

Patriarchal Revenge – Feudal Retribution

Nearly a month elapsed since the ghastly rape and murder of yet another young woman, Disha in Hyderabad which led to widespread outrage and anguish. The four alleged suspects were shot down by the police with their usual canard of encounter in self defense. There were stern condemnations of rape and celebrations of instant justice mainly by the political leaders. However the important issues of creating a safe environment for women and of securing the rule of law and due process still remain unaddressed. And they are going to remain unaddressed given the record of the Indian polity for, at least, one and half century.

On the TV screens we had seen several MPs expressing their anguish over the Disha case in the parliament. It is shocking that they could not think beyond death penalty. Then it became not a surprising thing when they said -justice- was done to the victims by way of gunning down of suspects by the police. This clearly shows that democratic values and ethos have not taken root in the society and it still mired in feudal and patriarchal practices and values.

Rape in feudal society used to be enacted on the helpless women of poorer sections as a part of feudal oppression which often takes the form of feudal retribution. The so-called development designed by the imperialism has changed the parameters. Depicting women as sex symbols and corrupting the minds of young generation has taken many forms. The new set up kept the feudal male supremacy unchanged adding consumerist culture and this is leading to heinous crimes on women.

Ending sexual violence is not a political priority for the government or the opposition. It makes a lot of noise whenever such crime was reported and takes certain steps to assuage wounded feelings of the kith and kin of the victim as well as those of people at large. The unspent Nirbhaya fund is one example. Set up after the Nirbhaya case, it accumulated Rs.3600 crore till date, out of which Rs.3409 crore is unused. The Supreme Court has the following comment: -Post-Nirbhaya, many amendments were introduced in the criminal law redefining the ambit of offences, providing for effective and speedy investigation and trial. Still statistics could reveal the desired results could not be achieved-. The National Crime Records Bureau reports that 32,559 cases of rape were registered in 2017 and there were 1,33,813 rape cases pending before courts in 2016.

Today more and more women go out of homes for education or work or recreation. More and more women, many of whom are sole bread winners for their families toiling in odd jobs at odd hours and commute day and night. The State after state governments issuing notifications allowing the women to work in night shifts in all registered factories placating it as empowerment of women. Under such a situation, providing safety to women is primarily the duty of the government. It is done more in verbose talk than in action.

As the Disha case again showed, repeated failure of the government to provide safety for women coupled with delayed action and apathy shown by law enforcement agency leading to agitation and unrest among the people. To cover up the failure and assuage the feeling of people, it became a common recourse to enact fake encounters with impunity. No one - from the common man on the street to the politicians and to the Chief Justice of India to the first citizen of India - has any doubt that the encounter is fake. Many believed that this extra judicial killing was ordered by the Chief Minister himself. All most all the representatives of ruling class parties expressed their satisfaction that the justice was done to the victim and congratulated the higher officials of police and Chief Minister for this act of instant justice. It is surprising to see that entire media took for granted that the four

suspects are the real perpetrators of the crime even before the police filed the FIR. This reminds one proverb that call a dog as mad one before killing. There remains forever one question unanswered; why those four suspects were silenced?

The entire episode reveal gain that there is no democratic values among the law makers as well as the law enforcement agencies who are supposed to function according to the Constitution and uphold the rule of law. That is why we have the heading for this write up; both the rape and murder of Disha and the killing of four suspects are feudal and patriarchal in natures which are intertwined. The cries for instant justice also smacks of feudal mind set.

As a citizen of India one has to think over and question our selves: How and why we became insensitive to incidents like slapping a child, beating a -disobident- wife, sexual violence by army men in North East and Kashmir, scores of atrocities on dalits, lynching of Muslims and began to consider them as normal?

The sexual violence against women will be stopped unless there is a radical change in the present society in all - economic, political and cultural - its fronts. Yet one has to demand for immediate safety measures that have to be provided by the government and its agencies. Retributive actions in the name of instant justice will not solve the problems faced by women. Rather it tends to strengthen the hands of present oppressive rule.
