



You too turned out to be just like the Gurus, Galav, Living document of patriarchy conspiracy: Madhavi

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Received: 18 Sep 2024; Received in revised form: 17 Oct 2024; Accepted: 24 Oct 2024; Available online: 30 Oct 2024
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Abstract— *'Madhvi'* is an age-old story of women living and dying in traditional cultural-moral confines, whose consciousness, intelligence, thinking-vision, thought-conscience have been deliberately pushed to the margins by the patriarchal system. The purpose of this paper is to understand the cruel story of the transformation of Madhavi, who is gifted with unique and divine qualities (Possessing intact virginity and becoming the mother of Chakravarti sons) by a father and lover dyed in the dark hues of idealism and greatness, and then the conceptual journey and development process of her becoming an idealist woman in the context of motherly role.



Keywords— *Drama, Mahabharata, Women's Identity, Intact virginity, Everlasting youth, Patriarchy*

I. INTRODUCTION

'Mahabharata' depicts the narrative of 'Madhvi' from the 106th chapter of *Udyogparva* to the 123rd chapter. Madhavi was the daughter of *Yayati*, the fifth king of the Chandra dynasty born in *Nahushkul*. The basis of the plot of the play is this *Madhavi*, which *Yayati* donated to Galav, the disciple of *Vishwamitra*, so that by the virtue of her unique qualities he could be freed from the debt of his *Gurudakshina* and the demon arrogant *Yayati* would not get discredit. Unable to repay it on his own, a failed and frustrated *Galav* is inclined to commit suicide. But, at the last moment, *Vishnu* sends *Garuda* as a *Brahmin* to save him, who advises him to go to the buckler of munificent *Yayati*, who has taken *Vanaprastha*. In such a situation, when it was impossible to find 800 black hued (*Shyamkarni Ashwamedhi*) horses with any one king in the whole of *Aryavarta*, *Yayati*, in the arrogance of his magnanimity and greatness, he donated his only daughter *Madhavi* to fulfil this impossible task. *Madhavi* had a boon that the son born from her womb would be the *Chakravarti* emperor and more than that, after childbirth, *Madhavi* could regain her appearance and youth by taking 'virginity' by performing some religious rituals again. The guarantee of *Chakravarti* sons and the boon of perpetuity are the yardsticks of *Madhavi's* evaluation. She

lives in the abode of three kings, gives them sons and sexual pleasures, and in return *Galav* gets two hundred *Shyamkarni Ashwamedhi* horses from each king respectively. For the last two hundred horses, *Madhavi* herself decides to leave *Galav* and stay with *Rajarshi Vishwamitra* because the remaining 200 horses are with *Vishwamitra*. Thus, *Galav* is liberated from *Gurudakshina*, honoured at the convocation. *Yayati's* charity is hailed and *Vishwamitra* is also hailed for putting such a difficult test to his disciple. But, *Madhavi*... There is no one to mention her name even. The *Galava* for whom she gives her best without any personal purpose, like the mashed grapevine (*Dalit Draksha*), is also unwilling to accept it as the really is. And on realizing such a cruel truth, she makes a stern decision not to attain virginity and youth again by performing rituals before the *swayamvara* and departs to the forest as an ascetic.

II. DISCUSSION

Without raising the theoretical flag of feminism in this play, the playwright has tried to understand all the issues of marginalized women, their character and mentality through his creative intervention in conventional story of *Madhavi* depicted in *Mahabharata*. He has tried to establish those women with *Madhvi's* interest who continue to strengthen

and make their human dignity and life-struggle strong and necessary by developing their understanding and fearless mould ('*anbhai-sancha*') even in many deviations like patriarchy, pseudo-idealism, fame-indulgence, lust-thirst, love-hypnosis, religion-loyalty, consumer-culture. At the beginning of the play, Madhavi seems to represent a woman in the quagmire of social beliefs whose self-esteem has been absorbed by the smouldering personality of a man, who does not know how to resist and, repeatedly compromises her self-respect to maintain the status quo. But, in the latter half of the play, *Bhisham Sahni* has put the patriarchal system in the dock by making this Madhavi created by the cultural organizers his spokesperson, hanging the selfish behaviour of the men who claim to be her absolute self in the piling of dangerous questions and discussions. They also go to the root of traditional feudal ideas and look for the causes which are the main factors for the pathetic agony and exploitation of a woman like '*Madhvi*'.

In the story of Mahabharata, the humiliation of *Agnigarbha* (who is born from the womb of fire itself) *Draupadi* who is independent, confident, free from male supremacist power, in a crowded and coward assembly had become one of the root causes of war; What would have been the intention of *Rishi Vyas* behind the drawing of a unique woman like *Madhavi*, this is a big question. The bigger question is, why did *Vyas*, the creator of women like *Ganga*, *Gandhari*, *Kunti*, *Draupadi* become so dull at the time of the creation of *Madhavi's* personality? A woman united with such rare qualities neither questions nor does *Vyasa's* writings expend a sentence or two of sympathy for her austerity and exploitation. Was *Maharishi Vyas* trying to point out that by the time of Mahabharata period, woman was being transformed into an object by being touched by her human form. Was she now a stock or bond that could be redeemed again and again, mortgaged?

The incident of *Draupadi* being defeated by her husbands in gambling and strip naked also indicating to this fact. All the men around her want to exile not only her body, but also her mind, memory, consciousness, identity, and enjoy her fibre. What was the result of this insult of *Draupadi*, it is well known to all. But, for *Madhavi*, *Vyasa* was so ruthless and cold, that *Sahni ji* was so irritated and awestruck that this anxiety and exasperation became main transfusion in creation of this play. "*I was returning from a convention in Madhya Pradesh with my writer brothers of the Progressive Writers' Association. The train compartment was packed when Trilochan Sastri, sitting next to me, began to narrate the story of Madhvi. The story was really poignant and met all the demands of the play. I was so impressed that I sat in a corner during the train journey and sketched out it. On returning to Delhi, the first thing I did was to pick up the book of 'Mahabharata' in the library of the Sahitya Akademi*

*which contained the story of Galav-Madhavi and read it end-to-end. There was not a word of sympathy for Madhavi in the story. Nor was it condemned that Madhavi approached Vishwamitra with an offer of cohabitation. I wasn't convinced.*¹ Therefore, *Sahni* (Playwriter) as the second Prajapati actively intervene in such an inhuman condition by proposing a twist in this play and make her an antagonist against the umbilical forces of feudal society.

It is important to note that according to the story of this play and *Arshagranti Mahabhabharat*, *Madhavi* shares her body with four men, but does not wreak any kind of ravage. Dogmatic questions are not raised about her modesty, purity, sanctity etc., because for *Madhavi*, the path of abrogation from human dignity is chosen by her so-called immediate guardians and leaves no option for her but to go to the sacrificial altar for her. This kind of dogmatism is found not only in the Indian scriptures, but also in Christianity in *Jerome (340-420 AD)* The theory that we invent in '*Letter to Pammachius*' is more or less the same. "*It is better for a woman to know only one man than to know many. In other words, she presents herself as a prostitute for just one rather than pleasing several men at once.*² It is also mentioned in the *Qur'an* that self-righteous women will be considered as excellent as those who give themselves '*hiba*' for the Messenger. "*O Prophet, We have made lawful for you all the believing women who dedicate themselves to the use of the Messenger.*³ The Arabic word *hiba* means to give something to others for use, *hiba* can be for some time and forever. The cheese found in *Hiba* can be used as you like; Whether it is a woman or an object. What a contemptuous attitude Christianity, which considered itself modern, to woman, this can be gauged from *Father Tertullian's* words, "*O woman! You are Satan's demon. You destroy even that which even Satan does not attack directly. It was by your fault that the Son of God was destroyed, you must always be miserable and miserable. Paul the Prophet, who spread the Christian Shari'ah, wrote in his first letter to 'Ahadnama-e-Jadid' Temutas – 'Men alone are the reflection of God, and guileless men are victims of the deceit and evils of women. Therefore, they are not educated, educated or even spoken upon.'*

In fact, irrespective of the religious beliefs or geographical regions, the woman is 'treated' like a creeper or a shadow, she has to depend on her immediate male relatives for her identity and beingness. Glorifying one's own subjugation is considered a certificate of her being a virtuous woman. Therefore, despite being at the axis of creation and action, independent women are often considered treacherous and weak. The *Madhvi* on whose shoulder *Galav* crosses the splinter of his impossible ordeal; The way he talks about *Madhavi* to his friend for the last

two hundred horses makes his (even among the men) innermost impurities clearer. "God has made a man patient, but there is a fickleness in the nature of a woman. That is why it has been said that the control of man on the fickleness of women should always be maintained. It is ultimately the woman's benefit.⁴ Origen is also a proponent of this idea. He believes that the moral strength of man is far greater than that of women and that women are betrayed because of their special inclination towards the senses.

No matter how misogynistic and cruel the male ideology may be, it is impossible to demolish it. Our scriptures are littered with misogynistic words and adjectives and by converting them into objections, this ideological system of patriarchy controls the entire public mind. How cruel and ferocious this society can be towards its own women in order to maintain and preserve its talismanic power, is evident in the story of Madhavi. How and how long can 'stigmatized, abused, raped and beaten women stay in the family'? They are bound to leave by home by themselves or be chased away by family members – what difference does it make. In today's context, the relevance of this story can be understood by reading the narrative of the terrorist organization ISIS of Central Asia making Yazidi women sex-slaves. The difference is that in this play Madhvi, a woman is donated by her father, and these Yazidi women were kidnapped from the father-brother's house for sexual servitude for being heretic.

The pain of Yazidi women in Central Asia can also be understood in the context of Madhvi's story. These women have not only gone through the torture of ISIS's sexual slavery, but are now facing a new turbulent situation. The condition of reunion with one's society and people are the abandonment of their infants whose fathers are ISIS fighters. What can be a bigger fear for a mother than to have to throw her innocent child out of the breast & life. Madhvi's dialogue is the dialogue of every woman who has been cheated, deceived and persecuted by her own people. The only assurance for Madhvi is that her child's father is the protector, but these Yazidi mothers are not relieved either. The authentic document of the struggle to become a sex slave is *The Last Girl* by Nadia Murad, which was also awarded the Nobel Prize, but all the reports scattered on the Internet, the stories of those unfortunate mothers, the guardians of those innocent sent to the orphanage, all have suffered this tragedy not only on the body, but their souls also bled because of these inhuman *fatwas* and decrees. However, the majority of the public is aware of this inhuman and barbaric treatment of Yazidis, and now even *Afghans*, who are included in this list because of their desire to remain confined to their limited scope, many of whom have been handed over to couples who have succeeded in reaching another country for the safety of their children. So

many women like 'Nadia' were crushed, some were returned to the country, so the decree was that their return is possible only by abandoning the children born to these fighters. Their freedom is at a great price and who to choose between the child? The same question was evident to Madhvi. "Independent? What freedom, Galav? Behind those gigantic walls my little boy is looking for my nipples with his mouth open, and you are saying, I'm free? Galav, do you really think me free? The mother who is not able to hold her child to her breast is free?"⁵ Perhaps this is the reason why, despite of this state of mind, some Yazidi women returned, some mothers embraced a lifetime of suffering, sobbed and accepted their fate for the sake of their children, and lost their identity and beingness as they were bought and sold and raped every day. Men who only want their women to be happy see their bold decision as a galav, "I didn't know you would be so weak when you had children. Therefore, perhaps women cannot do risky work, cannot discharge the responsibility of any big work."⁶ The memory of Madhavi, who has come after abandoning her milking child, seems to Galav a mere imagination and a palsy sentiment, he would in a moment remove Madhavi from her motherhood and make her *Haryashcha's* son, and the mere mention of her spontaneously annoys, "(Galav) Vasumana, who Vasumana? (Madhavi) Vasumana, my son. (Galav) O... Not yours, Madhvi, the son of King Haryashcha! Yuvraj of Ayodhya!"⁷ The sober and disciplined Galav could not resist admiring the horses (in whose attainment he had no contribution), mesmerized by the beauty, speed, and brilliance. Man nourishes only his ego in every means, in every way, in every purpose. The whole of woman's life seems to him to be without purpose against his own petty desires, and so the mere discussion of the subject dictated by the emotion of the woman becomes a reflection of her impatience and incontinence.

In fact, no matter the time, situation, country, religion, place, in the case of women, male and feudal society behave alike. *Zahida Hina* describes this philosophy in a very accurate manner, "There is no need to go into detail, be it the life of Razia binte Iltutmish doing Sultani in the Delhi court or the agni pariksha of Sita, the tales narrated by Shahrzad or the life of today's woman, this maze, ritual, society, is tied to the chains of politics, The tales of women breathing in the life of life are raigenuous."⁸ The situation of women in the West can also be understood from the Pope's confession during a visit to Central Asia, in which he expresses his anguish at the abhorrent act of sexual exploitation and sexual slavery of nuns by priests in 33 countries.

In fact, whoever controls the means of production and employment governs the society and the system. *Madhvi* is the story of this compassion. *Ranendra* has also

highlighted this fact from the interest of the play Madhavi, "The story of Madhavi is a gruesome example of the dehumanization of women in ancient times, but this process started at the same time when the concept of personal property appeared. The idea arose in the mind of the man that his acquired property, his cows, his land should be inherited by his own son. This hypothesis overturned matriarchy. This change was one of the most decisive changes mankind has ever experienced. A man knows the woman to be the body and the body to the womb for the gratification of his ego, the growth of offspring, the temptation to make impermanence eternal, and sexual pleasure. Prof. Krishnakumar's remarks in other contexts will further help to open it up. He says, "The irrefutable concentration, founded amidst the diversity in feminist laws, customs and adult behaviours, is striking that a radical change in a girl's temperament is necessary," The deep scepticism in the culture about her nature is understandable from many aspects. But these aspects can be seen in three categories: first, the unreliability of the woman, the second, the indelible impurity, and the third includes the tricks of safely exploiting the mechanical utility of the girl.⁹ Moreover, a man does not want to understand, nor to explain. The beauty of the female body has been prescribed for pleasure. From contraceptive research to surrogacy, scientific advances give women the illusion of sexual freedom. In fact, the whole mess has been created to keep it completely under control. The question is also why so much micro manipulation for the child? The answer is clear that through a woman, a man wants his brilliant offspring (man) to whom he can transfer his power and property, make his successor(son): that is why both the boons received by Madhavi became a curse for her. She gave birth to four sons one after the other, but could not become mother of anyone's, became the medium of sexual pleasure of four men, but could not become the wife of anyone.

Actually, feminization is an inhuman system under which men created women according to their ideology and concepts and in this order her consent was never taken, her own feelings, history, desire-reluctance were not identified but pushed on the path of man's good work. Beauty and virginity came to be recognized as the foundation of her existence. Galav's request to Madhavi "Madhavi, but you have got a groom. If you can remain a girl, why not... Why didn't you perform the ritual? First of all, you..." And Madhvi's reply (I want to appear before you as I am now. What to hide from you, Galav..... I don't want to perform rituals anymore. I want to be the way I am)¹⁰ Galav's loving and romantic personality was dissolved and the male character was exposed. Because of Madhavi's disfigurement, her lover Galav also starts making shallow arguments to abandon her, "I am an pauper (akinchan)... I

don't want to stand in your way.... I cannot violate religion and moral norms, I am helpless... How can I consider a woman who has lived in my guru's ashram as my wife. ¹¹ Madhvi is not accepted to him as she was now.... youth has gone...disfigurement is her new physical identity.... Youth and virginity are the only basis of his attachment. The true colour of Galav leads Madhavi to the decision from which her liberation is possible only by marching. "What did you yearn for? I was just an instrument for you. You were lying even when you were pleading in front of me. You have only loved one person and that of yourself. But I didn't recognize you. I thought all the time that Galav was a man of true spiritual practice and loyalty. You too turned out to be just like the gurus, Galav..."¹² This feeling, derived from unpleasant life experiences and struggles, was Madhavi's personal truth. "The dysfunction of the body can go away, Galav, I can become a girl again by performing rituals, but now I am not a young woman at heart, am I. I am the mother whose lap has been filled and emptied... Youth and physical beauty will be restored, but what will I do with this heart that has been shattered!"¹³

III. READINGS AND CONCLUSION

From where the drama's inspiration was adapted, the most flabbergasting thing is that Bhishma Sahni found, is *Maharishi Vedvyasa's* utter silence on the mental and physical abuse of Madhavi. And, even more shocking, there was not a single word of condemnation against this exploitation. This trap stuck in Sahni's mind. He changed the tone of the play by creating a truly progressive woman who represented an actual ameliorative woman while interacting with patriarchal mindsets and traditional stereotypes. Leaving Galav in the dark night, she held herself to *Vishwamitra's* hostage for the last two hundred horses and not to perform the Abhaya ritual that re-create her a virgin in the *Swayamvara* proposed by her father and finally the abandonment of the beloved Galav is indicative of the process of developing this human dignity and hence she has emerged as a key protagonist for the adjustment of tradition and progressiveness.

Bhisham Sahni has not only created this woman from the perspective of *Mahabharata* from a critical perspective but has also identified the various dimensions of the conscious ruthless hegemony structure of man. The most powerful voice of *Sahniji* that has emerged in 'Madhavi' play and which is in fact the focal of 'Madhavi's consciousness' is that, first, the emergence of woman as a commodity whose buyers and sellers are her own guardians. Second, the passionate and pneumatic love of *Galav* and *Madhavi*, in the environment of which they have adopted a progressive approach. The play also attempts to confront

and find answers to the questions that the protectors of society, tradition, etc. are at once feels uncomfortable to face. In fact, *Madhvi* eloquently raises questions of women's consciousness, not merely deliver 'academic speech' of women's discourse. How conservative, feudal and reactionary is the patriarchal attitude of men towards women (whether *Mahabharatakar*, *Yayati*, *Galav* or *Vishwamitra*) is raised by the playwright in a very powerful and sensitive manner and so it makes its presence felt as a highly impactful and poignant masterpiece.

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