

Review Paper**Echoes of Resistance: A Study of *Monsoon* and *The Dissident MLA*.****Nisha Narang¹ and Nazish Khan^{2*}**¹-Research Scholar, SBS, Government P G. College, Rudrapur, Uttarakhand, India.²-Assistant Professor, Department of English, SBS Government P G. College, Rudrapur, Uttarakhand, India.**Article history**

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Department of English,
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College, Rudrapur,
Uttarakhand, India.**Abstract**

Resistance is an outcome of oppression of the powerless and the marginalized by the powerful people of any society. People show their resistance when they cannot muster physical courage to fight. Back in 1960s, women in literature were not shown with courage and power to fight the oppression inflicted upon them, they chose resistance as a tool to voice against the prevalent malpractices against their sex. The present paper studies two plays (*Monsoon* and *The Dissident MLA*) by Asif Currimbhoy and tries to highlight the resistance shown by the prime characters of aforesaid plays.

Keywords- resistance, rebellion, hegemony, victimization, subordination, oppression.

Asif Currimbhoy is one of the most important dramatists of post-independence Indian Theatre. Fabian Bowers says that he is "a playwright of International stature and India's first authentic voice in the literature" (p.07) Born in a Khoja Muslim family of Goa, after getting some early education in Bombay he went to the U.S. for higher education where he became the witness of several dramatic productions which revived in him the dramatic interest and inspired him to follow the same path; he chose to write drama because he thought that emotions can be well expressed by dramatizing only. Although most of his plays are male centered and have male protagonists but his women characters are enchanting despite the fact that they have not given much dialogues by the writer, they do not fail to cast a long lasting impression over the audience. Currimbhoy is the first playwright to present a modern image of women through his dramas, his women characters are lively, and do not fail to stand against the society when they need to.

In Indian literature women for long have been presented as victimized subordinates of men and they also seem satisfied with their roles accredited by the patriarchal society. They willingly accept the subordination as their duty towards the men of the society or of the house. This state of hegemony is clearly visible in the women of our society when they are unable to perceive that they are subordinated and they become accustomed of the domination by the patriarchy. Women do not even realized that they are dominated or oppressed they take everything to be their fate and willingly surrender to it.

The willing acceptance of veil in women, wearing nose-pins; which was once used to symbolize taming, and accepting happily to stay at homes, doing domestic chores and breeding children is also a form of hegemony. Women do not even realize that they have been subordinated; in matter of domestic help they keep their husbands out and say it is their own duty to cook, all these things are made for them only, but they do not realize that these things have been made for them to keep them busy at homes.

Though most of the plays of Asif are male oriented yet his women characters are more powerful than his men. His women characters are always fighting against the norms of the 'male society' which are imposed on them. They are not satisfied with the place they are provided; they struggle to create their own niche in this male dominated society. No woman of Asif is at ease with her status and position; they are fluttering as birds to break the cage they are locked in. Asif has not presented them as 'angel in the house' but 'rebel in imprisonment'. His women characters such as *Monsoon*, *Sumita*, *Rose*, *Elizabeth*, *Shanti*, *Sonal*, *Rita*, etc. are remarkable in their own way. Asif has not given his women characters proper room to grow yet they stand as a tower and play important role in his plays. *Monsoon* and *Rose* are his two characters which are central in stories. Where *Rose* is a dumb girl, *Monsoon* does not speak much, yet we can trace the rebellion against the patriarchal order in them. The present paper tries to trace the element of rebellion against the patriarchy in *Monsoon* and *Shanti*, and highlights the way they carved a niche for themselves, and discusses the problems they faced in way to achieve this place and also describes their journey as real rebel and their moves of rebellion.

Monsoon is the titular character of the play *Monsoon*, she is a simple girl who does not know much about the world, all her childhood she spent as a captive in the house of Tuan Andrew but when time demands she comes out to be an incarnation of resistance. When the play opens *Monsoon* is a girl of six or seven, she is seen before *Ling's* restaurant with her grandmother who is a blind beggar. *Monsoon* is groping her grand-mother's way as a blind woman's stick. She catches quick attention of Tuan Andrew because of her

'watery eyes' that reminds him of monsoon clouds so he names her as Monsoon. We are not told about her parentage or real name but her story starts when Tuan notices her and starts making designs about his plan of Immaculate Conception. Monsoon seems to be an epitome of purity to Tuan and he thinks her to be the best carrier to bring an angel like Christ into this world. Tuan is a religious fanatic, he thinks himself to be angelic, who has power to bring god into life and chooses Monsoon for this conception. Monsoon's resisting nature can be noticed from the very beginning of the play when Tuan Andrew takes her to his house in order to give her Christian teachings. She never pays full attention to Tuan Andrew, she always repeats the same line about what her grandmother says. She never fully surrenders herself to the teachings of Tuan. Even After spending many years with Tuan Andrew when he calls her to anoint his back with oil she does not appear quick, she stands still behind the shield. Even when he asks to consummate their so called marriage with him she resists, although since childhood she is taught that she has been brought and raised by Tuan Andrew with sole purpose to bear a child from him in future.

Monsoon is very powerful although she is only fourteen; she shows the traits of being a super woman. When Andrew falls sick, she calls Dr. Juan for him but when she goes into labor she does not ask Dr. Juan's help even when he asks her if she wants to ask for something she denies, after sending him off from her house she gives birth to the baby all alone. When she goes into labor she exclaims her rebellious plans thus-

I ...know... why... you... want... the... child... so... badly... I ...know...
But ...know ...for ...now... I... shall ..bear... the ...child ...you... wanted... there ...is... no ...other... way... to
...revenge...you... (p.115)

Only after this statement we get to know that she has kept something hidden in her mind for Tuan Andrew and there is a lot more that is unpredictable about this girl. Soon Monsoon bears a girl child, she is always skeptical about the intentions of Tuan, she never leaves her child alone with her father, she always keeps an eye upon him when he is with the little girl; in fact Monsoon never accepted Tuan as a husband, she always held him to be a potential danger for her as well as for her child. We can see the peak of her rebellious character when at the end of the play Andrew drags her to throw out of the house, she asks him a last moment with her child, she never wants to leave her child with a man who has never been a good person to her, who always considered Monsoon to be a part of an experience, she never wants her daughter to undergo the same circumstances she went through. She does not trust Andrew so when he drags her to throw out of the house she begs him for one last moment with her child and strangles her to death so that she can never be hurt by a male only to prove his experiment or ideology true. The last dialogues by Monsoon are heart tearing when she strangles her daughter and says-

Nothing, nothing will come in the way of my stopping you, Andrew Tuan... (pg.146)

Though Tuan Andrew kills Monsoon in the end yet she wins the battle of motherhood to protect her child from the life of suffering and did not let Tuan Andrew succeed in his evil designs.

Monsoon is a play of protest and rebellion, Monsoon never surrenders in front of the black designs of Tuan Andrew, she is always alert to the teachings taught, never resigns herself fully. She is always suspicious of him and threatened to his designs but cannot rebel openly. The thought of taking revenge on Tuan Andrew for snatching the childhood and her only relative from her is always there in her heart, she is always waiting for the day when she can retaliate. The day comes when she has to choose between her and her daughter so she chooses the freedom of her dear daughter and denies the same suffocating life for her by setting her free from the bondage of body.

The Dissident M.L.A is a historical play on political theme; it is based on 1974 riots of Gujarat and the Dissolution of assembly. Manu is an M.L.A of Ahmadabad, he is dissident because he is never satisfied with his position and always craves for more, and to get higher position than his present one he uses some strategies against government to become M.P. He uses the university students through his son Rajesh who is a university student as well. Manu is the central character of the play but Shanti, his wife is an equally important character, though just like the other female characters of Asif, she has not been given much room and dialogues, still she is capable to attract the attention of readers.

Shanti is the wife of Manu, unlike the Indian wives, who blindly follow their husbands whether they are right or wrong, she is always seen resisting the actions of her husband. She does not passively surrenders to her husband for doing wrong to her, treating her ill, using her as a servant, for not giving her proper respect as a wife is given, she always fights back and blames him for using her as a house maid, she even tells Ramesh that she has been just clearing the mess that his father has been spreading for last twenty four years. Shanti is not a silent sufferer, she knows her rights and ways to get them, she is not happy with the treatment she gets from her husband and when she talks to Ramesh about their relationship she exclaims-

And who clears the muck then, do you know? Me! me! That's what I've been doing for the last twenty-four years. (pg.10)

Shanti always craves for a normal husband-wife relation, she is seen trying to turn things right with her husband but all goes in vain because Manu does not show any interest in her, he is always occupied with his thoughts over the political matters, strategies for

getting his position in the party back. Shanti cannot bear the way she has been treated by her husband; she is on revolt against her husband. She even asks Ramesh, her son to treat his father the way she has been treated all her life, she exclaims that she wants Ramesh to put disgrace over his father; she never wants him to follow his father's footsteps.

Shanti is a woman and has a woman's longings and desires, all she needs is love and respect, but she gets insult and abuses in return. She knows that she is harsh towards her husband but the long journey of twenty four years with her abusive and rude husband has made her the way she is, she herself says to her son that when she married Manu she was 'Like a gulab'(pg.10). She justifies her changed behavior in these lines-

You make me mad. You think you're the only person with the right to be mad. What about a woman? Woman's pain...and woman's pleasure...goes deeper. (pg.31)

Shanti knows this fact that Manu loves their son Ramesh; anything done by Ramesh against Manu will hurt him most so she wants Ramesh to go against his father and become a matter of embarrassment for his father. While talking about her aspirations to bring shame to her husband she exclaims-

That useless father of yours, Ramesh. Smelt of bad breath every time he kissed.....and the rest was worst. Grow up and disgrace him, son. You know what he'll do then? He'll shine through you, my noble, beautiful boy. But ...you...down...him! He sucked life out of me. Do not let him escape. (pg.09)

Shanti is the only character of Asif who is given dialogues, though her part is short still we find her fighting the odds of her married life, she always tries to turn things right and wants to live a normal life but this male dominated society never recognizes her worth as a woman. Manu is an arrogant man who looks upon women with disdain, the way he treats Sonal and Shanti is a clear example of his misogyny. He calls Ramesh his own son and calls Shanti 'a dung heap' (pg.09). Shanti is fearless, she does the same treatment she gets from her husband, she is not fearful of the patriarchal society she lives in; she has her own voice and her own identity and she knows how to express her true personality.

Woman in Indian Literature is commonly presented as a passive member of the society with no important role to be played, she is portrayed as mother, wife or beloved, shown doing traditionally imposed roles, whether she is a doctor or a high-rank officer she is first and foremost presented as a woman full of feminine virtues like she has to be emotional, sentimental, sensuous, obedient, beautiful, concerned so and so, there is a set image of a woman in literature or popular shows that is approved by the society but while creating a woman the writer sometimes seems to forget that there is a human in her who can refute, resist, shout, yell and deny, she can also have anger, hunger, passion, rebel and a persona of her own, which does not match with anyone else. It is the misfortune that whenever a woman rises her voice against these stereotypical show-off she is said to keep a mum as people expect her to be portrayed like this only; when she asks for equal rights and freedom she is termed as 'feminist', not as 'humanist'. A woman is taken to be a mother, wife, beloved but this patriarchal system denies all the possibilities to consider her as a 'human'. Several examples show that even if she has a towering persona, she has to either follow society or has to face its revolt.

Asif is one of those early writers who started presenting Indian woman untraditionally modern and strong and created a different scenario. In a patriarchal society like ours, women are birds in the cage although the bars are virtual and made of emotions, societal fears, sentiments, and orthodox customs, patriarchy shuts them with or without power. Asif skillfully tried to be a voice of Indian women and portrayed some of the most powerful characters of Indian English Literature. His characters like Monsoon and Shanti were not given enough dialogues or space as compared to their male counter parts but they still manage to create a place for their own and leave a permanent mark on his audience.

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