

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ARUNDHATI ROY'S "THE GREAT INDIAN RAPE – TRICK I" AND "THE GREAT INDIAN RAPE – TRICK II"**

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**Abstract**

Phoolan Devi who is also popularly known as the 'Bandit Queen' is doubly marginalized because, in the first sense she is a woman from low caste and secondly, she is a 'woman'. India boasts itself for its diverse culture and its unity despite its diversity. But in reality, it is a 'meta narration' because in India people are divided in terms of the language they speak, religion they follow, caste they belong to and their gender. In Phoolan Devi's case she is doubly marginalized. Roy examines the deconstruction of the caste system and the patriarchy in India together with the implications of belonging to a patriarchal society, which she reflects in her narratives.

**Keywords: Condition of being women, humanism and feminism, womanhood, patriarchy in India, caste system.**

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Arundhati Roy, instead of taking a feministic approach to the life of Phoolan Devi adopts a humanistic approach to her life. Her works "The Great Indian Rape – Trick I" and "The Great Indian Rape – Trick II" serve as a voice for the voiceless Phoolan Devi, a doubly marginalized woman in the caste conscious Indian society. Roy wants the society to look at Phoolan Devi as a human being with all emotions, desires and feelings rather than a woman. Written in 1994 when Phoolan Devi was still alive, Roy is unable to bear the rape of a living woman made available for public consumption through the film "The Bandit Queen" directed by Shekhar Kapur. Roy says, "Doing it without her consent, without her specific, written, repeated, whole-hearted, unambiguous consent, is monstrous... I cannot believe that it is not a criminal offence." (MSH 855). The film is based on the book "India's Bandit Queen: The True Story of Phoolan Devi" written by Mala Sen. Neither the director nor the producer is concerned about the truth in the 'true story'.

Phoolan Devi who is also popularly known as the 'Bandit Queen' is doubly marginalized because, in the first sense she is a woman from low caste and secondly, she is a 'woman'. India boasts itself for its diverse culture and its unity despite its diversity. But in reality, it is a 'meta narration' because in India people are divided in terms of the language

they speak, religion they follow, caste they belong to and their gender. In Phoolan Devi's case she is doubly marginalized. The book which is said to be the source of the film is written based on the newspaper reports, interviews, meetings and written accounts during Phoolan Devi's imprisonment which means that the book may not project the exact details of the incidents that happened in Phoolan Devi's life. The book is a 'human book' written by an author and not Phoolan Devi and it may be confined to errors. Nobody knows what exactly happened in her life except herself. Roy observes, "Sometimes various versions of the same event – versions that totally conflict with each other, that is, Phoolan's version, a journalist's version, or an eyewitness's version – are all presented to the reader in the book." (MSH 837). On the contrary the director of the movie who claims that the movie is based on real incident, is not ready to meet Phoolan Devi who is the core of this film. He and his producer, Mr. Bobby Bedi openly admitted their unwillingness to meet her. He is not worried about what exactly happen to a doubly marginalized woman in the society. He looked at the film as a product to be sold successfully to thirsty customers. He did it because "Dwelling on the Degradation and the Humiliation is absolutely essential for the commercial success of the film. Without it, there would be no film." (MSH 855).

Roy is very conscious about the individual's liberty in the democratic India especially a woman. She questions society, the critics of the film, the director, the actress, the producer about their right to assess a living woman's rape. Also Roy accuses the director for adding his own 'imagination' to the film to make it a more commercially successful film, "...they gave themselves the right to 'cut' alter and adapt" it is okay to cut and alter in films but Roy questions, "...does 'cut, alter, and adapt' include Distort and Falsify?" (MSH 852). The caste system is a part and parcel of Indians' lives. This system affects women more rather than men because it seems clear that caste rules do not influence men's lives as they alter women's. This is why they are labeled as 'doubly marginalized'. This means that their fate is not only decided by caste, but their femininity is a cause of their marginalization as well. In other words, they are undervalued and taken advantage of both for their caste and their condition of women. This happens in every sphere of the caste system, but especially in lower castes, since women from inferior castes have always been a prey for the upper class.

Phoolan Devi, being an illiterate woman does not know anything about it. Roy came forward to thrust this issue into limelight. The director and the producer of the film intended to cheat and mislead a voiceless woman in the society. They denied to screen the film for Phoolan Devi. It unfolds their intension. But this won't happen for people in power. Roy also narrates another interesting incident. Once the chairman of the Censor Board explained why there was a delay in clearing some films on Rajiv Gandhi. He said that there is a trouble with political people, political films because they are about 'real people' and they must be absolutely true. Roy questions the inequality that prevails when it comes to the poor and voiceless, "In the eyes of the Law, are Rajiv Gandhi and Phoolan Devi equally real?" (MSH 850). This would refer to the so-called gender violence, which affects every woman around the world, to a greater or a lesser extent. The violence against women is a global concern that is related to power, privileges and the control by men, encouraged by ignorance. Moreover, it appears that governments have failed to protect women, since, broadly speaking, law tends not to be observed and there are no immediate consequences for those who break the few laws that speak in favour of equality and respect for every gender.

Roy is very critical about the establishment of Indian Womanhood in the film. In Roy's perspective "when a woman becomes Womanhood, she ceases to be real." (MSH 856). Roy is more of a humanist than a feminist, a human being who has concern for fellow downtrodden human beings. The film just portrays Phoolan Devi as a rape victim and a victim of the caste conscious male chauvinistic Indian society. But in Roy's view Phoolan Devi is more a human being than just a 'woman'. She also has all the emotions and desires like other human beings.

The director's desire to produce a 'classic cinema' and to satisfy the audience who give sainthood for a woman through womanhood. In the process of his direction, he failed to empathize Phoolan Devi's feeling. He "...stripped a human being of her Rights. Her Dignity. Her Privacy. Her Freedom." (MSH 857). Most importantly Phoolan Devi denies the accusation on her that she murdered twenty-two Thakurs. But, in the film Shekhar Kapur shows that she holds the responsibility for the murder of the twenty-two Thakurs. But the confession of the two men among the twenty-two people says that Phoolan Devi was not there. But other eyewitnesses say that she was there and holds the responsibility of the murder. And this film and its portrayal may have an impact on the people who watch it, the upcoming judgment, the Thakur community and moreover it might become a threat to her life but the director is not worried about it.

In India, marginalization occurs for several reasons. It is based on the religion, caste, language, gender, economic status. In Phoolan Devi's case she became a victim of the caste, gender and class-conscious society which preys upon the downtrodden. She was caught in both victimhood and brutishness of the society. The concept of 'womanhood' makes a woman saint and simultaneously gets rid of their personal emotions and desires. The film "The Bandit Queen" did the same to Phoolan Devi. It gave her the womanhood and took away the rest of her identity.

Apart from the Indian caste system, patriarchy is also prevalent in India. Patriarchy is found in "any culture that privileges men by promoting traditional gender roles" (Tyson 2000: 85). Patriarchy along with the caste system, clearly has a negative impact on women's lifestyle. To prove this point the film eliminated two main incidents that took place in Phoolan Devi's life and focused only on the 'rape'. According to Mala's book, which the film is said to be based on, the first incident happened at the age of ten. She is not married at the point of time. Through her mother she came to know how her uncle (father's brother) Biharilal and his son Maiyadeen forged the land documents and chased her mother and father out of their own land. This enraged her and she went to her uncle's field along with her frightened elder sister and demanded her parent's land. Maiyadeen asked them to leave the place but she didn't so she was beaten unconscious. Her first act of rebellion is not against rape but for her parent's right to their land.

The next incident happened when Phoolan Devi was under imprisonment. When she was behind the bars, she was down with excessive bleeding due to ovarian cyst. So, her womb was removed without her concern. When Mala Sen questioned the doctor about this, he said without any regret that they don't want her to breed any more Phoolan Devi. Roy questions the authority of the state to remove a woman's womb without her concern. These two important incidents are not shown in the film because it won't entertain the audience as the 'rape' does.

Roy examines the deconstruction of the caste system and the patriarchy in India together with the implications of belonging to a patriarchal society, which she reflects in her narratives. Furthermore, she attempted to portray the unfairness and the difficulties that Indian women must face due to their condition of being women. She has been regarded as “a voice from the global South purposefully undoing sanctioned ignorance, crossing borders of gender, caste, and class” (Grewal 143). Roy, as a writer fights injustice, both through the criticism of India’s misogyny and through the subversive actions of women. It unfolds social inequality as well as serve as an example to Indian women. She sees literature not only as a production of art, but also as a weapon to denounce injustice and make women’s voices heard. In this sense, Roy proves that there are movements against injustice, but economical, authorial and social power prevents things from changing. In the words of Brooks, “the ‘totalizing’ tendencies of earlier feminist theorizing was challenged from within feminism by marginalized, colonized and indigenous women” (34). There are activists in India who fight for justice and equality, Roy being a very good example of that.

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