

"WRITING THE RAPE: A CRITICAL STUDY OF RAPE NARRATIVES THROUGH FEMINIST AND DALIT LENS"

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Abstract

The historians and the nationalists in India are of the view that women are under ever pressure and subjected to experience the domestic violence. They also claim that India is predominantly a male dominated country and claim that the Indian women are in need of the liberty and freedom and equal opportunities. Dalit women and other women are always being humiliated in body and mind through sexual harassment, domestic violence and rape. For all the men out there woman is not written in braille. You don't have to touch her to know her. In fact the perspectives and the ideologue that the nationalists have are of the continental in origin and immigrant in nature and practice.

The proposition of the paper is to analyze the issue of Rape from socio-cultural point of view. It also deals why and how the understanding the concept of *Rape* is different from Indian feminists point of view to that of Dalit and subaltern feminists with reference to the select Dalit and Subaltern narratives.

Key Words: Feminism, Rape, Dalit, Subaltern, Caste, Indian Feminism, Western Feminism, socio cultural aspect.

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Introduction

Taking the issue of *Rape*, the India feminists statistically claim that according to the National Crime Records Bureau, 24,206 rape cases were registered in India in 2011. A new case is reported every 20 minutes, although the latest estimate suggests a new case every 22 minutes. In 2012, the conviction rate for rape was 24.2%. In fact they fail to study who are the women being raped and which caste do belong to? They also fail to study the authentic reasons behind the issue of *Rape* whether it is due to biological or sociological differences.

The proposition of the paper is to analyze the issue of Rape from socio-cultural point of view. It also deals why and how the understanding the concept of *Rape* is different from Indian feminists point of view to that of Dalit and subaltern feminists.

Crime against women hit the newspaper, television, and social media networks daily. The reaction from the public reaches its momentum when the issue of rape hits the limelight and slowly it ebbs with the women going out for a march with candle light or voicing out against the crime in the social media network. Post the Nirubaiya incident has anything in the society change by taking effective steps or it has been nullified, it is as usual a heated debate. Whenever a girl is being molested or raped more than thousands of people discuss about it and more columns in the newspaper deal with it, more than million times it is being spoken by the politicians, journalist, celebrities, religious leaders and so on. Everyone has something to say about it and contribute their idea to it but what actually happens is that it never reaches the victim and no proper action is been taken through law to the affected girl. What happens to the rape victim after the rape is unknown to the public more than the rapist the girl raped is focused in the media and more debate takes place for the reason of the rape and in more case the girl is accused for her dress, or late night going out. Is the society accepting her, is she getting wedded to another person in spite of her being raped, how the family and neighbors of her treats her is not being addressed. There is much report being piled files after files regarding the rape victims but in reality the humiliations, the torcher the pain suffering is not be addressed

properly. Even though it is addressed the rapist is not given proper punishment under the law. The human rights commission involves in it and reduces the level of punishment.

The gender inequality is the main reason for rape in the society. Mostly the women who work in call centers and whose jobs are associated with the night shift and corporate field are the main victims. The rural women are being mostly affected due to their survival in the remote residential areas. Mostly children are being raped if the dress code that tempts the man to rape then why is the old women and children being raped. In most of the rape cases the rapist is either a neighbor or a relative known to the victim.

In the early years the woman were considered to be the prey and property for the man who are the natural predator. There were no safety for the women in the society and the burden to safe guard her was later formalized as husband, father, brother. A crime committed against her body became the crime against the male estate. In the beginning the male concept of ownership was forcible extension of his boundaries to his mate and later to their offspring. Susan Brownmiller gives the definition of rape as “If a woman chooses not to have intercourse with a specific man and the man choose to proceed against her will, that is the criminal act of rape” (18) later in the years according to ancient Babylonian and Mosaic law a payment of money like fifty pieces of silver was given to the father for the theft of virginity of the daughter.

In Hammurabi code the women were not given independent status as the female should either be betrothed girl living with the custody of her father or she should be a lawfully wedded wife living in the house of a husband. If a man rapes a betrothed virgin the girl was considered to be out of crime and the rapist was found guilty. If it is a married woman then she has to take the blame equally. The Hebrew punishment of rape was that if a girl was raped within the walls of the city then both shares the punishment of facing death through stoning. During the rule of King Athelstan in the tenth century the punishment was severe for rape “If a man were to throw a virgin to the ground against her will, “he forfeits the king’s grace; if he shamelessly disrobes her and places himself upon her, he incurs the loss of all his possession; and if he lies with her, he incurs the loss

of his life and members” (25). The vengeance continued and the punishment not only affected him but even the things associated with him like “even his horse shall to his ignomy be put to shame upon its scrotum and tail, which shall be cut off as close as possible to the buttocks. A similar fate awaited the rapist dog, and if he happened to own a hawk, let it lose its beak, its claws and its tail” (25). During the reign of William the conqueror the castration and blinding was the punishment as stated “Let him lose his eyes which gave him sight of the virgin’s beauty for which he coveted her. And let him lose as well as the testicles which excited his hot lust” (25)

Feminist and Feminism started to get into the stream as the people saw feminism as the war between the sexes than the political struggle to end a sexist oppression. The reasons behind the war between the sexes are due to the sexual discrimination, exploitation and oppression. The battle ground is always home as a proverb of Bantu speaking Gusiis of south west Kenya goes as “Those whom we marry are those whom we fight” (17). Bell hooks opine that feminism can end the war between the sexes as “it can transform the relationships so that the alienation, compensation and de-humanization that characterize human interaction can be replaced with feeling of intimacy, mutuality and camaraderie” (35). Eradicating the sexist oppression will bring equality in the society as it is the basic of all other oppressions. Racism and class oppression is also stemming from the sexist oppression. Sexist oppression is of primary importance not because it is the only oppression but it is the practice of domination that most people experience they may play a role of discriminator or discriminated against, exploiter or exploited. Though the sexist oppression cannot eradicate or eliminate all other forms of oppression it can make the other oppression intact as all the oppressions are connected to the social structure.

Bell Hooks says that “feminism is the one radical political movement that focuses on transforming family relationships”(39). She further adds that feminism as a movement ends the sexist oppression to bring a social change that will strengthen and sustain the family life in the entire household. Bell hooks conclude in her essay on *Feminist theory form Margin to Center* as “The fight against sexist oppression is of grave political significance- it is not of women only. Feminist movement is vital both in its power to

liberate us from the terrible bonds of sexist oppression and its potential to radicalize and renew other liberation struggles” (42)

The society still expects the men to earn money and women to take care of the household. During the year 1963 Betty Frieden's *Feminine Mystique* was released and the book was given for fifteen prints during the continuous years. The book made the women think beyond the household. As the women rather than being a happy homemaker, contented wife and happy mother the women felt that they were intellectually and emotionally oppressed stopped by the limited options which the society left open to her. Their mystique stops with the identity of Mary's mom and tom's wife they don't want to have an individual identity. Most of the mothers insisted them not to be mere housewife like them even though the girl could not see beyond twenty two and they were engaged and married and led the life as their mother. Betty Frieden brings out the anguish of six years old mother as “Wish I'd studied more science, history, government, gone deeper into philosophy... Wish I'd develop a deeper and more creative life of my own and that I hadn't become engaged and married at nineteen. Having expected the ideal in marriage, including a hundred per cent devoted husband, it was a shock to find this isn't the way it is” (68) The term masculine and feminine are used only in legal papers and forms but in reality they are like the two electrical poles. Simon de Beauvoir states that man is right in being man and it is woman who is in the wrong. Women are always seen in terms of body as women have ovaries and uterus and these things imprison her in her subjectivity. Women is often termed that she thinks with her glands. Men ignore the fact that they also have anatomy as they include testicles and they secrete hormones. Women are always seen as an object of sex as anatomy is women's destiny. The identification of a woman is determined by her biology. Betty Frieden says that women have to shed her immaturity that has been called femininity in order to get the full human identity. This crisis of identity was there hundred years ago and in order to overcome the identity the women have to suffer to become fully human.

Women are always compared to the moon and water and men are compared to the sun and air as in the Hindu sacred marriage the man says “I am sky and you are earth and

she says I am earth and you are sky". In *Masculine Mystique* written by Andrew Kimbrell draws the survey of the He and She characteristics as He- more self-oriented, very competitive, needs less intimacy, more independent, strong drive for power and money, more sex-oriented, more aggressive, more manipulative and more polygamous. The she list are- more other focused, less competitive, need more intimacy, more dependent, power and money are less important, less aggressive, less manipulative and more monogamous.

Draupadi is written in Bengali by Mahasweta Devi' and translated in English by Gayatri Spivak. It deals with the condition of women of lower class. The setting of the story is Naxalbari movement. Mahasweta's short story Draupadi reveals a story of a 27-year old woman who is punished in sexual violence by the army officials.

There are much similarity between the Vyasa's Draupadi and Mahasweta's Draupadi. First one is 'Disrobing of Draupadi' in Vyasa's masterpiece Mahabharata, Draupadi gets her robe miraculously whereas Mahasweta's Draupadi refuses to be clothed in order to make the insurgents feel guilt of their act. In both characters there is a 'power within' in the most crucial moments of their lives. In the morning she walks to the general naked and says "you asked them to make me up; don't you want to see how they made me?" The way Draupadi tears her piece of cloth with her teeth and the way she walks towards him in the bright sunlight with her head high and the state of her condition freezes the general. The officers believe that this is a form of punishment will weaken her but they easily succeed in only stripping her but her empowerment after so much struggles slaps the officials of their third degree punishment in sexual violence. Draupadi stands for whole tribal women who are in the same condition.

The Indian politicians on the issue about rape are horrifying. Mr. Patil, home minister of Madhya Pradesh says that even if we provide one policeman per house we can't stop crimes against women... The rise in atrocities against women is due to obscene images used in advertisements. Mr. Gaur, home minister of Chhattisgarh said on 5 June. It

[rape] is a social crime which depends on the man and the woman. It is sometimes right and sometimes wrong. Mulayam Singh Yadav puts forth that such incidents [rapes] do not happen deliberately. These kinds of incidents happen accidentally he further added that boys make mistakes. They should not be hanged for this. We will revoke the anti-rape laws. Dharamveer Goyat senior politician in Harayana state reports that if the limit of morality is crossed by women, such cases will happen, he further adds that I have no hesitation in saying that about 90% of the girls consensually go with men and then they end up meeting criminal minds and become targets of rape.

In most of the cases the Dalits in the rural areas are being raped and most of them are not registered and if registered they are not taken serious steps to prevent these issue. The sufferer's fate is not known to the media or public but the issue of rape hits the media if it takes place in capitals or metropolitan cities. How many women who are raped come out with the same sprit into the public like Draupadi. Some lose their life when they are raped and post rape when they are in medication some die and the rest of the survivors hold on to the pain and struggles all through their life. Only few strong women try to come out and speak out about the abuses. If women assertion has to take place the equality between the genders has to be achieved and men has to be brought up in society in such a way to respect women and not to see them as a sexual object. Women should also try to voice out and the law in the country has to be strict to stop the issue of rape by giving them hard core punishment.

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