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## **Feminism**

(Nature and Relevance)

■ Dr. Prakash S. Tale

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**Plight of Aruna Shanbaug in Pratibha Jadhav's Monologue**

**Mi Aruna Bolteya**

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Pratibha Jadhav is a well-known critic, speaker, author, solo actor, story teller, anchor, singer and Head, Marathi Department of Arts, Commerce and Science College, Lasalgaon Tal. Niphad Dist. Nashik, (MS). Recently she has emerged as one of the most significant writers in Marathi literature. She is a representative of fervent Feminist voice and she becomes the spokeswoman of all victimized women in society. She has written *Akshracha Daan* (Collection of Poems), *Sanwad Shwas Maza*, Poetry Collection (2020) which is translated by Dr. Kishor N. Ingole entitled 'Dialogue My Life' from Marathi into English. She has presented the monologues such as *Mi Aruna Bolteya* (2015), *Mi Savitri Bolteya* (2018), *Mi Asifa Bolteya* (2021). She got various awards from different NGOs of Maharashtra State. She has presented her monologues abroad also. She declares that literature is not only a reflection of life in general but also it has a social function to perform. She did not believe in the dictum of 'art for art's sake' she believed in 'arts for life's sake'.

Violence against women in India has never been uncommon phenomenon. Women in the Indian society have been victims of humiliation, torture and harassment as one can observe from written records and newspaper reports. *Mi Aruna Bolteya* is a monologue written by Pratibha Jadhav in the Marathi language. It is based on the tragedy of Aruna Shanbaug, was an Indian nurse who was sexually assaulted by a ward boy, Sohanlal Bhartha Walmiki, a sweeper on contract at the KEM Hospital, Mumbai. Aruna Shanbaug was born in 1948 in Haldipur, Uttar Kannada, Karnataka. She worked as a nurse at the King Edward Memorial Hospital (KEM) in Mumbai. Aruna was a fair, pretty young girl with dreams in her eyes. She had been working in the neurosurgery department and later on shifted to the dog surgery department. She was in charge of proper feeding of dogs, cleanliness in the operation theatre and kennels. The nurse's changing room had been on the fifth floor but due to climbing up and down the stairs, Aruna along with Sister Mary changed her uniform in the basement of CVTC. She had been saving money for her marriage. She was engaged to a doctor employed at the same hospital. But destiny had something

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different in store for her. She caught up with a quarrel with Sohanlal who often disobeyed and answered back on pretext of stealing mutton and milk, food meant for dogs. And the day arrives when Sohanlal plans to rape. He attacked her while she was changing her clothes in the hospital basement. He choked her with a dog chain and sodomized her. She died of pneumonia on 18 May 2015, after being in a persistent vegetative state for nearly 42 years.

Pratibha Jadhav, while presenting the monologue '*Me Aruna Bolteya*', expressed Aruna's bloody pain, touched her heart and told her about Aruna's past. In fact, not only did Aruna want to show the wounds of body and mind to Pratibha Jadhav, but she conveys the message that this should not happen in future. She gives a slap to masculinity ruined by lust. She makes you think. (Jadhav 15) This monologue gives an account of woman subjugation. It shows that how a rape leaves the victim victimized for the entire life.

She didn't make any crime but she was punished like rape. Her real life, the manifestation of silence needs to come before society. This is done by Pratibha Jadhav in a monologue called '*Mi Aruna Bolteya*' with very lively acting. Today, women are bullied in the streets, in the alleys, in solitude and in the crowd also. The monster in man is reborn every day. In an environment where a woman is harassed on a daily basis, a sensitive woman like Pratibha Jadhav has presented a disturbing reality.

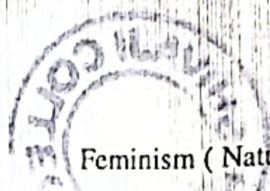
Jyoti Dharmadhikari (poet, professor, writer, Maharashtra Times) says, "the monologue will remind the society of the wrongdoings again. Through this monologue, Pratibha Jadhav has brought to the notice of the society the pain on which the dust of time was falling in the form of '*Mi Aruna Bolteya*'. We see the death of 'Aruna Shanbagh' as a third person, so the distance is created and the pain of grief is tolerated for some time. But Pratibha Jadhav lives by presenting with the real 'Aruna'. Pratibha Jadhav explains Aruna's biography by entering a foreign country. In this monologue, she has unveiled the story of a painful life and raised the cry behind it." (Jadhav 19)

The incident that Aruna suffered was not just a rape but a reprehensible incident in which she had to be confined in the same room for four decades. At that stage, Pratibha Jadhav presents a series of thoughts that may come to Aruna's mind. The wording done by Pratibha Jadhav is important, the dialogues of the monologue, Aruna's outcry, pain, sorrow are conveyed to the audience along with that. Through this monologue, Pratibha Jadhav has taken the society on a progressive path.

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Aruna Shanbag is a fictional story but unfortunately an unsettling fact. Monologue is a very effective medium and Pratibha Jadhav has used this medium to the fullest to present it to the people. Aruna is a victim. Trying to observe male lust, society, family and the future definitely brings tears to one's eyes and results in fists being covered with hatred. Aruna, who is covered with sorrow, Aruna who is suffering, and Aruna, who has been fluttering inside for the rest of her life till the last breath of pain, is powerfully presented by Pratibha Jadhav. Aruna, who was caught up in a childhood game, then a fascinated young woman playing in a golden dream, and then Aruna, who was torn apart in one fell swoop and saw her countless, squirming life with helpless eyes, was powerfully presented by Pratibha Jadhav. In a very limited way, without exaggeration of compassion and emotion, one by one petals of pain should be peeled off and the scars of emptiness, blood clots should be left behind with hot rods. After Pratibha Jadhav's presentation, the clotted blood stays in the back.

Pratibha Jadhav says, "We have to change this whole thing: who is going to change it ....there is no one else, you have to change this picture together....In the hope that someone else will come and change, 'this will change, he will change and then the country will change; if there is no such thing, it should be like 'We will change, the country will change'. (Jadhav 15)

Pratibha Jadhav's dialogue shows the pathetic condition of Aruna. She utters, "Save me, help me, so I cried a lot. But at midnight, the noise from the basement did not go upstairs, I lay there all night ... like a corpse ... By torturing that beast I was strangled by a thick chain tied around the neck of the dog ....My brain vein was severely injured in this attack. And I became a living corpse ...A living corpse.... a living corpse.... a friend picked me up, put me on a hospital bed....I was in a very sad, miserable condition ...Shown on television, published in paper. I had become a corpse ...My body is still alive but lifeless. It was lying on the bed of ward no. 4 in the hospital. The heart starts beating because it is alive. As the slow breathing started ...Because some fluid was flowing in the stomach through the rubber tube inserted in the nose ...Sometimes I want to move my eyes, to blink ...Sometimes I would roll my eyes. (Jadhav 13)

Because even today Damini, Nirbhaya, Gudiya are being tortured. A girl is tortured in a power mill in broad daylight. One of our sisters, who had raped in a moving bus, is thrown naked on the side of the road in the midst of a torn intestinal tract in the middle of the night

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with death torture. Just as a three-year-old girl is raped, so does a 60-year-old woman. This means that the situation is not only improving but also deteriorating. The condition of a woman from time immemorial seems to be the same. When will society think of women as a person, as a man? It's a big problem. This question is bothering many others like Pratibha Jadhav and herself. Aruna passed away and Pratibha Jadhav wrote a poem during that day. In her poem, *Once There was an Aruna*, Pratibha Jadhav describes the pain of Aruna Shanbagh, who endured inhuman atrocities and breathed her last.

How much you endured

My intellect was zero!

Aruna how you have turned

From virgin into grandmother? (Dialogue My Life 34)

These above lines tell us about Aruna's suffering. From these lines the poet Pratibha Jadhav has the power to paint a grim picture of how helpless Aruna must have endured in her life. The poet is mentally suffered by the injustice done to Aruna. And she writes,

You have seen in the seasons, just the deadly summer...

Then the words have been morose on you (Dialogue My Life 34)

The atrocities committed against her were so horrible that the poet has given a heartbreaking description of the sudden end of Aruna's life.

The well-known poet Vijayalaxmi Ramod<sup>\*</sup> says, "While presenting the monologue *Mi Aruna Bolteya*, Pratibha Jadhav had expressed Aruna's bloody pain which touched her heart and she told about Aruna's past." (Jadhav 22) This monologue catches on the nerve of readers. Aruna's life has a specimen of interest of writers, filmmakers and doctors to try new ideas and test their innovation. Gender issue is a favourite issue of any woman today. When gender issues are discussed, gender difference, subjugation, glass-ceiling, and sexual preferences are the important issues. Reaction to these issues, are greatly influenced by the socialization the Indian female receives since birth.

While giving the review by Swati Sharma and Sushma Suri on the book, *Aruna's Story: the true account of a rape and its aftermath* written by Pinki Virani they comment, "The story evokes a chilling sensation that has created disturbance in whole arena of thoughts. There is no instance in the story that can be cherished. The reader feels sorry for Aruna. When we try to empathize with the character there are certain thoughts that are questioned. What is the need for empathy? There are several stories like Aruna. We have seen documentaries, art films and

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commercial films that show immense poverty, immense subjugation of women which made an impact on all of us. But the story of Aruna makes us feel disturbed, helpless and often restless. (Sharma and Suri 3)

To my mind, Pratibha Jadhav's treatment of women seems more sympathetic and genuine than the other writers in Marathi literature. Thus through her dauntless fervor Pratibha Jadhav states the pitiable and pathetic condition of women in Indian society. Due to horrible treatment meted out to women in various parts of the world in general and in particular, it is essential to take women's liberationist attitude in the interest of women themselves.

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