



Harassment and Perseverance for oneself in Usha Ganguly's *Rudali*

M. Sruthi Sriee

Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of English Thiruvalluvar University, Tamil Nadu, India

Received: 15 Dec 2023; Received in revised form: 25 Jan 2024; Accepted: 01 Feb 2024; Available online: 10 Feb 2024
©2024 The Author(s). Published by Infogain Publication. This is an open-access article under the CC BY license
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Abstract— This paper aims to analyse how a woman belonging to a low society is abused and how she stands for herself in Usha Ganguly's *Rudali*. The paper depicts specifically at how caste and poverty reflect the differences in the interaction between the high and the low sections of a society. Women belonging to lower community are depicted as continuously weeping, wailing, cursing their femininity and being responsible despite all the odds. The play written by Usha Ganguly depicts the fate of the female protagonist Sanichari, who is being harassed through harsh words and curses used by her family members due to a vague entitlement given for her name and her birth on an inauspicious day. Being cursed, abused through harsh words and completely isolated, she decides to become a *Rudali* (Mourner).



Keywords— Verbal Abuse, Harassment, Low community, Women, Mourner, Ignorance.

Harassment is said to be an act of tormenting by continued persistent attacks and criticism. It is usually annoying and is considered to be illegal and as an act of crime in some cases. It is an act/behaviour that persists over time and even one-time incident can also be as considered harassment. These include passing jokes, remarks, passing comments, bullying and so on designed to cause the victim great discomfort.

Harassment of the weak oppressed is a universal phenomenon. The subtlest but nonetheless the dangerously damaging form persecution is Human Harassment. Human Harassment can be defined as the use of abusive or derogatory comments or remarks (epithets), usage of comments or words based on race, gender, caste, nationality, religion, creed, region or affiliation (P. Bhavani and Dr. M. Kannadhasan 16).

Verbal harassment a type of harassment that makes one who is abused feel less comfortable and humiliated. Sherri Gordon, a certified professional life coach and bullying prevention expert states that,

Verbal abuse involves using words to name call, bully, demean, frighten, intimidate, or

control another person. This can include overt verbal abuse such as yelling, screaming, or swearing. Such behaviors are attempts to gain power, and the goal is to control and intimidate you into submission. As a result, it is abusive and should not be tolerated or excused (Gordon).

She also states that people experience these verbal abuses in home and is considered to be normal way of communication but they do have lasting consequences. One such experience is depicted in Usha Ganguly's *Rudali*.

Rudali is a play written by Usha Ganguly. The play was first performed on 29 December 1992 at Sisir Manch, Calcutta by Rangakarmee. The script of the play was written by Usha Ganguly after a workshop exercise which include the playwrights Ganguly's *Rudali* stages a plot of a woman's struggle for survival. The play depicts the struggles of an oppressed woman against poverty, humiliation and desolation interwoven with unsettling realities of the other women.

Rudali is a title given to woman who mourns for the dead people. It is a custom that is followed in village outskirts of Rajasthan. They are hired professionally to weep and mourn upon the dead of the upper-class males.

Rudaalis still exist in villages like Revdar of Sirohi, Shergarh and Patodi of Jodhpur, Chhittar *ka paar*, Kotda, Chuli, and Fatehgarh of Barmer, and Ramdevra and Pokharan of Jaisalmer districts of the state. However, their scope of work has now narrowed to a great extent. The reason behind this is that the Rajput landlords don't yield the same power as they used to in the past (Garg).

The play highlights about a woman who lives doing all the minor jobs in village for her own survival and as well as for her family, transforms into a professional mourner to avenge herself despite all the odds she faced. The play centralises Sanichari, an old woman who is considered to be unlucky and having miserable fate. She faces extreme verbal abuses by her mother-in-law, Somri because she was born on an inauspicious Saturday. "SOMRI. Why shouldn't I say it? After all, you were born on an unlucky day, Saturday. It's your destiny to devour everyone around you!". (126) She works for members of her family, to provide them at least one square meal in a day. She is the central character of the play. She is active, responsible and self-dominating and a caring person for family members. Despite all these, she is never considered nor cared and instead she is always blamed for anything that is happening ill at her home.

The everyday blaming and calling her as a bane made her to feel uncomfortable. Being born as a lower caste woman, she is abused by calling a low caste, who has no knowledge of religion, faith and education. In one scene, she goes to the Vaid (village doctor) to check her bedridden son Budhua, whose life was at risk. Vaid had a glance of her son and declared that he is dead and to give his fees. "Vaid. Hurry up and give me my money. It's getting late. And I'll have to cleanse myself in the river before going home. (Sanichari fixes him with an angry glare) What're you glaring at me for? Take out the money and pay up." (134) She pays the Vaid and completes the funeral rites for her son. After the demise of her son, eight or nine years later she only had Haroa, her only grandson. Her daughter in law leaves the house soon after the death of Budhua.

Haroa being in his adolescent age, never wanted work instead he always wanted to be merry. Sanichari sends him to work so that he gets one square meal along with the daily wage. Haroa couldn't work since, his employer's son thrashes him with shoe and treats him badly like a slave. He makes excuses to his grandmother to not go for work. Once, she got to know that he didn't go to work for about ten days. When she orders him to go, she gets blamed by him and he says that it is due to her bane all of his family members were dead and now only he is left and soon her bane will swallow him. He leaves her all alone and goes.

SANCHARI. What did you say? I don't feed you well? My whole life has gone in feeding and raising you, and now you turn around and say I don't give you enough to eat?

HAROA. No you don't. You never gave anyone enough to eat. You starved my great-grandmother. you drove out my mother, you killed off my father... (147)

Sanichari all alone goes to the market and meets her childhood friend Bikhni. Both discuss about their families and their current lives. Her friend, Bikhni also lives alone. Both go to Sanichari's house and both become rudalis for their earning. Despite doing jobs for living a good life she got blaming and was abused. Now both of them take up a job that will be title coherent to their name.

The human psyche clatters and fracas by these uttered concentrations to such a point that the object is ragged to his/her reverence and value. The victim cracks psychologically energetic and identifies that it is literally separated from the normal outer world. The verbal spikes leave a remaining and crippling effect on the human psyche that quests them infinitely a study of the most difficult and unremarkable form of harassment (P. Bhavani and Dr. M. Kannadhasan,17).

Any victim who has faced verbal harassment ends up ignoring the pattern of verbal abuse or makes excuses for the behavior. Similarly, it can be said that all the abuses and comments given to Sanichari made her to come out her usual life and take up a profession that provides a good wage and food. She takes this profession for her survival and doesn't care about the abuses and titles given at her back.

REFERENCES

- [1] Debī, Mahāśvetā, et al. *Rudali, From Fiction to Performance*. 1997, ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA58525229.
- [2] Gordon, Sherri. "What Is Verbal Abuse?" *Verywell Mind*, 7 Nov. 2022, www.verywellmind.com/how-to-recognize-verbal-abuse-bullying-4154087.
- [3] P. Bhavani & Dr. M. Kannadhasan, "Human Harassment in Amitav Ghosh's the Circle of Reason", *International Journal of Computational Research and Development*, Volume 4, Issue 1, Page Number 16-17, 2019
- [4] Garg, Amit Baijnath. "Rajasthan's Professional Mourners, Rudaalis, Are Slipping Away and Need Rehabilitation - Gaonconnection | Your Connection With Rural India." *Gaonconnection | Your Connection With Rural India*, 17 Dec. 2021, en.gaonconnection.com/rajasthan-mourners-rudaali-rehabilitation-education-literacy-tradition-culture-women-marriage-widow.