

Impunity and the Marginalization of Women in Nepal: A Socio-cultural Perspective

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Abstract

The condition of Nepalese women is as adverse as the plight of Nature which is treated by people for their own vested interest. The thinking of people around the world is different from the aesthetic beauty of women as well as Nature. However, we can't expect a world without women or nature. To conserve the integrity and sovereignty of Nature and women is a big problem today. It is the responsibility of the government to preserve women's dignity in society. A rich and prosperous society can't be positively imagined unless men show respect and regard for the empowerment of women.

Marginalized Literature of Nature and Woman

Society expects women to lead an ideal life with qualities like sincerity, purity and truthfulness. These values constitute social norms even though men are found to judge women in terms of physical beauty only.

The steady change in nature lasts for long whereas the hurried change in society evaporates rapidly. Social changes depend on the wish and desire of people. But people ignore "to respect the grandeur of Nature/God"(G.M. Hopkins). And they are lured by social changes of goodness and badness. William Shakespeare, with regard to goodness and badness, states that "nothing is good, nothing is bad, but thinking makes it so" (121). In our social context, men view women as a source of comfort as well as the doers of household chores. Such a viewpoint plays an unhelpful role in a woman's life.

Eastern and Western Rhetoric

The rhetorical myth of "Kana Sarungga (Sada Britch)," a love story, is derived from the ancient Hindu culture. The love story of "Kana Sarungga" is identical to the love story of "Lailla Majanu." Kana and Lailla are the names of female characters, while Majanu and Sarungga are male characters. These traditional Hindu stories are no less ideal than the stories or myths found in "British and American Literatures." Both male and female characters remain restless unless they achieve success in their love affairs.

Media Discourse

Contrary to western society, sex is not open in Nepalese society. Nepalese civilization hardly reflects the system of western civilization. In this sense, western psychology differs from the ethics of Asian countries like Nepal and India. Violence against women is more explicitly reported today in India. But, there is no reduction in violence against women. It affects innocent children too. They are victimized today in the absence of

protective law in Nepal. The law of F.I.R. is inadequate in the case of victims of social crimes. As police personnel arrest guilty and take them to court for hearing, criminals get bail easily at the first hearing without being reprimanded for crime. Sunil Pokharel, the General Secretary of Nepal Bar Association, while speaking at the LAN (Literary Association of Nepal) Annual Conference held in Kathmandu on 1 -2 March 2013, viewed that “rampant impunity in sovereign states and nations is a shame for all of us.” Such impunity is a great threat to Nepalese society. Mr. Pokharel claims that our country does have several laws to protect women’s rights, but they aren’t implemented effectively. The lawyers and human rights activists say that women are not enjoying equal rights, despite several INGOs and NGOs working in Nepal. These foreign agencies are not honest about women’s causes.

Marginalized Nepalese Women

Violence against women is a recurring phenomenon in the name of dowry, witchcraft, and such other matters. Nowhere in the world are women so victimized and marginalized as in Nepal. But this writer has met old women and deprived people well cared for in Wangma Community in Xiachen district, China. But in Nepal, the government isn’t serious in the case of violence against women. Women are vulnerable in our society. Males and females don’t enjoy equal treatment in reality. For example, the birth of a son is treated as equivalent to a goat’s son. Son stands for the male kid of a goat. Likewise, the birth of a daughter is the nomenclature for mercy. She has to live her life on others’ command. Mercy is a derogatory term while talking about women.

Derogatory Word

We can’t imagine a world without women. But Nepalese discerning eyes are different when the question of rights and property sharing arises. Both have separate recognition in this respect. Female’s honour and identity are related socially, politically and economically. But discrimination and injustice against women continue creating a bad impression about society and government policy.

Hindu Myth and the Vedas

There are several corruption and crime-related events in Hindu scriptures. For example, Draupadi’s molester Dushasan in *The Mahabharata*, and Sita's kidnapper Ravana in *The Ramayana* are the glaring cases of violence against women. Prof. Khagendra Prasad Bhattarai, in the first year of M.A. orientation seminar held at Patan Multiple Campus in 2001, made the remark: “A judge gives justice in court but does less justice with his wife in household chores.” Of course, women’s plights are still unheard of as Prof. Dr. Shreedhar Lohani asked M. Phil students attending Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s theory class at a Dhulikhel resort in 2012: “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

We have not framed strict rules to eradicate crime and corruption that pose a threat to women’s empowerment. There are three institutions

which reflect how exploitation and discrimination are committed against women. These institutions are educational, social and cultural in nature. They are transparent in the world of film and orchestra, social fairs and festivals. For instance, there is not a body touch scene and song in the old film and theater. It means westernization has impacted our culture. They are noticeable in *Deushi, Tihar, Tij, Holi* and other such festivals of the Nepalese society. Other social institutions are school, college, restaurant, hospital, hotel, motel and various religious institutions. The third is legal institution, including administrative sectors like court, police station, political forces and jury. These institutions violate women's rights rather than empowering them.

Discrimination against women has a long-rooted history as mentioned above. Prof. Dr. Mohan Prasad Lohani, at the same annual conference of LAN, said, "Crime against women has continued in Nepal even though untouchability was abolished in 1963 A.D."

The Root Cause of Marginalization

Impunity or breach of law is a threat to women and their social movement. People can independently speak in favour of their rights. But they rarely respect social norms and values. Our court releases them (the guilty persons) at the first hearing. Government and non government sectors have become irresponsible to people. This is one of the root causes of how Nepalese cultural system is vulgarized. Political leaders are being lured into self-centered actions. They have lost their moral sensibility and authority.

The west-canonized civilization is being propagated through advertisement in the media. These acts of mimicry are degrading the essence of Nepalese culture. Such blind imitations are visible in daily newspapers, radio, pamphlets, and posters on the street walls. They tend to increase violence against women.

How Women can be Empowered

In a similar vein, Prof. Hriseekesh Upadhyay, in the panel discussion on "Literature of Violence against Woman" held on 2nd March 2013, argued that women's violence affects society badly. He cited the instance of William Shakespeare's sister. She ran away from her home and worked in a theater to develop her career.

Education can empower women. However, educational institutions are becoming expensive and women's position is not yet well-defined today. Policy makers are not actively working for women's empowerment.

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