

FRAGRANCE OF FEMINISM IN TARA PATEL'S POEMS 'WOMAN' AND 'REQUEST'**DR. SUNEETHA YEDLA**

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ABSTRACT**Y.SUNEETHA**

The role of Indian Women in Literature is often quite wide in spectrum. Women are portrayed as second fiddles even women played three roles simultaneously - as a woman, wife and as a professional in their career. It is frequently believed that man is all-powerful, whereas a woman simply plays various roles in all spheres of society. Beginning with our Indian mythology *Manusmrithi*, in which Manu projects women as slaves from the beginning till the end of their life. The two great epics of India, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* give no scope for women. Women are depicted as machines of reproduction in history and still exist. The deep rooted patriarchal system does not allow women to realize and express their roles. In the middle ages the conditions of women become worst than ever. Further the condition was worsened with the origin of superstitions which restricted the movement of women. Women were tortured in the name of tradition and religion.

In the realm of Contemporary Literature Tara Patel occupies a very significant position as a feministic poet against the dominance of men on women by her voice against the patriarchal dominance in Indian Society. Tara Patel exploits her talent as a poet and denounces overtly in her poems. Tara Patel is one of the finest and most distinguished Indian women poets in English who is internationally recognized for her masterpiece, *Single Woman (1991)*. Woman's search for identity, status and individuality because of dominance of men in Tara Patel's poetry is the current theme in the present article.

KEY WORDS: feminism, male dominance, patriarchal system, superstitions*Article Info:*Received on: 20/04/2013Revised From :21/04/2013Accepted on:16/05/2013**INTRODUCTION**

India, the land of myriad colors, has contributed significantly to the world literature. This contribution of India has been chiefly through the Indian writing in English. The nineties and twenties have witnessed a remarkable flowing of Indian Literature in English in all forms – poetry, drama and fiction. Whatever the literary form the role of Indian women in literature is often quite wide in spectrum. Women played second fiddles to men even though they played three roles simultaneously - as a woman, wife and as a

professional in their career. It is role frequently believed that man is all-powerful, whereas a woman is simply offered a supporting as well balancing role in all spheres of society. The notion of woman being is bequeathed to us from our ancestors. Even the great myths of Indian literature portray woman as pathetic living things.

Beginning with our Indian mythology *Manusmrithi*, in which Manu projects women as slaves from the beginning till the end of their life. The two great epics of India --- *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are also in

the same line and give no scope for women for their hope. Women are depicted as machines of reproduction in history and still exist. The deep rooted patriarchal system does not allow women to realize and express their roles. In the middle ages the conditions of women become worst than ever. Further the condition was worsened with the origin of superstitions which restricted the movement of women. Women were tortured in the name of tradition and religion.

In the realm of Contemporary literature Tara Patel is one of the finest and most distinguished Indian women poets in English. She occupies a very significant position as a revolutionary poet against the dominance of men on women. She is widely acclaimed as a revolutionary poet for having raised in poetry her voice rebelliously against the patriarchal dominance which is the casual factor of subordination of women to men in Indian society. Since she started writing in favour of Indian women and against male dominance her voice, tone and terror become predominantly feministic. Tara Patel got international recognition for her masterpiece, *Single woman* (1991). Woman's search for identity, status, and individuality because of dominance of men in Tara Patel's poetry is the current theme in the present article.

As Tara Patel in her master piece *Single Woman* in the chapter "The Role of Assamese Women in the August Revolution of 1942" states that "Women are surpassed even men in the August revolution of 1942 in all its three stages – spontaneous, planned and destructive. The August Revolution presents an inspiring saga of Assamese women's fearlessness, sacrifice and fortitude." (78) By observing all the movements in India Tara Patel exploits her talent as a poet and denounces overtly in her poems the tradition that empowered the male to subject the women to subservience and circumscribe their individual rights.

Fragrance of Feminism in *Woman*:

Tara Patel's poem, *Woman* expresses her sense of exploitation at being born a woman and pathetically confesses her intense yearning for love, care and understanding, as she is traumatized by the plutocratic

establishment's indifference and utter callousness. Her peculiarly powerful poem engages a dual, sadist-masochist approach, of torture and self flagellation and an escape that merely intensifies the longing to be healed and cared for. Her poem, as most Indo-Asian women's poetry, does not outline any feminist agenda but claims and compels attention as woman in search for identity, recognition and a space of her own obliterating the barbed margins. The first few lines in *Woman* express the kind of situation that most women go through. She says:

A woman's life is a reaction to the crack of a whip.
She learns to dodge it as it whistles around her
But sometimes, it lands on the thick, distorted
welt of her memory....

A reminding her of lessons learned in the past.

Here the 'whip' becomes symbolic of the instrument of authority in the hands of patriarchy used to beat women into compliance. In this Tara Patel gives an insight into the fate of woman's life in a male-dominated world in her poem *Woman*, of how woman's life is a long saga of pain inflicted upon by patriarchy. But that pain ultimately takes the shape of rebellion:

Then in rebellion she turned her face
to the whip, till pain became a river in flood
wreaking vengeance.

Tara Patel is obsessed by the question of feminine egotism and identity. She rejects the male dominance with the objective of achieving freedom and equality with men. In her poem *Woman* Tara Patel writes:

It is easy to dismiss All men as bastards
Perhaps I need to do a course in male psychology
With extensive practicals

Tara Patel's voice in *Single Woman* is the voice of protest against woman exploitation, drawing a distinct line of demarcation between the women of the past and the present: "I cannot live like you, mother/maintain the status quo

I daresay your discovery of sex/was not wonderful
..... Love is an illusion I've lived /with for so long,
mother/although you never inspired it." Some lines

quoted in the poem *Woman* represent woman as a convict, a refugee or a yogi –

She ran away to live as an escaped convict,

Or a refugee,

Or a yogi in the wilderness of civilization.

Beneath the thick, distorted welt of her memory,

She dreams.

The key concept of the poem *Woman* depicted in the above quoted lines. Tara Patel's presentation of sense of traversing is a wider trajectory of the cultural diversity along with the ideological positionality of the women.

Fragrance of Feminism in *Request*:

Tara Patel's voice gradually changes in her poem *Request*. The perception of the Modern Indian Poetry by women represents that they all are anti-male is not true as all of them do reject men or are altogether anti-male. Tara Patel also presents the same in her poem *Request*. The main concept is -- her longing for love and companionship that never meets its due satisfaction. Tara Patel has to literally beg for it in the stated lines:

But because I'm pining for an old pleasure,

Have lunch with me one of these days.

I miss you most when I'm eating alone.

A man should look up a woman sometimes

for old times' sake.

For reasons other than those which are obsolete.

She also talks about loneliness that many women experience due to an overrated or underrated life which is depicted simply and realistically in her poem, *Request*.

Sometimes for old times sake

You should look me up.

Have lunch with me, I'll pay the bill...

The thought expressed in the above quoted lines brings out and realize the irony hidden between the lines "Have lunch with me, I'll pay the bill". Tara Patel speaks about post-colonial identity and personal struggle of women in her life in the poems called "*Woman*" and "*Request*". *Request* is the poem, in which Tara Patel presents her longing for love with emotional tone yet succeed in bringing the reality to the fore in the lines mentioned –

It is not your lack of love which distresses me anymore.

I'm no longer obsessed with a blind emotion

Which promises everything and nothing?

You have to be young forever to be in love.

By the quoted lines revealed states that Tara Patel tries to show the feminine role in the society. Her works do not work as revolutionary spirit against the society nevertheless portrays the society as it is.

Tara Patel's poems *Woman* and *Request* are most convincing to women readers who approach it to identify themselves with the inner sight of the poet and see the world through the eyes of a haunted woman. Most of her poetry concerns itself with the poet's intensely felt need for declaring all about herself, about her desire for love, her emotional involvement and her failure to achieve such a relationship. Her poetry is crises-crossed by soul searching, self analysis, introspection and looking deep into oneself, which is why she is called one of the best Indian English woman poets of modern times. Tara Patel also endowed with strong Indian sensibility; she depicts women's issues and problems very deeply in her poetry. Among the Indian women poets Tara Patel follow footsteps of kamala das in denouncing the supremacy of male.

CONCLUSION

As concluding remarks I would say, *Woman's* voice was heard throughout the ages but only in the songs sung to highlight the spiritual yearning in the lyrics and the passionate love songs. Indian women for long have been encircled in the pain and suffering of orthodox society. Solution for this problem begins with the social reformers 'Raja Ram Mohan Roy', 'Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar' and 'Veeresalingam Panthulu' who fought for education for women, and remarriage of widows and for assertion of their rights. But the pace of reformation is still slow. The voice of woman in society is yet to be heard, though women in India have been fortunate enough to occupy high and honorable places of power. But the fact remains that traditional women are yet to liberate themselves from the unreasonable beliefs of Indian society. It cannot be denied that there are clear differences between male and female temperaments and this difference would

show in everything to which both genders turn their hand. By knowing all these women have to raise their voices against this patriarchal tradition, where we would find literature analyzed on the basis of its own merits and not on the basis of gender.

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