

Feministic Humanism as Delineated in Indian Dramatic Literature

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Abstract- Feministic Humanism defend women, the most suppressed; and celebrates humanness, the most needed at present. It suggests how feminism and humanism are interconnected. Because, the human society will not advocate the act of favouring one man at the outlay of another woman. Men and women are indiscrete. They together make humanity to survive. Hence, the dramatists as humanists question why the Indian society encourages the patriarchy to establish undeniable mastery over women. This article proposes the feministic ideals that the dramatists disseminate while attempting to civilize the society.

Index Terms- Humanism, Feminism, Indian Drama, etc.

INTRODUCTION

The premature theologians hold the view that women in India during the early Vedic periods enjoyed a fairly high status. They argue, though the Rig-Vedic society was patriarchal in nature, women enjoyed a relatively high status, Sati norm was not in vogue and widow remarriage was permitted. And, it is believed that women's status degraded gradually in the medieval times. The historians examine a greatest decline in the social state of women in the age of later Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanishads. It encouraged the gradual depraved of their future prospects domestic, social, religious etc. Accordingly their individual rights were also condensed. The age of the Sutras, the Epics and the Early Samhitas forced on considerably further descent in women's position. India started to firmly exercise the rules of Manu on the so called second sex. Resultantly, women sustained to fall lower in the social ladder in unity with the codes of Manu; Girls are supposed to be in the protection of their father when they are children, women must be under the supervision of their husband when married and under the safekeeping of her son as widows. In no circumstances is she

allowed to declare herself independently...It is the duty of all husbands to put forth total control over their wives.

Women in literature, through the centuries have been depicted as the mythic models from the Ramayana and the Puranas. Drama in India is noticeably a matter that is closely related to the Indian attitudes and philosophy of life. Hence, inquiring into the Indian Dramatics provides a better scope to figure out the status of the women in the past. The contribution of Sanskrit drama is irrefutable while attempting to elucidate the status of women in the traditionally-bound India. For instance, Rama's Sita, Ravana's Mandodari, Gautama's Ahalya, Bali's Tara in Ramayana, Draupadi in Mahabharata, stand prototyping ancient Indian women's wretched position. Then, the debut of feminist conscience which developed specifically with the British advent kindled democratic views of eminent men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and other reformers. And, their earnest efforts for the betterment of the status of the so-called second sex laid the foundation for the feministic humanism in India.

Determining to stop established the oppression through stereotypic representation of women in Classical literature Upanishads, Manu Dharma, Ramayana, Mahabharata, etc. the playwrights notably Bharatendu Harishchandra (Hindi), Grish Chandra Ghosh (Bengali), Dwijindra Lal Roy (Bengali), Dinabandhu Mitra (Bengali), Ranchodhbhai Udayram (Gujarati), M. M. Pillai (Tamil), Balvant Padurang Kirloskar (Marathi) and Rabindranath Tagore wrote in support of the repressed. They delved into our folk tradition to create plays to protest against social inequality, injustices and prejudices. Their plays were highly critical of patriarchal social constructions and entertaining obvious gender differences. They waged an unyielding fight to stop

the practices of child marriage, sati (the custom suicide of widow with their husband's dead body), devadasi tradition (Courtesans and prostitutes), Jauhar (voluntary captured wives or daughters of defeated warriors), Purdah (curtained and secluding women from the society), and Polygamy, dowry and caste systems etc. The modern Indian English plays came out in response to the obvious failures in achieving the target of the previous. It refers to various endeavours of feminists bring about legal and institutional rights on par with men.

The new theatre which emerges due to the force of the western ideologies on the emancipation of women was totally different in every aspect as it assimilated a new form of imitation from western theatre. It is clear that post-colonial drama in India is a fused art, a mixture of diverse literary influences. The plight of women under such environment had become a dreadful practice throughout the country and the modern writers in all the languages have exposed the same effectively. The modern dramatists made use of drama and theatre to hold inhumane acts against women. Widow remarriage, for instance, powerfully espoused by Ishwar Chandar Vidyasagar in Bengali finds creative expression in the Assamese play *Ram Navami* (1857) by Gaunbhiram Barua and in *Suohadra* (1928), a Punjabi play by Iswar Chunder Nanda. The famous Telugu play *Kanyasulkam* (1896) by Gurajada Appa Rao deals with the destructive custom of Child marriage and the practice of advertising girls to old men.

Most probably the idea of feminism besides humanism took root in Indian English plays especially of Aurobindo, Tagore and others. It eventually resulted in the appearance of a new composite brand of feministic humanism in India. They endorsed plays to provoke revolutionary thoughts in the audience literate and illiterate. It supports the dramatists in reforming the young generation and in liberation them from the claws of parochialism. Krishna Mohan Banerji (*The Persecuted*), Michel Madhusudan Datt's (*Is this Called Civilization?*), T. P. Kailasam (*The Widow and the Parrot*), Pratap Sharma (*A Touch of Brightness*), Lobo Prabhu (*The Family Cage*), A. S. Panchapakesha Aiyar (*Slaves of Ideas*) and Sri Aurobindo (*Perseus the Deliverer*) are some of the pioneer dramatists to write with such revolutionary themes. The other remarkable modern dramatists to

write with feministic concern are Rabindranath Tagore (*Red Oleanders*), Badal Sircar (*There is no End*), Mohan Rakesh (*Half-way House*), Mahesh Elkunchwar (*Flower of Blood*), Satish Alekar (*Begum Barve*), and others.

With the help of Indian theatre, the Feminist movement succeeded to a great scope in checking the increasing problems and the invisible difficulty to the emancipation of women from the rule of patriarchy. Raising consciousness among women about their problems and cognizing those about the religious or cultural theories of sexual politics in India both in ancestral and social spheres are major contribution of the modern Indian English dramatists. They exhibited how women are being represented stereotypically as frail or vulnerable creature, sexual object of the male's desire, procreating device and so on. Thus their plays with feministic suggestion helped to support the empowerment of women through literature.

They used drama as a tool to attack the age-old customs against women and to recommend that inequality of sexes does not have a biological basis or origin; it originates in the cultural constructions of gender difference. The assault on the conservative society which sees the women as only the "other" of the male began with such misinformation plays. Thus, the playwrights sought to formulate a gender-neutral society which will promote the authorization of the silenced in the society. The end of such plays with series of anxiety, made a proposal to the audience about their household tasks in the making of an unhindered society where women are treated as humans. As a result, more and more women put on courage to speak out their sufferings. Particularly, enactment of such plays with radical ideas had to some extent moulded the middle class women's psyche to protest against gender-discrimination. But obviously the marginalised position in the household as well as the social order bespeaks the truth that in no means that Indian Feminism was able to make any headway in uprooting the gender-based discriminatory ideologies. It is evident in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*. He voices the grief of womanhood through *Tara*, the victim of gender-bias, who "deserves something better" is crippled and let to die by her prejudiced parents.

All these reveal the fact that the sixty-eight years of unbroken crusade for the independence of Indian

women remains unsettled. Hence, speaking of women's liberation theoretically or enacting out of reach legislations for women's welfare alone cannot bring any remarkable changes in the awful position of women in India. Realistic steps should be taken to neutralise the conservative minds of both the men and women as implied at in the modern Indian English plays of Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani, Manjula Padmanabhan, Dina Mehta and others. Their plays with humanistic concern for the victimized women highlight on the notion that the parents as individuals, as communities, as society should repeat a fair mindset to treat their sons and daughters equally, to value their feelings honestly, and to not oblige myths of manliness as being exploitive and womanliness as being submissive on the young generation.

WORKS CITED

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