

## Conclusion

Once upon a time...

I lived in a country

Utterly discrete from the country

In which I live now

That was a country devoid of

Caste, Class, Religion...

And other divisions.

.....

Then, one day I was born

A baby girl

And things fell apart.

As seen in the preceding chapters, since time immemorial, all across India, women's struggles have originated because of the denial of the existence of a self. Women have been negotiating a space for themselves and trying to search for an identity. However, the Indian feminist literature till the late twentieth century has mainly been the voicing of the experienced realities by middle class women who tried to find a space for themselves beyond the domestic confines of the house. If we trace the Western literature till the same period, it has also been dominated by the waves or diverse groups that though had different mantras to gain freedom from the patriarchal jaws but yet confined the freedom to their respective formulations.

These stances and rebellions have been homogenizing women and demanding them to rigidly adhere to the tenets of being a feminist expounded by different groups.

India is a big mirror to an undifferentiated crowd of unnamed, unknown and faceless people. It is a country with various constructions of mechanical regulations which glance at the masses as homogenous wholes abandoning the microcosms. There are multiple small worlds within India like class, caste, religion, capitalism and Naxalism. This country is no one place and therefore, cannot be seen as a huge uniform mass of people having a common lived reality or the obvious truth is never the only experienced reality. Therefore, the Indian women's search and writings for the desired space and identity have been seen to become more accentuated as the country is divided along many lines of class, caste, religion and many other divisions and marginalities.

### **Class/ Caste Frames Broken**

In *The Space between Us* we see that the fixed position of the two Indian women, Bhima and Sera in the class arrangement of the cultural web of the Indian society is not only supported by the indispensable role of division of the people on the basis of labour and economic capital but also by the submissive consuming of the assembled cultural connotations.

Bhima, sitting under the patched roofs of her small hut understands the plight, exploitation and the lower status of the harijan woman who everyday brooms human waste passively, however, she is oblivious to the same reality of discrimination practiced on her by her upper class *malkin* Serabai. Ironically, the docile victim of patriarchy, Serabai unknowingly enjoys a sense of oneness with the class that has even beaten her up, while employing authority over Bhima. The upper class man-made structures successfully dominate two women in different ways, one is obvious and the second is a victorious shot of the deep-rooted disapproval for the lower in the upper class woman.

Baby in *A Life Less Ordinary* has an understanding of the lack of material resources, as one of the prime conditions of her lower position in the social society. She substitutes this lack by recycling the limited available resources. She not only uses the tool of her education to earn resources for the bright future but also takes up the task of washing and cleaning that is considered filthy by her patriarchs. These jobs are considered demeaning by her patriarchal society as they are believed to dismantle the steps required to project oneness with the uppers. They do not want to break away from the uppers' social constructs and rituals ordained for their women. Baby thus appropriates restricted dominant socio-economic space itself, to subvert the authoritative cultural productions.

Bhima, on the other hand, achieves liberation by leaving the house of Serabai which had become the fulcrum to unearth the roles, positions and meaning working in the socio-economic society. By moving out of the house, she herself becomes the kernel from where the fabricated reality of the constructed society can be clearly seen. She can easily decode the lack of courage, to accept the truth, working in Viraf and Sera's act of throwing her out. The binding base of the society working on the figure of a hero safeguarding it against the evils of lie, cheat, greed and lust is ripped apart by the liberated Bhima.

Bama in *Karukku* narrates many tales of the brave Bondan-*maama* who by the elders of both upper and lower is considered bad. Nonetheless, at the same time, he is loved by the children for his successful transgressions of the constructed boundaries. Through these tales, Bama not only triumphantly wrecks the dominant creation of the Dalit self in the cast of bad, evil, passive and inactive but digs a free space within the Dalit self.

Sujata in *Mother of 1084*, through the contrast of selfless love of young revolutionaries towards various classes and Dibyanath's hypocrite upper-class society strips off the mass of integrity from the latter.

### **Dominant Traditional Religious Myths and Ideologies Perforated**

Draupadi in *Yajnaseni: The Story of Draupadi* is a well-read woman. She is a blend of flexibility and scripted knowledge mandatory to survive in the ever-evolving and changing spaces of this post-modern world. In the assembly hall, after being lost to Kauravas, she questions the order of Yudhishtir's stake to attain her freedom. The traditional narration of disrobing seals the location of Indian wife to be an eternal slavery which can not get altered with situations. However, by showing the entire Kuru clan dumbstruck at Draupadi's' debate on dharma, the difference between the sources and comprehension of knowledge and dharma is unveiled. Draupadi discloses the difference between discussing the written scriptures and the self-formulated moralities and definitions, revealing and authenticating a space where the discourses of dharma, ethics and moralities can be framed in respect to multiple perceptions. Thus, in accordance to the Hindu reverence of dharma, Draupadi does not dismiss it but marks its multiplicities. This puncturing of the fixed idea of dharma not only locates the gaps but banishes the patriarchs as symbolised by the Kuru clan, and their justification of chaining women. The Kurus themselves fail to use their written dharma to battle against the dharmic claims of Draupadi.

Bama in *Karukku* narrates a communal myth. It is a tale of a chaste woman Nallathangaal who is forced to commit suicide because of the socio-economic gendered reality of a Dalit woman. Her own society bolts doors on her. She does not have money to feed her seven children and devoid of a protective husband and education she is left with no choice but to commit suicide. However, her idol along with the idols of her seven children is installed in a shrine. By exploring the language of myths banned to the Dalit community, Bama, first of all, celebrates this profane act and then overthrows one of the significant myth of the dominant Tamil patriarchal culture. The Tamil culture till today celebrates and reveres the chastity of Kannaki who through the power of ideal womanhood had set an

entire city on fire to purge it from sin. Kannaki accomplishes such a divine act only by strictly following the patriarchal codes laid for women's body.

Using her mythical tale, Bama questions the difference between the chastity of a Dalit woman and a Brahmin and thus, she constitutes the Dalit woman through her exclusion from the dominant power structures and at the same time represents these gaps of the dominant religious myths where the selves of the marginalised breathe and become. These are unexplainable gaps of prescribed and practiced. The hollow space in between the two is the fissure where the marginalised identities are constituted. It can also be understood as poststructuralist and psychoanalytic absence always existing in language and unconsciousness.

Bama's further disclosure of the Nallathangaal myth been forgotten by her own community not only threatens the power of myth language but also shows the self-in-becoming which never has a fixed noun or value attached to it.

### **Appropriation of the Prescribed Language**

Pratibha in *Yajnaseni: The Story of Draupadi* undercuts the two main strategies of the dominant literature that produce images which are unquestionably consumed by every Indian. One, the dominant literature uses the language which is a mere construction as its prime device to rule and second it codifies language into various fixed compartments. Nonetheless, Pratibha subverts these strategies by appropriating them.

The old grand narratives like *The Mahabharata* has become a cosmic repertoire of diverse Indian identities. Their fabricated sense of eternity makes them the language and literature to read and grasp the truths and actions of individual socio-economic and political identities. However, Draupadi's helplessness to read herself tainted in one of these central narratives reveals out their construction by language and timely revisions by the communal

objectives of groups and societies which leave certain voices unrecorded. Ray exposes this construction by making Draupadi's narration emerge from the spaces of denial. Everyone knows the Draupadi who swore to plait her hair with Duhshasan's blood but Pratibha's Draupadi narrates how scared she was listening to the words of revenge at her birth. Draupadi's fearful trembling is set against the crude political agendas she has always been depicted as a party to. Pratibha's Draupadi constantly efforts to explain and warn not only the Pandavas but the entire Kuru clan against the dangers of the game of dice but yet the historical grand narrative has been labelling her to be the reason of the biggest bloodshed. Ray uses language to battle the truths affirmed by language.

Ray also uproots the patriarchal genre of epic from elite locations of culture and through the new Draupadi places it amidst the common Indian girls. Unlike the quasi-divine figure of an epic, Draupadi is a common Indian girl for whom life is not a serious matter but a beautiful playful world replete with the joys of love and human desires. This juxtaposition of two languages highlighting the destruction involved disparages the glories of the war fought to keep the fate of nations intact. Ray gives minimum pages and description to the narration or depiction of war rather uses all the possible colours to bring out the joy hidden in human life and happiness of humanly desires. It is also reveals that the protagonist of big stories is not necessarily the male heroes on whose actions rests the destiny of the whole nation but common women who are even acted upon. Ray's Draupadi is born to enact her father's desire and she dies at the will of her husbands, however, she emerges to be victorious by showing these definitions and ideas of ideal heroes to be a mere construct.

Bama in *Karukku* destabilises the prime purpose of the autobiographies in the first line itself. She neither introduces the self nor tries to delineate it to the readers hinting at the impossibility of reading one fixed- identity or coding it into given nouns of the already approved language. Like Pratibha, she also employs the governing language which

is otherwise not allowed to a woman, as her tool to put forward her realities. For instance, by using the myth of Nallathangaal, she brings out the monetary tragedy of Dalits being performed on the body of Dalit women.

### **The Mantras of Globalised/Capitalist Packaged Images Uncovered**

The other kind of patriarchal domination seen operating in *The Space between Us* can be comprehended in the context of the modern global capitalist market which thrives on the concept of packaged images. Viraf is clever to employ the artistic expertise of defamiliarisation. He sells the glamorous features of femininity to prey his aspiring urban professional wife, Dinaz.

However, Muskaan in *Footprint in the Bajra*, through the 'kangaroo courts' and Naxalite spirit of revenge operating in the open killings not only reveals the performances of socio-political establishments and anti-establishments to be working on similar meanings but also exposes the concept of heroic image relished by both the seller and consumer in the capitalist society. By probing into the contracts of the claimed liberal group, she understands her non active and peripheral position in the Naxalite power play. She stumbles on the liberation ideologies that schematise the new images of women to suit the new patriarchal cloak.

### **Engagement with Marginalised Women's Sexuality**

Viraf the modern patriarchal hero in *The Space Between Us* enacts classlessness. He does not rule the lower-class women in the traditional way. In order to satiate his sexual lust, he builds a narrow tunnel where the so-called blasphemous female sexuality can be performed. So instead of class, he fashions and uses women sexuality to captivate the lower-class Maya.

Nevertheless, Through Draupadi in *Yajnaseni: The Story of Draupadi* the changing sexuality of marginalised women can be witnessed. In a scene where the Pandavas and Draupadi are asked by Krishna to make confessions, Draupadi intrepidly confesses her love for Krishna in front of her five husbands. She transgresses the margins of rigid femininity constructed by the moralities of the religion to reveal women as a desiring subject. She is fearless of the patriarchal ethicalities and uncovers herself to come out of the shackles of protection and security. She indomitably writes numerous wishes and pleasures of romantic rendezvous with both Arjun and Krishna overturning the culture where women sexuality has to be kept enclosed both in life and its echo, that is, art.

### **Notions of One Fixed Self Ripped**

Baby in *A Life Less Ordinary* deconstructs the dominant perspective of seeing the woman-self only in relation to her heterosexual body. Baby's husband forces his sexual lust on her but aware of the non availability of recognised spaces of revolt against the sexual exploitation unleashed in the institution of marriage, she does not revolt. However, the same institution when further, placed in the areas of her class, does not even permit her any ideological confrontations, she battles against its various social injustices. These acts launch spaces where the self is untied from her heterosexual body.

Draupadi in *Yajnaseni: The Story of Draupadi* reads the vast chasm lying between the place of culmination called sea and a flowing river juxtaposing it with the gap between the dharmic throne of Hastinapura and herself. This rigid throne is always indifferent to the changing feelings, requirements and emotions of its kingdom. The *kshatriya* dharma of the Pandavas can not make friends with the *kirtas*, the understood devils of the forests but the flowing river Draupadi can. This otherness of Draupadi is not the negative-other but highlights the strong but evolving dependence of human beings and



nature opposing the needs of social structures to place people in the location of the 'self' and 'other'.

Draupadi's desire to be born again as a human destroys the primal desire of *moksha*. It also highlights the difference and multiplicity existing in the seat of the self. She not only negates the existence of one defined self but by placing it in the dharmic design of rebirths reveals the psychoanalytic fact of unfathomable identities lying in the eternal unconsciousness which can not be summoned by collective memories.

Bama in *Karukku* puts two incidents next to each other to unmask the self-formation. The lower-caste Parayas understand their untouchability in the eyes of the upper-caste Naickers but the same Parayas massacres with Pallars, the another lower-caste group even over a ripe banana. This highlights the alternative formations of a self.

In *Mother of 1084* Sujata's personal experiences and memories of Brati's alienation collide and correlate with the visits to four different places filled with varied understood public realities. Each visit marks the interaction of Sujata's self with other selves. This flux of fluid and changing selves formulate and modify her experiences and perspectives, which not only help her to see through the fissures present in the upper class social constructs but also assist her to attain freedom from the social roles.

### **Redefined...**

Therefore, through all the above points we can clearly see that Indian women writings can not be reduced to feminist writing if the latter is just about holding to the already laid fixed doctrines of being a 'feminist'. However, in India, the land of diversities, the spirit of feminism has broken the boundaries of marginalities and works in relation to globalisation and capitalism. The redefined spirit of Indian women's freedom is about who each woman is and what she desires without reducing the freedom to any 'ism' that

homogenises and annihilates distinctions. In the selected Indian women's works, we have seen the writers and their stances of freedom embracing multiplicities of identities and selves that are continuously in the course of shifting, discovering and becoming as they originate from different women's needs and positions.

Rephrasing Draupadi's words:

It is a new beginning...