
PREDICAMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA AND LITERATURE

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Abstract: In Ancient India women were treated as the honorable ones. Women's role was recognized at the domestic level as well as society level. Women played pivotal role as caretakers of their family. Patriarchy ruled over matriarchy, in the form of traditions. Males dominated, suppressed women attitudes and wishes. Women had long term patience in their veins and blood. Domestic violence in side of the house and at the outside world like teasing, abuse brought mental pain to her. Some writers in their books created women as weaker sex. In the modern era due to poverty level, some women, girls were ill-treated in the various modes of Human Trafficking, child abuse, teasing in urban localities etc. Modern technology brought some changes at the work place in India. Some superiors, colleagues were trapping the women by using Technology. Family is a part of the society. In-laws ill treatment for the sake of additional dowry created a big problem. At the village level upper caste people head strong attitude also degraded the values of idealistic Indian society. Nirbhaya's case also added the fuel to think over the atrocities, which were taking place against the lower caste folk. Media's role, Individual role, Human consciousness were a great tools to bring some change in the mindset of the people for holistic and ideal society.

Key words: women, Domestic violence, Teasing, Atrocities.

Introduction: Literature is like a canvas in a frame work in which writers portray their characters. The purpose of mentioning it here is to flashlight on some of those images and unveils them. Literature records life and society's response to which is embodied in the author's image portrayed in his creation. An exploration of the image of woman in literature enables us to access the writer's vision of them. In a transitional period of our country's history when society is changing from tradition to modernity, such an exercise has its own value. To become aware of the merging new image of woman is to be aware of a vital issue in our society. The image of woman is central to the study of literature all over the world. Altering the context and the special meaning involved, what Shakespeare told about Cleopatra is indeed true of the woman image in general that "Age cannot wither Nor custom stale her infinite variety."¹ Woman has inspired literature and has been its pivotal theme too. She herself is also a creator of literature and therefore a woman's presence in all literature is all spreading. This is true of Indian Literature in English also. Indian Literature written in English is, perhaps, smaller in volume compared to the output in several regional languages. It spans a smaller range of time as it commenced with the spread of the English language and education in India. Macaulay's minute of 1835 and the commencement of English education led to the development of English in India written by a smaller community of writers, Indian Literature in English also emerges from the same ethos and shows similar concerns visible in other Indian Literature. Although a high concept of womanhood prevailed in an ancient India, there followed a later degradation and attempts at projecting a good image followed after the several reforms introduced by Raja Ram

Mohan Roy and others during the freedom movement. The basic mythic and archetypal image which existed in ancient items has such a strong appeal and is fundamental to our culture that it still continues in our literature, contradicting this defied image is the degraded and exploited image and its duality is reflected in literature too. Gender deformity not only makes men and women in complete human beings but enslaves them to the exploitative and oppressive society. Men are exploited and oppressed in the society while women are exploited in the house. Men are content with their power in the house while women are content with their power over the children and daughters-in-law. "Like men, women are also divided and hierarchized class wise and relation wise, this causes alienation and antagonism between the women of the higher rungs (rich/higher castes/mother-in-law) and those of the lower rungs (poor/lower castes/daughter-in-law). Men and women imbibe the exploitative and oppressive culture and perpetuate it. So, they never realize the reality. They blame one another for their miserable life and quarrel among themselves. But they are not united and do not collectively try to eradicate the morbid culture that brought about this pathetic state. That is why Claude M. Steiner talks about the liberation of men and women from sex role scripting."² Badal Sircar's mini play "Marital" presents the banal and disharmonious marital life of middle class couple. Sircar is interested in the social dimension of the problems rather than the individual one. In his "Stale News" play, the exploitation of women is hinted at. Three says, "Offices are closed on Sundays half days on Saturdays. But there's no holiday for me. I had to light up the over at day break, and I've been on my feet ever since."³ Stale News is the result of the

collective work of Sircar and other members of Satabadi team. They have collected various news items of the exploitation and oppression made a collage that portrays man. The Vedic cosmogonies symbolically reveal the division of labor in our society which is existing. It is an indispensable evil of civilization. It affects the whole humanity. These divisions did not remain horizontal for a long time. But they were hierarchized by the human urge to overcome the feelings of inferiority caused by the alienation of human beings from nature and to prove their power and superiority. The hierarchization, a major process of civilization, gives rise to competition which replaced cooperation. This process caused private family and private property. Even human love underwent privatization and so individualism emerged and replaced collectivism. Hierarchization and privatization have supported and sustained each other. All this has caused and consolidated social deformity and inequality. The social deformity of the Hindu society has not changed much for ages. Gross atrocities are committed on Sudras and Panchamas by high caste. Hindus at one place or another, even now in the modern age of democracy. "An article appeared in Frontline Magazine about the atrocities of upper castes. Subash, a Shudra boy of twelve years, allegedly broke the glass shell of "Akhand Jyothi" on 28 May 1994 in Jaitsar, a village of Rajasthan. For not allowing him to be caught, Prakash kaur, his mother, was most inhumanly punished. She was stripped naked, dragged with her legs, tied around the durga temple and beaten with sticks all the time by upper caste men and one of them allegedly pushed hard a stick into her genitals. Then her head was tonsured, her face was blackened and she was paraded on a donkey in the market. Hot water and then Kerosene were poured down into her mouth; she could not survive the heinous torture and died."⁴ This is only one of the incidents that often happen throughout India. In the past we were mainly an agricultural country with the village as the unit of society. Since the last two world wars changed the outlook of life had its impact on India. Since then gradually, there has been rapid urbanization due to industrialization. The process of industrialization and urbanization changed the basic structure of our society. The migration of women from rural areas to urban centers also created social problems. Moreover, the pressures of urban living also affect the moral life of women, whether married or unmarried. They live in overcrowded and unattractive houses, the loss of privacy; boys and girls growing up in close vicinity and teasing each other have been important developments in urban centers. India is great democratic country. Statistics reveal that domestic violence becomes a daily routine one. National Family Health Survey, 2006 reveals that women are

becoming victims in the hands of hubbies, in laws. Some women are committing suicides to un bear the torture. In 2012-14 periods 24,771 women lost their lives due to dowry harassment. In these three years throughout India 3.48 lakh domestic violence cases are registered. Within these three years (2012-2014) state wide dowry harassment cases recorded are as follows: West Bengal – 61,259 Cases, Rajasthan- 44,311 an Andhra Pradesh- 34,835. In Modern Era, Technology plays a crucial role in the mindset of the people. A woman posted a suicide note in Face Book one day after Christmas on 26/12/2016. Her name was Sheremeyer hailed from New York, it run thus, "I have been slowly dying inside... I feel that the only thing I have to live for is this little guy asleep in my arms right now, John. He is the only reason why I haven't blown my head off right now. Apparently addressing to her husband, Sheremeyer wrote in her post," you will never see your son again. You don't deserve to have a son, a legacy. Why should you have your name carried on? You are a nasty man."⁵ Family is an Institution. An institution can function effectively only if it follows the rule of continuity of change. The entry of a newlywed bride into the house of her husband is an important landmark in any family. She is the child of the present and represents continuity. The in-laws act as the link connecting the past to the present. They ensure continuity in a family. Both the bride and the in laws have to understand and love each other to allow an interrupted progress in the family. In 'Untouchable' novel Mulk Raj Anand portrays untouchability through Bakha and Sohini characters. Bakha's sister Sohini faces the exploitation of chastity at the temple. Sohini's beauty brings mental pain in her life. The Temple priest Kalinath casts his eyes over the assembled women and is charmed towards the beauty of Sohini. He calls out to bring her pitcher for him to pour the water on a priority basis. Pandit Kalinath tries to usurp the chastity of Sohini at the temple. She screams. The priest at once turns table by shouting 'Polluted,polluted'. Sohini's character is pathetic due to the atrocities of hypocritical individuals of higher caste. Sohini becomes victim in the hand of Gulabo washer woman at the well. Gulabo hates Sohini very much.Sohini gets laugh at the comment of Gulabo. Gulabo reacts to the laugh of Sohini. She scolds sohini that "Ari, you bitch! Do you take me for a buffoon? What are you laughing at, slut? Aren't you ashamed of showing your teeth to me in the presence of men, you prostitute?"⁶ Water is the basic requirement of life. Sohini has to wait patiently till a Brahmin Pundit offers her water, and that too insulting her physically. Pundit addresses Sohini, "oh, you Lakha's daughter, come here,' he said, 'you have been patient and the reward of patience, say the holy books, is supreme. Get away,

you noisy curs, get out of the way!' The girl advanced meekly and put her pitcher down the platform. The priest lifted the can with great effort. For a moment he successfully handled the water, being surcharged with the glow of that warmth which he felt being near Sohini, intoxicated by it. Then his normal weakness returned. So he splashed the water and the outcastes flew on all sides, half wet, half dry. 'Get out of the way! He shouted as he poured the water into Sohini's pitcher. He was attempting to cover his weakness by bullying.'⁷ In this novel Upper caste domination, impartiality is well portrayed. Khushwanth singh's 'Train to Pakistan' portrays the atrocities of upper caste, Bureaucrats on women. Juggut singh is a bad character; he maltreats Noor as a concubine. He shows his masculinity and bullies her in the beginning of the novel. This conversation between Noor a muslim girl, (a blind man's daughter) and Juggut Singh reveals that he is badmash. "You put your hands on the person of a strange woman. Have you no mother or sister in your home? Have you no shame? No wonder the police have got you on their register as a bad character."⁸ Hukum Chand is a magistrate in this novel. As a bureaucrat he forgets his duty and gives priority for merriment. He arranges a party in his bungalow. He summons a young girl and ill-treats her. The troupe which accompanied along with her also supports the misdeeds of Hukum Chand. "Hukum chand put a glass of whisky to the girl's lips. Drink a little. 'Just a sip for my sake', he pleaded. The girl stood impassively without opening her mouth. The old woman spoke again. "Government, she knows nothing about drink. Hukum Chand produced a wad of notes and put it on the table for her. Then the party went to the car, leaving the magistrate with the girl in his lap and the bearer waiting for orders."⁹ Iqbal comes to Mano Majra and avail the shelter at Gurudwara. Iqbal singh is refined man. Meet Singh makes a query to Iqbal "You have seen the world and

read many books, but take it from me that a snake can cast its slough but not its poison. This saying is worth a hundred thousand rupees." Iqbal dissatisfies with the saying and gives reply "There is no crime in anyone's blood any more than there is goodness in the blood of others", answered Iqbal waking up."¹⁰ Dalits face atrocities in the hands of upper caste people in India than other community folk. Dalit women are becoming victimized than Dalit men. Dalit Solidarity Peoples (DSP), an NGO based in Delhi surveyed about the living conditions of Dalit women and creating awareness against the sex violence. This organization has taken up some programs to combat the violence. It brought some good results. Mahi 17 year girl who hails from Jalandhar's Abadpura started a crusade against inequality in the form of song. Her songs are a response to the discrimination faced by dalits across the country. In an Interview, she explained how freedom isn't just a seven letter word. "Yes, I sing lyrics that talk about Dalit empowerment. Call it Ambedkar folk or chamar pop, I feel the essence of my songs exhorts people from across castes, age groups and economic back grounds to take a look at themselves and realize the need to fight against injustice and oppression."¹¹ Her song, "Dangerous Chamar", encourages people from the Dalit community to stand united and fight forces of social inequity and economic deprivation.

Conclusion: India is based on values. Indian Culture is an amalgamation of various traditions. We celebrate every festival in our own manner. Modernity and Technology brought drastic change, but some community people are still entangled in the maladies. Men and women are equal in the creation of almighty. The difference is in the eye-sight. If we come across a damsel in the shopping mall, public places we ogle at them and create a problem. It lies in our thinking process. Change must come from within the heart in every individual.

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