

Empowerment of Women: A Study on Abhi Subedi's 'Fire in the Monastery'

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There is a stubbornness about me that never can bear to be frightened at the will of others. My courage always rises at every attempt to intimidate me." – Jane Austen

Abstract: Women Empowerment denotes the establishment of an atmosphere for women where they can produce stable judgements of their individuality for their subjective welfares as well as for the society. The role of Women in a society or community is turned out to be crucial in this world. In a true sense, women empowerment can be done and if the women are educated and financially can assist their families. In 'The Fire in the Monastery' Abhi Subedi has highlighted the ailment of women in particular circumstances. He has highlighted the protagonist women 'Purnima' as a central character. This present research examines the situation of women in the domestic and outside world. Therefore, the empowerment of women will help in empowering the future in terms of education and will help in eradicating poverty. This will help in enhancing the status of a community and also prospectus generation.

IndexTerms - Women empowerment, community, society, education, poverty.

I. DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

As Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai eminently quoted "I raise up my voice—not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard...we cannot succeed when half of us are held back.", and that emotions specifically summarize the origin of the new age in women empowerment. The discrimination against women is barren all over the world even in this 21st century. The Male= chauvinistic societies in most of the countries which are adept at exploitation as well as the oppression of women. Despite the fact, about 50% of the world's population consists of women, however, unluckily the maximum of them are without basic rights in the field like education, freedom of speech, voting power and even independent identity. In specific, the crimes focused on women are stated from all over the world. There are still questions remain in acceptance of women empowerment even in the developed countries, while the developing nations and nations under political threat are distant from accomplishing the anticipated position.

II. INTRODUCTION

In some countries around the world, women enjoy a status of equal opportunity with the men as per statutory and lawful provisions. Perhaps, some countries have taken massive developments headed for the inclusion of women with an open-minded gender shining in different fields, from literature to astrophysics to finance. On the other hand, the headlines about dowry killing, female foeticides, and domestic violence are still found in different Media; set a soundless interrogation spotted behind the two words. Here, in these modern days, factual growth and progress can only be accomplished by initiating successful steps in eradicating inherent principles of gender partiality and oppression like the confinement of women to the secluded national territory, constraints on their mobility, poor access to health services, nutrition, education and employment, and marginalization from the public and political sphere.

'The Fire in the Monastery' or Agniko Katha set in a firm monastery of the Tibetan Buddhist direction in the mountain region of Nepal. It is a play about concepts, quest, queries, and quirks that the characters show during the course of the action. A constant tension between fixed space and spaces not seen takes place in the play. Human beings are caught between rigidity and movement. The characters disturbed by their information about the fire that consumes an old library somewhere in the precincts of the monastery, trying to declaim more significance in this modest experience than it is indispensable. The fire only acts as a catalyst that brings different modes of imagination together. The overinterpretation or the misinterpretation of the words obsessive by fire, the cultures the monks and nuns have not perceived or read, comes like a stone in the calm lake casting ripples.

III. PROBLEM DISCUSSION

Professor Abhi Subedi 'Fire in the Monastery' (Agniko Katha) was published in 2004. This drama elicits the lives of monks and nuns who take individual routes in their life once a fire abolishes their library. The protagonists are women where the life filled with the fall and rise, however, they realize their potential at the end of the play. In further, the consciousness of the two nuns to ensure the position in their lives marks this play authoritative both in the characters and also with the themes. This drama consists of three main characters. A nun named Bhikshuni Purnima and a vocal nun discuss their lives as nuns, their lives as women, and

their condition of the past. In the event of their conversations on various topics, which are related to life and fortune, the play reveals the personal sufferings of each character in the play. As a result of that, in 2003, the play was brought to the Aarohan Gurukul theatre by director Sunil Pokharel. It cast Nisha Pokharel as the main female character, Purnima, and Sarita Giri as the singing nun.

Fire in the Monastery is the response to the query, where it attempts in the conversational background of its characters represented as nuns and monks of a monastery. Moreover, the play is greatly influenced by the principles of Buddhism; the play searches to find reactions to the queries that ascend from the requirement of its female characters to comprehend their own situations. The actions and its consequences on the life played as a central protagonist. Fire in the Monastery is naturally an interactive play that agitates the unpredictable temperaments and different stages of the character and also her needs. In addition to the dramaturgy, the play is outwardly a spontaneous tale that however brings out the disputes of the contemporary situations over the lens of a woman, one that raises women to be highly potential personalities.

In this play, the characterization of the nuns and monks are depressed by the upheaval that ascends once a library is shattered by a fire in the monastery. Meanwhile, it is frequently anticipated that they make sure of not identifying the importance of the books that have spun into ashes, obviously, it is shown that the members of the monastery are deeply mourned by the facts that the words of Buddha have vanished. In which, in these circumstances, the fears of the nuns are reflected. "What would others say if we stay as if nothing has happened?" asks Purnima. "So you want to worry because you're afraid what others might think of you," replies another nun. (Subedi 2004, 46) and after that 'What Purnima says is the alarm not just of her own but of women in general'. The above statement presents the enduring prospects of women's docile role in civilization, which can grow into a menace if a woman does not act as she is likely to. The forthcoming statements, meanwhile, can be said in contemporary as another aspect of women that is moving by means of expectation of women to whom they are and not what basically is prospected by other people. The representation of these two extents reveals the changing the characters of women in Nepali theatre.

However, in another occasion, Purnima says that she senses the identical and where she desires to be wiped out from the place where she is praying. Her nun friend ripostes,

"You should not feel like that. You know you're a nun. If not, you go and get wedded and have a family." Where will she go? "There is no place for me to go," asks Purnima. "How unusual this is! Buddha is all over the world, but if we leave this place and go outside then even he will have difficulty in looking after us".

They say if we leave the monastery there won't even be God to take care of us. Consequently, Women are not able to move the monastery as men can easily." (Subedi 2004, 47) The dialogue marks the edge amongst the community and private sphere visibly. "Masculinity (man) is associated with the public sphere; to be a man is to be a person who does significant effects outside the internal sphere—who does man's work." (Abbot and Wallace 1997, 10) The display of manliness has universally existed and whereas the monastery is no exception. Nuns are likely to perform the conventional roles of women, where they will be marrying and having children after they are coming out of the monastery, while men can decide on to live their lives as they wish and for comfortability. This kind of splits shows the colossal discrimination between the men and women.

However, Agniko Katha separates from the conventional role of women. When Purnima agrees to leave the monastery in search of Gyan (her friend), she says, "I'm leaving to prove what a female nun can do in her life." (Subedi 2004, 79) It should be noted that Gyan, who is represented as a person, is metaphorically presented as wisdom. Moreover, here, the documentary producer Shekhar Kharel marks in Nepal Magazine (2002) that the nuns and monks discover themselves with the elucidation more than the meaning of the word Gyan (wisdom) in the play. The nuns who start out the journey in search of Gyan the person come back with "Gyan" the wisdom. As a result, they return with the responses to the queries they try to find, with the comprehensions of the transformation of the words of Buddha that they saw burned in front of their eyes.

Purnima's decision to leave the monastery and her inclination to face the material world articulates a whole heap about the shifting roles of women in Nepali theatre and Nepal culture. "When the nun Purnima left the stage, she was asserting the power of a woman. In the history of the Nepali theatre, the central journey of a woman were explored in the Sama Theatre, and it substantiates the significance of a woman's reality and moreover her supremacy symbolizes the new age of women, Purnima, who epitomizes women in general, upsurges directly above the conventional standards and philosophy as she commences to encounter the living conditions where it proves the proficiencies of a woman. The decision taken by Purnima highlights the mindset, struggle, protest and demand of the women in that particular period. The character of Purnima is significant as it empowers women with prerequisite remonstrations that climaxes with the concerns of the contemporary age.

IV. CONCLUSION

Through the above analysis, the present research highlights the importance of women in the society. The decisions of Purnima in do or die situation which focuses the mindset of conventional women on taking the confident decision to face up the world with reality. The inner wisdom of women is heading towards the real-life situation which emphasizes the proficiency and strength of women in a difficult situation and also the empowerment of women. As a result, the consent of women guides them in empowering

the prospect concerning enhancement and even eradicating their weakness in a problematic situation. Especially Purnima's decision-making skills replicate the women in the Nepal theatre and also in the Nepal culture. Besides, this particular action has given an opportunity for women to take specific actions wisely which helps them to be intellectual in the materialistic society. This empowerment brings knowledge, experience, and creativity among the women in this competitive world.

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