner wounds of them to heal them. The following speech of Lali and Jatin Prasad makes us realize the hollowness of their life:

Lali: why...? I asked you why? I brought up these children as a mother. They gave me respect like my children. I missed them, so I came here. (wipes her tears) A Kinner also has the same dreams but they are unfulfilled. I want such care and affection that a civilized person gets. (Kinner Maa 67)

Mr. Prasad: What have I done? To help a miserable person is not wrong, they have a place in society. They breathe and share joys and sorrows, feel one another's feelings. What is the difference? (Kinner Maa 72)

Sanjay Johari persists on the view that to be a Kinner does not mean he or she is not a human being. A Kinner's downhearted feelings are the same as others have. Like other people of society, they also want to live happily. They want a family and a relative, but it is regrettable that they are deprived of such things. In the play, Lali tells her feelings to Samiksha:

Lali: I don't really know what a family is. Your father made me realize what a family life is. He showed me affection and has the power to face people. He is a very generous person. (Kinner Maa 61)

The life of kinner is described by the dramatist. No doubt, through the life of Khajuri, Paro, Chandrika and Jhanak, the dramatist exposes the hollowness of their life. They want respect in life. They want that people to think about them and realize their emotions and sentiments, but they are deprived of human concern. The following speech of Khajuri is clear evidence of it.

Khajuri: You are innocent but they are cruel. They never accept your relationship with them. I told you before that we are the only means of recreation in their lives. They trifle with our emotions, our feelings. They never bother how we are pinched when they make a laugh and throw abusive remarks at us. (Kinner Maa 54)

Lali is a Kinner by birth but has all the qualities of a good wife and mother. After leaving the house of Mr Jatin Prasad, Lali becomes speechless, and like a mother, she is worried too much. After sometime, when she meets Mr. Jatin Prasad she shows her anxiety:

Lali: I understand the situation but it is strange how they forgot my devotion for them. They loved me like their mother. Samiksha did not take food without my help and Aniket always feigned to sleep in my lap. Mr Prasad, how is this possible? (Kinner Maa 55)

On the other hand, Sanjay Johari focuses on social injustice towards the weaker community of society. Despite Lali's submissive and amicable nature, society does not tolerate that she should have to live in Mr Jatin's family. Even his children, Aniket and Samiksha, don't like coming near her. With all her devotion and cares, they forget easily. She remained ready to help any person of society, but as soon as the mystery of her identity arose, their behavior altered. This is only because Lali is a Kinner. Kinner is not an abusive word but has become the subject of abuse in contemporary society. When the policeman comes he calls kinner, 'Nonsense, uncivilized bastard.'(74) At this, Mr. Jatin Prasad enrages and says:

Mr. Prasad: She was living in my house to rear my children. She is a Kinner not a courtesan. I think the subaltern is not a bad person. (Kinner Maa 74)

When the policeman tells him that they are not allowed in society, Mr. Jatin Prasad explains,

Mr. Prasad: This is also your duty to protect these community instead of making fun of them. But this is very shameful. (Kinner Maa 75)

This is very strange that the rulers of society like the policeman also do not count them as human beings. They treat them savagely and talk to them abruptly. The dramatist points out the heinous behavior of such people and tells the people that kinnars are not disgusting people.

In society, the kinnars are subalterns. They are dumb people in society. Sanjay Johari through the character of Jatin Prasad, voices for them to get their place in society. This is a literature by which many dramatists and other writers talk about such subalterns or miserable people. Through this play, Sanjay Johari wants the people to be provoked to think about the current situation of the hijra community and give them the right place.

Indeed Sanjay Johari, a great intellectual writer who does not hesitate to present the tabooed subject. His play 'Kinner Maa' comes in the category of social play. He has focused on the unobserved community of the kinnars. His sympathy for such community, creates human consciousness towards them. His aim is only to make the readers feel pity for them. We can say that this play is an eye-opener for the modernist who protests society to development. The dramatist has not left any stone to highlight the pathetic condition of the hijra community. Khajuri, Paro, Chandrika and Jhanak are the realistic characters that we find in the hijra community. He believes that the time has come to voice the voiceless section of society so that they get their place among human beings.

The characterization in the play is clear evidence of such people of high-rank society. The role of Mr. Jatin Prasad as well as Lali is a marvelous creation of the dramatist. Like other dramatists, Sanjay Johari divides society into two parts- the wrong society and, on the other hand, the people of the society who voice against such discrimination. Mr Jatin Prasad is the only person who wants to break the demarcation barriers. But the notable persons of the society have no value for the weakest community of kinnars.

The aim of the dramatist is to arouse consciousness towards such a community and get their appropriate place in human society. They are not non-living things. They are not part of the oppression. It is very disgusting that we have no feelings for them. As we see them, we are discriminated against and abused in any place. We have no hesitation to insult them and to ridicule them. Sometimes our superior behavior compels them into violence at any place, whether on the road, police station or in the family. But this is very regrettable. We are not ready to peep into their hearts, what they want and what they feel when we hurt them.

Thus, Sanjay Johari tries to evoke human consciousness for such a community through this play. His only purpose is to highlight the realistic picture of the society in which people have

automatically divided themselves into different categories. In fact, they are living in 'Superior Complex' where no place for such miserable community. The fact is that the people of contemporary society are living in illusion, and perhaps they feel happy and indifferent towards the subalterns and marginalized people.

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