

The Stoning of Soraya M. - Interrogating the Denial of Identity for Women

Dr. Shreya Karmal, N., Associate Professor, Department of English, SSV College,
Valayancheruvu, Ernakulam, Kerala

shrekarmaln@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The research paper entitled "The Stoning of Soraya M. - Interrogating the Denial of Identity for Women" probes into the way Soraya, the title character is denied identity and voice in the religious patriarchal State of Iran. The religious fundamentalists join the State and adopt an illiberal patriarchal stance which redefines the words of the Divine against the woman and silence her. The pathetic condition of the woman who is sentenced to death by stoning makes the readers to question the notions of divine justice, morality, sexuality and gender relations.

Key words: Denial, Justice, Identity.

Violence against women is not a new or recent phenomenon. History of women's oppression shows that patriarchy has often sought the help of religions and has misread Scriptures to silence women and their rights. Holy Words are often being misinterpreted or read whenever the dominant 'self' wants to subordinate the 'other' in terms of gender and sexuality. There is often the convergence of the power of the State and religion. The State sanctions the authority of religious patriarchy to exert its dominance. Feminist voices have often questioned the patriarchal exegeses or interpretations of Scriptures.

Trials on women based on religious patriarchy can be seen through all the ages. The so-called religious authorities whenever exerted their feudal power have always demanded purity and subservience on the part of women. They have also sought the help of the State to exert their authority. Whenever the State becomes hegemonic, the rulers have sought the help of religion too. So the oppression of women always depends on a hierarchical structure constructed by the State as well as the religion. Religious trials with the help of the State are narrated through many literary works. In England, during the Middle Ages, women were punished by accusing them of heresy and during the early Modern Era, women who stood against the authorities have been executed in the name of witchcraft. Soraya's story of injustice which happened in Iran in the 1980s is also an exercise of power both by the religion as well as the State.

The Stoning of Soraya M., written by Freidoune Sabetjani, articulates the injustices and hardships which the women of Iran have faced from the oppressive hegemonic State with the help of patriarchal construction of meanings for the Holy Texts. The writer narrates the terrible real life of a thirty five-year old Iranian woman, Soraya, who has been stoned to death for having been disloyal to her husband. The accusation has been fake and has been made by her husband Ghorban Ali in order for him to marry a young girl. To get rid of Soraya (as he did not want to pay for her) Ali conspires with the Mullah and the Mayor of the village. Ali threatens the Mullah and says that he will expose the past life of the Mullah.

Soraya is compelled to take care of Hashem, a widower. Later she is accused of adultery with Hashem. The widower is also a perfect accomplice for the hegemonic patriarchal powers which dictate the norms and rules. There is no one other than her aunt Zahra, to support Soraya in her powerless situation. It is Zahra who later details the story to Sabetjani. Soraya has had to undergo hard trials and is eventually sentenced to death by stoning. This story of