

Women's Marginalization in Polie Sengupta's *Mangalam*

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Abstract: *The present paper is an attempt to analyze self-identity, exploitation, physical violence and marginalization of women. The play Mangalam portrays the unhappy marriage between Mangalam and Dorai. There is lack of trust and understanding between the relationship as a husband and wife. It depicts the harassment of women in patriarchic society. It also deals with many issues such as rape, gender discrimination, complexity of human relationship and many more. In the play, Polie Sengupta depicted the character, Mangalam, who is the object in the hands of her husband, Dorai. The play highlights the woeful plight of women. It also deals with the various problems of women. Many women characters were humiliated in their husband's house in the play. When a woman marries and comes to her husband's house, she always suffers there and loses her freedom and identity which she gets in her father's house.*

Keywords: Marginalization, Self-identity, Exploitation, Physical Violence

I. INTRODUCTION

PolieSengupta was born in 1948. She is one of the notable Indian dramatists in English. She has been a teacher, writer for children, poet, columnist and playwright. *Mangalam* is her first full-length play. It has won the award for its socially relevant theme in The Hindu-Madras Players play script competition in 1993. She was also awarded a senior fellowship in the field of literature from the Government of India for writing drama for children. The play *Mangalam* deals with the various problems of women.

1.1 The term 'Marginalization'

The term 'Marginalization' is associated with the word 'exclusion'. It means that marginal groups are denied by the society. Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines the word 'Marginalization' as 'the process or result of making somebody feel as if they are not important and cannot influence decisions or events; the fact of putting somebody in a position in which they have no power.' It denotes inferiority and subordination. The term 'Marginalization' has many synonyms such as subordination, subjugation, suppressed and oppressed. This term also refers to the deprived, underprivileged and powerless people. Actually, marginalized women do not have any right and status in the society. In the play *Mangalam*, women suffer from various types of subjugation based on class and gender. Women face many types of discrimination in their day-to-day life. They are not having power in the family as well as society. They are victims of gender based exploitation. They are not having equal rights and active participation in the democratic society.

1.2 Women's Marginalization in Polie Sengupta's *Mangalam*:

In the play, Mangalam is the central character and Dorai, her husband is a symbol of male dominance. He is a father of Sriram, Mani, Usha, Chitra and Kannan. Actually Usha wants to marry with a college lecturer but her father, Dorai fixed her marriage with a rich man to maintain family standard and status. Her rights and feelings are always ignored and suppressed by her father. Usha is also not allowed to take higher studies because her father was interested in marriage proposals that came from upper class family. The voice of women like Usha always suppressed by the male characters like Dorai. He could not understand her. In this context, female voice says:

Women die many kinds of death;

For them, when a woman cooks

and arranges flowers in her hair
and makes place in the bed
she is alive.
But a woman can smile,
she can pin flowers in her hair
and arrange a red dot on her forehead
and makes place in the bed
she is alive. (Sengupta, 2000:102)

When the play opens, Revathy, the daughter-in-law, is plaiting her hairs, sitting on a chair. Her husband Mani, is a bank officer. He is looking through a sheaf of papers at one of the tables. Revathy was blaming Mani that she is being humiliated in her husband's house. Chitra is much more sensible than Usha. Thangam is the sister of Mangalam. She says if Mangalam had studied more, she would have become an officer, but she is died now. Dorai, is the husband of Mangalam and father of Sriram, Mani, Usha, Chitra and Kannan. He warns Thangam if she wanted to stay there, she had to control herself because it was the house of him. Thangam also blames Dorai for her sister's death. Dorai behaves badly with Mnagalam. He uses obscene language about her. He says, "So what should I call her? A devi? A virgin goddess? She came to me after being used, she was somebody else's leaving." (121)

Thangam is a sister of Mangalam. She is also suffered by her husband, Priappa because of his illicit relationship with another lady. Women like Thangam, Mangalam and Usha are marginalized and humiliated in their family as well as society. Dorai, as a father rudely behaves with his son, Kannan. When Kannan demands school fees, Dorai gets anger and cries: Get out! Get out! How dare you come at this time with your stupid problems. Fees! Special classes! Your mother is dead, your whore of a sister has eloped and you come here for fees. Fees! Get out before I- (109). It shows that Dorai is short tempered person. When Chitra eloped and married with her lover, Dorai gets angry. He was against the marriage of Chitra because her lover was non-Brahmin. He doesn't like it. He says, "That girl will not cross this threshold. She is dead to me." (111)

In Act-II, Sumati, daughter of Thangam was also treated inferior and got secondary position as compared to her brother. She was molested by her father's friend, Nari. There is gender discrimination between Sumati and her brother. It was presumed that women should always understand her responsibility as a woman. Women characters like Mangalam and Sumati are exploited by their husband in the play. They are marginalized by the society.

Thangam blames Dorai that he murdered his wife. In this context, she says, "You made her do that. She was afraid of you. My poor sister. She was afraid of you. Don't I know it? You are a *raakshan*. A *Kali-yugaraakshana*." (98). Being a woman, Mangalam wanted Chitra to go for higher studies and should become an IAS officer. It shows the affection toward daughter. Thangam is superstitious. She says: "...My sister used to cry every day. Even on Friday, Friday evenings. I used to say, don't cry, don't cry o Friday evenings, you will become a widow, don't let that happen. It's the worst fate for a woman." (106)

Being a woman, Thangam uses vulgar language while speaking with Revathy, wife of Mani. She says: "A woman who opens her mouth and smiles at men will also opens her legs." (118). It shows that Thangam is jealous lady. Being a man, Suresh always talks about women and girls. He doesn't seem to have a speck of respect for them. Sumati was older than Suresh. She wanted to be boss. She feels that Amma loved her more than him.

In Act-II, Suresh, Sumati and Thangam were discussing the play which they had seen. It was a play within play. It was an intense play. The play was about a small-town Tamil family. The family was from upper-middle class. It was about the relationship between husband and wives, Brothers and sisters, friends. Thangam got the letter which was kept by Suresh in the pages of book. It was extremely passionate letter. Somebody was in love with Suresh. According to Vikram, suresh is grown rather careless about his friendship, especially with women. He treats them like pieces in a chess game or like pawns. He uses his strategies. He uses them only for sexual purpose; afterwards he doesn't show any interest in that girl. In this context, Vikram says: "...As if that's all there is to a relationship, as if between a man and a woman, there's only the possibility of a check and a mate. A game. A sexual conquest." (145)

To conclude, *Mangalam* demonstrates the contrast between modern and traditional society, but the problems of women's marginalization still exist in the society. Women are neglected in the social, political, economic and cultural fields. Generally one can say that we are living in the modern age or 21th century. Our living standard is so called

sophisticated but our mindset is not changed. In the play, there is lack of trust and understanding between the relationship as a husband and wife. Women suffer from various types of subjugation based on class and gender. It depicts the harassment of women in patriarchic society. It also deals with many issues such as rape, gender discrimination, complexity of human relationship and many more.

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