

**B.S.Mardhekar's Views of Woman : A Marxist Approach**

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In his poetry Mardhekar depicts the modern human life. Mardhekar had spent his childhood in a village. The rich country life had bestowed its richness upon him in his childhood. But when he started to live in the metropolitan city like Mumbai, he experienced a horrible and confused human life. His rich experience of fertile and prosperous life in rural area made him aware of the hubbub and noise of urban life. He observed that industrialization and urbanization had left a great impact upon human life. He saw the trivial and trifle life of human beings, their inability and submissive nature, the sense of alienation within them, and their mechanical way of living in the urbanized industrial area. He started to think seriously over the problematic and confused life situation of the common man in Mumbai. In his poetry, he has reflected his sense of pity and sympathy for the degraded human being in Mumbai. Simultaneously he also criticized ironically such a degraded human life in his poetry. In short, in his poetry Mardhekar has reflected the picture of human life (common man) in both sympathetic and satirical manner.

While depicting human life in his poetry Mardhekar sketched the pictures of middle class and lower class people like - worker, labourer, farmer, merchant, beggar, sweet-maker etc. in his poetry and showed his sympathy for their exploitation by the upper class or capitalists. Besides the portrayal of the exploitation of these human beings, he also sketched many a portrayal of the exploitation of woman in his poetry.

The woman in Mardhekar's poetry not only reveals herself as an exploited human being but she also represents herself as a human being with motherly feelings, who is happy and creative, and who has deep love for her children and who represents motherhood. The creative image of woman, her creative capacity etc. shown in Mardhekar's poetry, point out his holy and pious attitude towards motherhood.

While expressing his views of woman exploited in both urban industrial life as well as real agricultural life, Mardhekar becomes restless. He finds that woman is not treated as a human being but she is regarded as an object or a commodity or a machine. The woman depicted in Mardhekar's poetry represents modern man's sense of isolation and his pitiable and wretched condition.

In the modern age woman has no identity of her own. She is but a dependent who has to sacrifice all her life for her husband and children. She can't think of her own pleasure but she has to be happy by giving pleasure to others. Our tradition has treated women as subordinate to man. She is looked upon as someone who is inferior to man. In the patriarchal society we see the dehumanization of woman. Her labour has no value or little value in the male dominated society. The modern woman lives a very wretched and poorly life. She has to neglect her own basic needs for maintaining the livelihood of all other members in her family. She passes her life in a very humiliating situation. Her neglected life has become a part of (urban) metropolitan as well as rural culture. In his poetry, Mardhekar depicts a woman who is repressed and downgraded in her social as well as familial life. He also represents the hardship the woman undergoes and the economic difficulties faced by woman in his poetry. In the opinion of Mr. Keshav Sadre, this wretched life of modern woman is but a part of urban culture. In this regard he says, "the age of science made some horrible effects on human life. These horrible effects of the age are

particularly seen in the big cities like Mumbai. In his poetry Mardhekar has portrayed these horrible effects of the age of science. The dehumanization of human relationship, the wretched condition of woman, the mockery of humanity and man haunted by fear and tension etc. are but inevitable components of urban human life".(P.63) .Here, the argument of Mr. Sadre reveals that the life of woman has been adversely affected by scientific developments in this age, Mardhekar feels very sorry for the helpless condition of woman. He is a bit nervous and pessimistic about her wretched and poorly life. As a human being, he shows his sympathy for the modern urban as well as rural woman who experiences a lot of sufferings and pains in her life. In his poetry he shows a sense of pity for the helpless condition of woman. It is but his typical Marxist attitude.

In the poem Pandur Sandhya Chauthya Prahari we see a housemaid in a pitiable condition. She has just faced the problem of abortion. Due to abortion she has become weak physically and mentally. However, in this sorrowful condition, she can't avoid her work. She is in need of rest but she can't take any rest due to her poor economic condition. Therefore she immediately goes to request her mistress to give her only eight days' leave and she assures her that she will resume her duties immediately after eight days. She also requests her not to appoint any other housemaid in her place. The following lines in the poem reflect the anxiety and tension aroused in the mind of the housemaid due to her economic problems :

Prabhat pandur pahilya prahari  
Tharthar kapai yavi taishi  
Bhikaradi ti abla nari  
Tharthar kapat dusarya divasti  
An dolyamandhi gheuni chand  
Vadali ; bai, aath disani  
Kamavarati yein khas  
Tanwar na theva duji per koni  
(P.No. 87, A.K.K.)

While passing through the sorrowful condition of abortion, the housemaid is worried about her job. She is aware of her economic problems. She knows quite well that if her job is lost, she will not get another job immediately and her economic condition would become worse. Here Mardhekar sees a type of pitiable condition of woman. He knows that due to her poverty, the housemaid has to care for her job in her wretched abortion condition also. Here, the poet feels sympathy for the sufferings of the housemaid. It reflects his Marxist sense.

In the poem 'Badvit Tirrya ' we come across the wretched condition of a beggar woman. The beggar mother of a beggar boy is following her son and begging alms from door to door. She is seen in tattered clothes. Due to her poverty she cannot cover up her whole body with clothes. She has to display her half a bare body. She has to display her dirty clothes and body and beg alms. She has wholly surrendered herself to her economic difficulties. She has maintained a totally submissive attitude. Like a submissive man she walks after her son for alms. It is but an insulting situation of a woman. The poet becomes nervous after looking at such a wretched and poorly situation of the beggarly woman. The word 'Lachar' (submissive and wholly surrendered) in the following stanza reflects the woman who has been defeated in the modern age :

Bhiksha mage roz / evadhasa por,  
Aai ti lachar / pathimage ///  
(P.No. 39, K.K. Poem 19)

The sympathetic representation of the beggarly woman in the above stanza reflects the Marxist outlook of the poet.

The poem 'Popatpanch, Chaturkijaani' is a good example of helpless condition of woman. The woman is a stone broker (Vadarin) who like the pet bird, parrot has to follow the order of

her husband. This woman lives in a very wretched and dirty condition. She is engaged in her work in front of her small poorly hut. On her back her child is sitting in the cloth bag. It shows that there is nobody in her house to care for the baby. Her work displays her struggle against poverty. She is a young woman who is poor and who lives a very humiliating life. The men sitting near her husband are expected to show their sympathy for this wretched and helpless condition of this woman. However, these men are willing to have sexual intercourse with the woman. They want to enjoy her physically and therefore they are instructing her husband to make his wife ready for sexual meeting with them. They are ready to pay some money to her husband. Mardhekar dislikes this unwanted and shameful condition of the poor woman. He becomes restless by observing the struggle of the woman for food on the one hand and the dirty sexual attitude of the moneyed men on the other hand. In the modern age the poor woman is but an object of sexual gratification of the upper class man. Her poverty, her wretched social condition etc. are of no use, the points of negligence for the upper-class people. The following lines clearly show this wretchedness of the female stonebroker :

"Vadarnichya mule lagali  
Pathangulila divasa dhavalya,  
Khujya manatil rulavarati  
Valvalti krumi anit alya (P. 42)

The difficult life of the Vadarin, her care for children while she continues her work and the attraction of men for her body etc. make the poet unhappy and answerless. He shows his kind attitude towards the helpless woman. No doubt, this poem is good enough to tell us the story of economic and physical exploitation of the poor young women in the modern society by the so called rich and wealthy people.

In the poem 'Gandhalalelya Un Chincholya' we see the hatred of the poet towards the helpless situation of human life. In this poem we see the women living in the apartments in Girgaon area of Mumbai. These women live in small houses. They are very weak and thin. All the time they are seen engaged in their household duties. After completing their household duties, these women have to satisfy their husbands physically. In fact they are tired of this horrible cycle of life. They don't want bodily meeting any more nor do they expect heavy household duties. However, they have to engage their attention in these activities unwillingly for continuing their life on the earth. She is tired of this mechanical routine. It shows her emotional and physical exploitation. In this wretched situation, they have to keep themselves happy. The helpless and wretched condition of these women living in industrial towns and cities, is depicted vividly by Mardhekar in the following lines :

"----- Khaimadhye  
Sansarachya, nibarat kirati  
Haadbande rashya bayaka  
Ushtibhandi urkun hasalya  
Vinit chimmne jivan ....." (P. 51)

In these lines we see the pessimistic attitude of the poet towards the pitiable physical condition of modern woman. In the words of Mr. Keshaw Sadre, "The women living in the small congested houses of Girgaon who are but mere bundles of bone and who are seen as living, creative human being by our society, make Mardhekar to show his disgust for the society. The horrible mechanical and boring routine in human life makes him restless" (p.61)

The wretched and helpless conditions of modern woman in the metropolitan cities like Mumbai and her boring domestic routine creates a sense of nervousness in the mind of the poet. He finds that even in familial life the woman is looked upon as an object of sexual gratification by man. Till the old age she is not allowed to get relieved from the passion of sex by her

husband. Mardhekar is wonderstruck at this horrible life of modern woman. He further thinks that if such a condition exists for a married familial woman what will be the situation of prostitutes. The prostitute has to undergo this horrible situation of sexual, physical, mental and emotional exploitation as long as she is alive. The life of the prostitute is a very wretched, vulgar and dirty life. The society corrupts her bodily and mentally merely for her economic needs. It is but her poverty which enables her to live and work as a prostitute. For the maintenance of her livelihood she has to sell her body to her customer. She has to continue her prostitution not only in her youth but in her old age also. According to Mardhekar, this is more horrible and highly shocking. This helpless state of the old prostitute has been portrayed too closely by Mardhekar in the following lines of the poem 'Ashich Hoti Nakati Ek' :

Ulate kes ni tirpya bhivaya,  
Murkat davi uroj unnat,  
Dhapa jeisha telyagharachya,

In the above lines, the poet represents an old prostitute whose virginity is totally destroyed. She is no more young to attract the customer and hence she tries to show her old dangled breasts to the customer. However, no customer gets attracted towards her. This scenario of the helpless old prostitute makes him nervous and hence he further says -

Kay halakhi stritvachi hi,  
Manusakiche kaya vidamban!  
Bhogshunya kari bhogyatheche  
Ling-gand prachohan prodarekhan

Here Mardhekar criticises the helpless situation of woman. He says that the prostitute is but an object of the sexual pleasure of man. He even dislikes the sale of body by the prostitute. Hence he says that it is just a mockery of woman's life that she is used for sexual purpose. The sex complex doesn't give her any satisfaction. Instead, she experiences sorrow and sufferings. Mardhekar himself expresses his feeling in the translation of the poem as follows :

"Alas, how womanhood is degraded to this stage, what a strange parody of human dignity, that the woman must blatantly display her sex complex in this way half concealing and half revealing the hidden ache of unfulfilled passion..... The sentiment is one of pity and shame at the sight, and reflection on social degeneration ('Mardhekaranchi Kavita', Swarup ani Sandarbh " Vijaya Rajadhyaksha., Khand Pahila, Mumbai, 1991, P. 249.)

In the poem 'Jithe Marate Kandewadi' Mardhekar depicts the hopeless waiting of an old prostitute for her customer. The old prostitute has lost her bodily charm. But for the sake of food she has to continue her profession. She is anxious whether she will get money or no today. She is badly in need of customer so that she will get money and she will maintain her livelihood. For that purpose she puts on her clothes which she had used in her youth. She thinks that at least the tight clothes will attract the customer. The following lines reflect her old age :

Tya nakyavar tang haveli  
Utsahachi thigalya choli  
Ghaluni basala bothatleli  
Shili tanagre zakit (A.K.K. P.No. 75)

The horrible situation in which the old woman lives makes us nervous and restless. Even in her old age she has to worry for her basic needs. Her tireless waiting for the customer shows her suffering in her old age. She also represents herself as a neglected woman here. In the following lines her helpless situation is reflected :

Jirn udhyachya ashene tar  
Tishthat baghane vat, rakhane  
Laaj, anakai janantikantar (A.K.K.,P.75)

The aspects of poverty, illness, oldness and negligence of the prostitute expressed in the poem arouse sympathy in the mind of the poet. He feels pity for this oppressed and exploited woman. This sense of pity reveals the Marxist attitude of the poet.

In short, Mardhekar has sketched the oppression and exploitation of woman in his poetry. He has thrown light on the injustice and severe punishment given to woman by man in the modern society. Her wretched and pitiable life really makes us sympathetic towards her. The portrayal of the exploited women in his poetry really impresses the reader. In this regard the remark of Dr. Kale is worth remembering here, "In the depiction of human life the different pictures of woman's exploitation depicted by Mardhekar in his poetry are noteworthy." (P.277).

#### References:

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