

Subjugation of Indian Women

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Introduction

“A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.” By Virginia Woolf

Post colonization Indian writings deals with several topics like identity crisis, Starvation, Darkness of ignorance, Humiliation, Discrimination etc. This paper concentrates on the voice of women in our society. From Henrik Ibsen’s “Doll’s House” in this play Nora’s husband treats her like a doll so that she is not able to grow. Then we have Virginia Woolf’s essay “A Room of one’s own” which gives the basic reasons why the women tolerate the atrocities of men.

“Why are women... so much more interesting to men than men are to women?” Virginia Woolf

She has also created fictional character of Judith Shakespeare who was Shakespeare’s imaginary sister. She is not able to carve niche because of being a girl she is not educated and forced to get married. We have a number of characters in post colonial era like Savitri in R.K. Narayan’s *The Dark Room*, Geeta in Rama Mehta’s *Inside the Haveli*, Jaya in Shashi Deshpandey’s *The Long Silence*, Anita Desai’s *The Cry* and *The Peacock*. All these caricature depict our post colonial Indian Society; rather they are mirror of our post colonial Indian society.

All these characters have a volcano erupting in their voices but as dutiful wife they are unable to argue or defend themselves. This novel deals with the fictional character Savitri, who is always tormented and shown her place by her husband Ramani. Savitri the character does not grow till the end. She shows her anger by keeping herself locked in to *The Dark Room*. She is never able to gather courage to fight for herself as her husband would be offended.

The beginning of the novel *Savitri* is not allowed to take her decisions however small they may be. Their son Babu is nursing a headache and he does not want to go to the school but her husband intervenes and sends him off to school.

These are the lines quoted by Ramani to his wife, “No, he hasn’t. Go and do any work you like in the kitchen, but leave the training of a grown-up boy to me. It is none of a women’s business.” (Page 1)

Wife has to be very obedient and dutiful. She will not be given a position of equality. Many a times never even asked as to what she wants. Savitri was enjoying a chat with her friend Janamma at her house. One evening she was called immediately by her husband for

going and watching a movie. Savitri wanted her children to be with her but was told by her husband some other time. None of her feelings were responded positively.

These lines quoted by Ramani, “The children can go some other day. Not an extra fly now.” (Page 20)

In another incident where the family is enjoying the festival of Navratri, the children were in high spirits decorating the dolls in their house. Babu who was showing great enthusiasm in the festival, He along with his friend Chandru puts the festoon of ornamental colored bulbs under the pavilion arch. Chandru Babu’s friend studying in the intermediate had a genius for electricity. He decorated the festoon but by evening when everybody was there at their place. The entire house was in darkness. Babu was sent with their son to electric office. In the mean time Ramani comes from office and learns that Babu did something and the lights went off that day Babu was not spared beaten brutally.

The incident of father hitting his child, “Don’t beat me father, He said, and Ramani gave him a few more slaps.” (Page 38)

Ranga their servant quotes, “It is no business of a wife’s to butt in when the father is dealing with his son. It is a bad habit. Only a battered son will grow into a sound man.

Savitri rose and went into The Dark Room to show her annoyance. Her husband’s attitude of indifference to wife’s being in The Dark Room can be seen when he comes for food as usual before going to office. He very happily asks the children what sweets to the children want in the evening so as to the message goes to The Dark Room, that nothing is going to change if his wife is showing anger on the context of beating his son.

Quote from Ramani, “Don’t you worry; I will buy sweets for two rupees.” He raised his voice so that it reaches the dark room says, “Don’t imagine that the festival can be spoiled by your sulking.” (Page 42)

The children came to her and requested her to have food but she turned her face to the wall and shut her eyes. The Dark Room to show annoyance, when men can show their anger freely why not women? The children felt bad that their mom had confined herself to The Dark Room so they go to her best friend Janamma and ask her to convince their mother to eat food.

Janamma her friend convinces Savitri that men are impulsive and they have many worries and burden. She further gives umpteen epitomes of her aunts how she was beaten every day by her husband and had never uttered a word of protest for fifty years. Another friend of her mother who was prepared to jump into a well if her husband directed her. Immediately Savitri felt that her protest had no meaning as others had faced much more than her. Her resentment becomes petty; she consoles herself and is out of The Dark Room. Ramani her husband makes no attempt to pacify or cajole her.

“One is not born a woman but becomes a woman.” By Simon de Beauvoir

Ramani strongly recommends that the Engladia Insurance Company employ the rather elegant and fiercely independent Mrs. Shanta Bai, recently separated. He is floored by her beauty and takes complete advantage of loneliness and starts visiting her daily which results of his coming home very late in the night. Savitri is clueless about all this; in fact even her favorite piece furniture is borrowed by Ramani to furnish the room he has hurriedly assembled for Shanta Bai in the office. When Savitri’s husband pleads and cajoles her for the piece of furniture, Savitri feels very bad but finally gives him the piece of furniture. In protest she only says, “If you take away the bench, what am I to sleep on in the afternoons?”(Page 54)

Ramani starts visiting Shanta Bai daily and this is revealed to Savitri through her friend Janamma, who has seen Ramani and Shanta Bai together watching a cinema. With this news she is totally shattered and asks herself again and again if she was beautiful? She once again tries to look

beautiful so that Ramani would not leave her. She confronts him about Shanta Bai but he takes it as a joke. Then the character of Savitri does not want to take any more humiliation she says, "I am a human being", she said through her heavy breathing. "You men will never grant that. For you we are play things when feel like hugging, and slaves at other times. Don't think that you can fondle us when you like and kick us when you choose." (Page 85).

This is the first time that Savitri has voiced herself. She gathers a lot of courage walks out of the house by giving all the belongings to him. Savitri shows for the first time that she can manage without him. But she was so upset that she tries to commit suicide, but is rescued by a man Mari in the river. For three days she tries to survive without her husband and children, she takes shelter in a temple. "What despicable creations of God are we that we can't exist without a support. I am a bamboo pole which can't stand without a wall to support it." (Page 146) But very soon meekly plans to come back.

Quote of Savitri, "A wretched fate would not let me drown first time. I can't go near the water again. This is defeat. I accept it. I am no good for this fight I am bamboo pole..... Perhaps Sumati and Kamala have not had their hair combed for ages now."

She returns to the house where only the children were waiting for her desperately. The husband Ramani somehow manages the children without the mother by lying to them that, she has gone to her father's house. Ramani tries to be normal but she exclaims that, "A part of me is dead."

"Being a woman is a terribly difficult task, since it consists principally in dealing with men." By Joseph Conrad

Conclusion

Through this character R.K. Narayan has created a real life like Savitri who is very obedient and dutiful wife. The author has successfully shown how the women have to tolerate all the atrocities of men and still live in the same house. Unfortunately Savitri's character couldn't gather the courage to leave the house but we have Nora in the play *The Dolls house* who has the courage to leave the house and shall not bear the suppuration of men. We also have Virginia Woolf who in her essay *A Room of One's Own* tells us that women can never have anything of their own everything is fathers, husbands or sons. Now the women question arises are we really going to be emancipated from this man's world? Though today's novels are based on women like Shashi Deshpande's, *The Long Silence* where Jaya is still searching for an identity after seventeen years of marriage. We have to still acquire a position in this man's world but we have a few breathers like CEO Indra Nooyi of PepsiCo, Geeta and Babita the female wrestlers, Saina and Sania and many others who are carving a niche for themselves. But still the women have to yet acquire a lot to prove themselves.

"As a woman I have no country.

As a woman I want no country

As a woman my country is the

Whole world - By Virginia Woolf

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