



SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL VULNERABILITY AS REFLECTED IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S RAPE FANTASY

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ABSTRACT

Rape is the most universal offense against women in world. Especially in India nearly 32,000 rape cases were registered across the country and the report was produced by the National Crime Records of Bureau by the end of 2021. Such sexual assault and abuse in present scenario paves way to societal vulnerability. All the news channels, magazines and crime records are evident enough to telecast and focus the crime regularly. The worst thing to hear is nearly 89% of the rapes were committed by close relatives of the victims. The people are leading their life with multiple stressors, shocks, exploitation and also of social marginalization. It is evident to note many psychological changes in the attitude of people. People are not ready help the victims directly or indirectly. Typically, women face many sorts of hallucination and fear in private and public place. Margaret Atwood's Rape Fantasy pictures the rape fantasies of the working class women and the psychological trouble that they undergo. The lesson about sex and sexual violence are well reflected in many literary genres to give more awareness to the people and to safeguard oneself from the crime.

KEYWORDS : Rapism, Vulnerable, Marginalization, Humanity, Assaultants

In the modern world, even when women status has been improving step by step, so far they are facing different predicaments in and around their life. They are in stipulation to act upon both family and professional errands together without the help of the partner. In some cases, the requirement of women turns out to be more humiliated when they get tormented by their family members instead of lending a hand. On the other side, sexual harassment also befalls more commonly at homes as well as in the offices. In some cases, the bitterest situation is that the women are harassed by their own family members, relatives, neighbours, friends, boss, etc. However, in all crucial situations, the women boldly administer a lot in their daily life to maintain their family relationships as well as to nourish their career.

Margaret Eleanor Atwood, a Canadian feminist writer and the winner of Booker Prizes has published many notable literary genres in her career. The distinguished writer has dealt with a variety of themes including gender, identity, religion, myth, power politics, and environmental changes. Atwood's reputation was known in the 1980s with the publication of *Bodily Harm* in 1981. In most of her works, she has revealed the autobiographical elements which have tempted the reviewers and critics to find deep about her life. Atwood's writing style is known for concise, glow and detachment. She always chooses the third-person as her mouth piece to reveal the internal thoughts flowing in her spirit.

In the short story *Rape Fantasies* (1977) Atwood uses pitch-black humor and razor-sharp social interpretation to highlight the way women feel unprotected on an almost constant basis in the modern world. Estelle, the narrator along with four co-workers, Chrissy, Greta, Sondra, and Darlene discusses about rape which is the recent and the most crucial disgusting happenings in the society. These young educated women have various fantasies about rape because it has widely disturbed the mindset of the people. Today, when one picks out the news paper or magazine the repeated article is about rape and the victims struggles.

All the characters in the story discuss their feelings about fantasies of rape. They recount a story during their lunch break over a card game. While all have romanticized "rape" fantasies, Estelle is not satisfied with their narration and points out that the situations they are relating are not about rape, because they rivet the women's aspiration and no intimidation or violence. Estelle breaks the trend by sharing fantasies of awkward a rape attempt through comical turns of events. In her fantasy narration she manages to break away from rape in many ways, from having the rapist help her to hold her handbag and finding of lemon to squirt in his eyes and also helping the rapist get out of his emotional problems. Altogether, concerning her rape fantasies are abnormal and which is very clear that none of the rapists involve in an actual rape.

The story *Rape Fantasies* begins with the narrator, Estelle's conversation with four co-workers, Chrissy, Greta, Sondra, and Darlene during the lunch hour. Their discussion is based on the continuous cases of rape that is heard and seen in the present culture.

Besides, all the magazines, journals, newspapers focus and report different kinds of rapes viz. Acquaintance rape, Campus rape, Date rape, Gang rape, Marital rape, Prison rape etc. It is also one of the reasons why fantasies haunt all the young minds and feels the psychological disturbances.

While Estelle and the four women play a game of bridge they were inspired by one of the aforesaid magazine articles. Chrissy suddenly interrupted to ask if any of them had ever built castles in the air about rape. Estelle attempts to amend the subject and get back to the game, scratchy with the topic. Sondra is very fervent to tell her stories on the area under discussion, as is Chrissy. On the other side, Darlene, an older divorced woman, is disgusted by the topic and stands up to go hang around by the coffee machine with her back to the others when the discussion persists regardless of her disputes.

The story reveals the disturbed minds of all the characters. At first, Greta admits that she has fantasized about rape. In her flight of the imagination, a fine-looking young man dressed all in black breaks into her apartment building through the unlock balcony. Her daydream is very quixotic, and Estelle makes fun by referring her rape fantasy to be very influenced by movies and television shows. After the rape attempt, the man tells her about his experiences battering women, and then escapes through the balcony.

Chrissy begins her own rape fantasy. She narrates that while she is sitting in the bathtub, a man suddenly enters. She never screams or attempts to run away because the rapist is blocking the exit and she knows it would be useless. He enters nearby and she starts threatening him that she will attack with soap fume in the tub.

Estelle breaks off at this point to criticize that these fantasies are not actually rape fantasies, because in their flights of the imagination, they are enjoying the incident, just with a stranger. She explains that rape is when you are forced into a crucial or violent act by weapons. The others do not seem to concur, and find her ridiculousness on the subject to be of poor taste. Chrissy stipulates that Estelle acknowledge her own rape fantasy, and Estelle eventually flows down her fantasies. In the first attempt, a man attacks her to rape, but she manages to squeeze a plastic lemon from her purse. Chrissy and Darlene ironically remarks on Estelle's sense of humour.

Estelle deliberates another of her fantasy when she felt very sorry for the rapist. While walking down a dark street she overcame a short, unattractive man covered with pimples rushing to her and pins her to a wall. As he attempts to rape her, his pant zipper gets struck and he begins to weep in frustration. Estelle felt sorry for him. Later she recalls about her previous working experience in Toronto in order to forget the fantasy.

Later Estelle returns back to memory and begins a second rape fantasy. When she is sick in bed, a man alike unwell climbs in through the window. He speaks with a stuffed-nose, and threatens her that he is going to rape her. But Estelle warns and later, they take medicine and

watch television. When she assumes her stories are not much interesting to the colleagues, Estelle continuous with the third fantasy. In this castle in the sky, she hears a noise from the mother's basement. She enters and finds a man with an axe in hand. He attempts to rape and kill her. She tells the man that she can perceive sound from heaven and she is the child of a heavenly angel and should not touch her. The man fails to believe and she exposes the cross mark in her hand. She also fantasies of a man who terrorizes to rape her but she begs him that she has leukemia and she could live only a few weeks. Equally he admits that he is also suffering from the same disease and it is very nice to live together with such a person. They walk along speaking peacefully and go for coffee and come to solution to live together in their final months.

Estelle is not much satisfied with the rape fantasies and the entire characters note that the men attempting to rape them are always a stranger, but the real statistical report show that the rape is usually committed by someone the woman knows well. All the characters feel there is no humanity in the society. Even the press report is in threatening way to the public to increase their ratings. According to statistical report accumulated by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) it states that the victims are more susceptible to sexual assaults by people whom they trust. Statistics shows 86% of rape victims across the country knew the criminal, who are either a family member or a close relative whom the victims trust wholeheartedly and would normally have no reason to fear. The victims should not lead a marginalized life and they should be bold enough to reveal the issues to the society.

In India like country Punishments for Rape should be very vigorous. If punishments are left to loosen or relaxed, the assailants will continue the evil acts uninterruptedly. We have to follow the strict rules like the countries Afghanistan, Iran, North Korea and Emirates. In Afghanistan when the crime is proved, the rapist is hanged to Death or shot dead by a bullet in the head within 4 days of crime. Only when we reduce and control the issues in our country common people can lead a peaceful and principled life. Or else we have to face different psychological troubles and social vulnerability. Especially woman are fallen in sexual violence trap. So each one should consider the situation of the women and in what condition the society is moving on. "Stop Rape and Save Women" for the betterment of our life on the peaceful earth.

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