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## “We Will Smash This Prison”: The Inner Dialogue of Indian Women

Neetika

Research Scholar, Department of English, H.P. University, Shimla, India

### Abstract:

Woman is the builder and moulder of a nation's destiny. Though delicate and soft she has a heart far stronger and bolder than man. She is the supreme inspiration for man's onward march – an embodiment of peace, love, piety and compassion. The position occupied by woman in a society determines the degree of development of that particular nation. In India the position of women has not changed much, even now born into a society strongly biased in favour of the male, she faces a prejudices as a girl, daughter, wife and mother. Throughout her life she passes through many roles and in each role there is the possibility of exploitation. As a girl child her birth cry is smothered even before it could take shape. As a sister she is given secondary status to her brother. She is expected to relinquish her rights on property for her brother. As a wife she is presented as commodity and bridegroom is given money to give her wife's status in the form of dowry. As a wife too, she has a secondary status in the household. Household chores come to her as legacy to her. She is the victim of marital rape, exploited by in-laws, she is tortured if does not bear a child, she is also sexually abused by the male members of family. Sometimes husbands himself use her sexually for his own promotion and growth. Thus after marriage, a woman's life is entirely gets changed. If marriage fails she always made the object of sarcasm, and looked down upon. Thus real exploitation begins with her birth and it reaches apex while in marriage. She is beaten mercilessly behind the closed doors, still they are expected to pretend to be happy that encourages the further exploitation. Even working women are beaten by husbands and they remain silent having all. The research paper aims to represent such women who are exploited by their so called husbands are being blackmailed, beaten up, being used by husband for the sake of his own selfish motive, they resisted but when it crossed the limits, they become avengers and took their own way of life, thus are the role models of such women who are not living lives but spending it for the husband's sake, family sake, children's sake. These women have liberated themselves from the preoccupied setup of society which suffocate their lives.

**Keywords:** Dowry, wife battering, female infanticide, divorce, cultural resistance, widow, sexual violence, marital rape

### 1. Introduction

Where women are worshipped there the gods dwell, says our scripture. “Give me good mothers, and I will give you a good nation” said Napoleon. The Quran says that heaven lies under the mother's feet. These eloquent proclamations are far removed from reality. Despite the large proclamations made here and there regarding the emancipation of and enhancement of the status of women the pact remains that they have not only been left behind and neglected in the social milieu but also they are subjected to killing cruelties and all abounding atrocities as a class. Born into a society strongly biased in favour of the male, she faces a prejudice that cuts across all classes, castes and religious. Right from her birth she witnesses her being other, and subaltern who is kept in margins, males as the central point of everything. She is assigned the different roles of daughter, wife, mother in her life span. As a daughter, she is always expected to be sacrificing, caring and always submissive, and meek docile. The research work aims at the atrocities against women in different life span of her life – as a daughter, sister, wife and as a mother and simultaneously present the inner dialogue of such women who dared to speak up their pain and have guts to stand against those and protecting themselves despite living in the hope to God to appear and save her life. “*Their Home is not their own*” At home she is discriminated much before her birth; she is not even allowed to take birth. Her birth cry is smothered even after it could take shape. If she still manages to take birth, she is killed. *Mamta*, a girl who does not know who her parents are, is the real projection of these selfish and cruel thoughts of parents. She was just of three days, when she was found thrown into the dustbin. She was sent to orphanage and lived there, with the feelings of dejection and unwanted, she says, “I don't know who my parents are and why did they threw me into the dustbin. If they did not want me than why did they even conceive me.” If she is given birth and accepted in the family, discrimination begins in her rearing. Rama, is a lecturer in a school, says that she has been sent to a local government school and her brother to a prestigious convent school. She was assigned the work of look after her younger brother, cook and clean the home. “Even though I had an interest to learn and finally with my strong conviction I got this position and I am aspiring to awake such families, where girls are accorded second position.” (Interview, 2002). “*What Offence I made, by demanding my Right?*” As a sister, she is always expected to not to claim for property, as it is only for her brother sake and, her husband's name is her after the marriage. “Promila, a middle class working woman in Delhi, demanded her share of property after the death of her parents, but initially her brothers denied to give her legal rights and she filed a petition against them in the court

and finally got her share, though she lost relation of brothers now. She says, “Why sisters are always expected to relinquish her rights, can’t brothers see their sister also need something to live in? and what offence I made, by demanding my rights? Brothers have family, wives then why would they bother for a sister?” (Interview 2002). “*Even Husband’s home is not her own*” On the threshold of marriage, juggling with both anxieties and anticipations, encoded in the cultural lore, the woman evolves herself with the cloudy and misty theme of “living happily even after?” The act of marriage transports the woman into a world of many new social relationships, but do the family member try to make her happy and help her to adjust there, I guess in very rare cases. General notion of Indian society is that ‘wife is an outsider and can never be the part of the family. After marriage she is uprooted from her home, even her own identification mark her name is changed. Only a woman changes from a miss to Mrs. So and so but not a man. She is born alive for dowry sake. She is abandoned for being unable to produce progeny, she is expected to accord prime importance to her husband, and she is subjugated through the marital rape. There are women who underwent these problems in the name of cultural tolerance, but at the end they broke their silence and transcending all the boundaries of society they came up as survivors and feminists, and deserve to be lauded. They can be the role model for many other women who are suffocating themselves in marriage institution, who are tired to be a wife, daughter-in-law, mother, neglecting their inner aspirations. The research work is focus to highlight such daring women of India. “*Daughter-in-law is not Meek docile only*” Not only the husband, but his parents and siblings also dominate the “daughter-in-law”. She is only daughter in the eyes of law, in actual practice she is no more than a slave. *Priya*, a working woman lives in a separate flat with her husband and two daughters peacefully. For seven years she had lived with her in-laws, and was not working anywhere, though she is well educated and possesses all the credentials, essential for a career. She says, “For seven years I could not understand what I am and what do I have, as I was always busy in giving best to my in-laws, but they reciprocated my respect with disrespect, comments, overwork etc. But I decided to go for job and got good salary and position and when in-laws ill treatments were not seem to end I have decided to move to the apartment given by the company. Initially husband opposed, but later he himself came here. I feel, why a woman should face ill treatments, she is not born to subjugate so what if she has to live alone, at least she has peace of mind” (Interview). “*My Body and My Right*” Marital rape is a violence that every woman faces behind the curtain, since India is a traditional society; women never speak up the violence in the public, as marriage gives husband a license to have an intimated relationship. Marital rape is when, ‘a partner enforced other to have sexual intercourse without her choice.’ *Suganda*, is a woman who got married five years back. She is a working woman and has a very busy and tiring day. She says every night, she is enforced to have sexual relation without her choice. She says, “Sometime, even during my menstruation, my husband enforced himself upon me. I requested him but he used to scold me saying “this is my legal right.” She further says, “For five years I tolerated and finally I decided to live separately and even warn him to file petition against him, though I have not done this so far, but I am planning to divorce him.” “*Why should it is a woman, infertile always?*” In India, woman is always accorded the responsibility of producing progeny to the lineage. She is made the object of sarcasm if she does not bear a male child, or no child. She is held responsible for not bearing child, and man is always keep safe, even if he does not have procreating capacity. *Pooja* is a woman, who is blessed with a son from second marriage. Ten years back she got married to a man whom she loved and who promised her to keep her happy, and protect her always. After three years of marriage, she was subjected to torment, humiliation and taunts because even after three years of marriage she could not conceive a child for the family. She was taunted as ‘infertile’ and it affected deep into her psyche. She went through medical treatments. She underwent all sorts of tests, but her husband ever underwent any tests. “If I ask him to go for medical tests, he used to scold me, even beat me”. I had accepted myself to be infertile. One day my mother-in-law asks me to divorce my husband and on denying they have started torturing her. “Even my husband did not support me.” Finally she get ready to divorce him and came back to her parents home and after one year she got married to a person whom she regards as “very supportive, caring and lovable”. Her husband got married to another woman and still they are childless. “I am very happy because I am not infertile and finally I washed that tag from my head.” Why should it is always woman to held responsible for infertility? So women should not accept such blame and derogatory words without a proof, even if she is not able to conceive, there is no need to be sad as technology has invented many other possibilities to get child and enjoy the motherhood. “*What if Marriage Fails*” What happens to the woman if her marriage does not succeed? It may due to incompatibility or torture or infidelity of spouse or social distances whatever may be the reason, if there is separation or divorce, it is always the woman who has to pay the price in terms of social stigma, being looked down upon, talked and gossiped about and exploited by other males due to her single status. *Shibani*, is divorced, single woman, working as professor in a college. She found her life even harder than that of her life in marriage. Her husband used to beat her up, humiliate her. She got tired and end up with divorce. Initially she had decided to stay single but social attitudes towards her made her life very bitter and finally she made up her mind to give her life another chance, to love and trust again and kept her heart open to accept someone again and with the virtue of good luck. “I finally met a man whom I found quite supportive, loveable and again go into the wedlock, without bothering social stigma. I am very happy and living conjugal life of marriage.” It is “your life and it’s your rights to spend it with your terms. Don’t bother society and they are no one to direct your life. Marriage is for support, love and care, not for getting tormented, beaten up, and being insulted.” So go ahead and live your life. People will stop discussing when they find another topic to discuss on.” (Interview, 2002) “*I am here for work not to tolerate humiliations*” More and more women are taking up jobs – some out of sheer necessity other because they are competent and want to utilize their ability. But is the society giving them an exploitation free environment and work culture, perhaps no. Most prominent amongst the exploitation in work situation is sexual in nature. The male colleagues, thinks it to be his privilege to sexually abuse his subordinate. *Sujata*, is an example of such woman, who is exploited by her boss in multinational company in Noida. She says her boss always used to call her up to his cabin and tries to touch her and stare at her. “Which I found very embarrassing and humiliating that many time I even thought to quit the job.” I discuss this experience with another girl in the office, I was surprised to know this that girl also underwent such sexual exploitation but remain silent, resisting everything, which encouraged him. She has decided to complain him to the MD of the

company but he did not pay any attention as he was very important member of the company. But she was convicted enough, and with her wit and intelligence she recorded all his sexual approaches to her in a camera, thus she filed a petition and the boss is exposed. "After that all rights of women are strictly followed in our office." I would say every woman has a *shakti* (power), and same intelligence as men have, don't resist everything silently and counter attack is needed to save self-respect and individuality. So do not sit at home thinking about the sexual harassment rather go and find out possibility to eradicate those by using her inheritance, *Shakti*. On the basis of aforementioned experiences, it can be concluded that women have a power equal to that of men. There is dire need to change the thinking patterns and sensitizing women as well as men so as to accord justice to aggrieved women. It is better to fight against the atrocities than to sit back, working and resisting all the discrimination. Every woman is capacity – a power, but unless she first recognize this is to be so, she cannot link it to awareness, appropriate action, direction that she can take individually, collectively.

## 2. References

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