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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	Author	Title of the Paper	Page No.
1	Dr. Archana Durgesh & Ms. Ekta Sawhney	Spirituality - The Antidote to All tribulations	1
2	Prof. S. Arunraj	A Study on the Status of Women Education in India	5
3	T. Avinash	Between Illusion and Reality: Subverting Stereotypes (An Analysis of Two Stories)	12
4	Dr. Archana Durgesh & Dr. Pooja Singh	Infertility: A Woman's Encircling Gloom	17
5	Dr. Vitthal V. Parab	The Emerging New Trends In Indian English Fiction	21
6	Dr. K. Anuradha & V. Elumalai	National Identity in Nissim Ezekiel's poem "Island" Correlative with Puram	29
7	Pragya Shukla & Sudhir Kumar	Fasting, Praying & Storytelling	33
8	Dr. Vitthal V. Parab	Pragmatism & Gender Bias in Kamala Das's Poetry	42
9	Dr. Maulik Vyas	Revisiting Mahapatra's Storytelling: a Study of <i>the Green Gardener</i>	49
10	Dr. Archana Durgesh, Dr. Pooja Singh, Achal Sharma, Bramh Prakash Singh, Aakash Wadhawan	Phoolan Devi: The Bandit Queen	61
11	Dr. Vitthal V. Parab	The Social, Cultural Impact of English Literature on the Traditional Life of the People of Bangladesh	67
12	Mr. Parkale Suryakant Narayan	"Sexual Politics" in Sharankumar Limbale's <i>The Outcaste</i> (Akkarmashi)	78
13	Thokchom Ursa	An Insight into Anthropometric Variations of Height and Weight among Monozygotic Twins	83
14	Dr. Prashant Krushnarao Pathak	Human Right and Child Education in Indian Constitution	87
15	कांछळे एम. एम.	दलितेतरांच्या दलित उध्दारांसाठी चळवळी	93

Phoolan Devi: The Bandit Queen**Dr. Archana Durgesh, Dr. Pooja Singh, Achal Sharma, Bramh Prakash Singh, Aakash Wadhawan****Abstract**

This paper has attempted to find out whether it is justified to take revenge by those women who have been a victim of rape and brutality. Indian poets and writers have described women as devoted and self-sacrificed, yet occasionally rebellious and dangerous. Phoolan Devi is one of the top ten women who took revenge for the heinous crime i.e. rape committed to them. She was born in India in 1963 to a low-caste family. After becoming estranged from her family, she became the companion to the leader of a group of bandits. During a struggle for gang leadership, Devi's companion was killed, and she was gang-raped by several men over a time period of three weeks. She later became a bandit leader herself, and in 1981 called for the killing of 22 villagers in Behmai, including two that had been involved in her rape. After serving 11 years in jail, she managed to get herself elected to parliament – but was killed in 2001, as an act of vengeance for her earlier murders. Even there are such animals who are wandering freely with their dirty and filthy thinking with support of politicians and other rich people. This paper tries to convey the message that every woman should learn from Phoolan Devi, that how *brave, courageous and dangerous* a woman can be if forced or harmed.

Key Words: Rape, Justice, Gang, Revenge

God created the earth. He created man, animals, vegetation, rivers etc. Then, he thought of decorating it and discovered woman. A man can build a HOUSE but woman makes it a HOME. We call our daughters as Laxmi, Durga etc. Goddess Durga symbolizes the divine forces (positive energy) known as divine Shakti (feminine energy/ power) that is used against the negative forces of evil and wickedness. Unfortunately, it is noticed from past years till today that importance and prestige of woman is exploited by people. Virginia Woolf's remarks appropriately the ironical paradox of woman's life. "Imaginatively she is of the highest importance, practically she is completely insignificant. Woman is tortured physically, mentally, socially and emotionally. If realization of mistake occurred afterwards by those culprits, then what is the use of being repent after the disgusting stunt. It cannot replace those tears which were flowed like a typhoon, the pain which made a woman feel like a corpse. A major question arises here, is it wrong to seek revenge? If a single hand is there to hold and give a way

for disturbed and frustrated person, it may be like a dream come true.

It has been rightly described in the poem written below

Jab kadamusne is jahan me rakha
 Logon ne kahatuhaisirfekabla
 Kyubhuljatehainwoh
 Narikikahani
 Har bar kartejoapnimanmaani,
 Roknauskajodharmapnasamajhte
 Kudhkokabhi, kyunahiwoparakhte.
 Kyuuskiazaadiuskokhatakti.
 Jinkikhudsekabhinahi pat ti.
 Uskiuddankeraaste
 Khadejolekelaathiyan
 Kyukhudnahitalashteyapniparchaiyan.
 Narihaiekphool
 Agar chahaRaundna,

Ho jayegiwohpratikool.
 Kabhibankebehen, PremhaiDikhhaya
 KabhibankeMaa, Kiyasar par saaya
 Apnehausle se, badal de jokaaynat
 Zindagisawaarnemeinhai, usikaHaath.
 Phoolantha us narikanaam,
 kartahu main uskezazbeko salaam
 Janmithi jab Phoolan
 SamjhasabneuskoKarzz.
 Nishkriya ho gayatha
 HarkisikaFarz.
 KoylekiBhaanti, Kiyauskokaala.
 Akhirkiskosunati,
 Kartiwoh
 BayaanHawala.
 UskaHridaythasaday,
 Jab huajulm,
 Huakrodhkauday.
 Abnahisehnithi, Uskoduniyadardbhari
 UskibilakhtiRoohbhithi,
 abaagebadhi.
 Haathuske, PaabandiyankeDarwazesilnelage
 jabRaqtmeinsamayekatre,
 aansuoukesaathgirNelage.
ARE, ..Nar!!
 TubhoolgayaNarikeroopPrachand
 jab Karle woVinaashka, NishchayAkhand.
 Jab kiyabanjar,
 Us Narikadaman.
 KhrodmeinDoobiwoh,
 KardiyaRaqtbharasaawan.

Raahmein aye Pattharbadhe
 Kuch ne gala ghotnabhichaha.
 Par kadambadhaya, usne jab bhi
 Jahaan ne kuchnayathapaaya.
 Jo kehtehain, wothiHatyaari
 Banithisakht.
 Wokyunahidekhte,
 Uskabikhraaurjalahuawaqt.
 Gherletihain jab
 Parchaiyaankai.
 Tab ekkiranbhilagtihaibilkulsahi.
 Abkyalautkarayega
 UskaRooshniwalaDil
 Andhera hi milega
 Jo bhi ho uskimanzil.
 TohkyunabantiwoChandi, Kaali!!
 YeharzhaimeraDuniya se
 Bankesawaali.
MilithiBaagiyon se
Par,
Cheenagayathauska
AzaadAdhikar.
Vinashkiyapaapiyonka
LekarRaqtRanjitPratikaar

The same thing happened with Phoolan Devi when justice was wandering somewhere in universe, far from Chambal land. Phoolan created her own justice. Violence occurred too fast and it created a dark image over her mind. The only satisfactory material was REVENGE for her. When a woman is raped or sexually tortured, she may experience Rape Trauma Syndrome. It happens due to cluster of extreme

stress and mental pressure experienced by a woman during sexual assault. She may cry, shout, sit calmly, laugh nervously, count the stars, burn papers uselessly. No response is appropriate or logical, but this HAPPENS.....and these things can't be cured just by medicines. Whatever she feels is valid because she feels it and it is how she expresses reaction to rape crisis. And if someone gather courage and regain herself, people always throw stones. Was Phoolan A Wild lady? And if she was, who made her dangerous? After her surrender, people were against her revenge. So a question appeared here, why did the people saw only the reaction, and forgets the action? Was Newton's third law not revolving in their mind? Phoolan was a little girl. The dirtiness made her brittle. But any force can break a woman temporarily; she can roll up all the power and can beat up the heat. She was caught in a circle of eyes, fixed in other peoples' perception. And this was the place she lived till her death. She was surrounded and lived by guns and at last died by it. Phoolan's tragic life always discovered goose bumps. People should understand that, SITTING over chair and making comments is very simple. STEPPING into one's shoes is just opposite.

Once upon a time, in a small village named Gorhakupurwa in Jalaun District, Uttar Pradesh. There lived a girl, of a mallah caste, Named Phoolan Devi. But some transformation took place in her name. There is a pathetic story behind the flipping of her name from Phoolan Devi to "*The Bandit Queen*". Her life took unexpected turns with harsh incidents which created uproar in her heart and also society.

Phoolan Devi was born in mallah caste (boatmen) in a poor family. She was fourth and youngest child of her father Sri Devi Din and one older sister survived to adulthood. Phoolan's family owned 0.4 hectare land approx., very large Neem tree on it. Her father had hoped that produce of the tree would enable him to pay

dowry for his daughters' wedding. Though, Dowry system is ill-factor today. But, at that time, it was a right of groom's side, and Phoolan suffered the same. She was forcefully married to a man named Puttilal was 20years older than Phoolan Devi, who was 11 years old.

Phoolan Devi's childhood was ruined totally. She was criticized as "*The Oldman's Wife*" by the children of that village. One day, accidentally; one large earthen pitcher was broken by her. In response, She was tortured, molested and RAPED by her husband at the unflourished age of 11. She did nothing but wept in agonizing pain. Phoolan Devi ran away several times to her marital home, as she was experiencing such painful actions by her husband. She was returned by her parents to her husband each time to be punished. But, she was very courageous and brave girl. She didn't accept her ruined fate and ran back to her marital home and started working with her father and mother. A wife leaving her husband was a serious taboo in rural areas of India, and Phoolan Devi was marked as a social outcast.

Phoolan was now, a woman. Once, Phoolan was working in farm alone Ashok, Sarpanch's son tried to RAPE her. She protested with her full power. Ashok, on seeing her running, made his own description of the scene. Phoolan was made culprit in front of her father and village people. Sarpanch criticized her and said "*This girl is bad for our boys. She will have to leave the village*". Phoolan was trapped in this web and left the village. Kailash, Phoolan's cousin took her to his house.

Now, Bandit's society was wating for Phoolan to be introduced. She started living in her cousin's home after getting a small introduction with Vikram Mallah, a bandit's gang member. Vikram was just a gang member; his leader was Babu Gujjar, who was very cruel and oppressive. Fake news flew over area that Phoolan was involved in bandit robberies. She

was arrested by local police. Then, she was severely abused, tortured and RAPED by policemen in jail. She was forced to bear that pain; physical and mental both.

She was bailed by Thakur with support of bandit gang leader Babu Gujjar. Babu Gujjar wanted Phoolan for his physical entertainment only. On May, 1979, Babu Gujjar kidnapped her from her marital home on the tip of knife. She was taken forcefully to bandit's area by dragging over ground littered with stones.

Vikramallah showed respect and care for Phoolan but was bound in limits. Babu Gujjar RAPED her at night once, Vikram Mallah who was against all this odd and evil things controlled his anger. Vikram was in two side situation. He wanted to save Phoolan from Babu Gujjar and was waiting for chance. Chances are meant to give shots. So, Vikram Mallah shot Babu Gujjar when he found him RAPING Phoolan again in day time. Phoolan was now greatly affected by Vikram in a positive manner. Some attraction was sprouted between both of them.

Now Vikram Mallah was gang leader. He wanted to give Phoolan her own identity, which she required the most. Vikram played a great role in uplifting Phoolan's life. At village "*Astha*". Phoolan was given the title "*Devi*". She was started to be known as "*Phoolan Devi*" throughout the Chambalghati area. Undaunted by the fact that Vikram already had a wife and she unfortunately had a husband, Phoolan and Vikram began living together. Phoolan Devi learned how to use a gun from Vikram and participate in gang's activities across Bundelkhand. Phoolan was the only woman member, of that gang of dacoits. A few weeks later, the gang attacked the village where Phoolan's husband, Puttilal lived. Phoolan herself made her husband to sit over donkey and dragged over ground in front of the villagers. She left him almost dead by the road with a

letter or a note warning older man not to marry young girls. This was the first revolt against child marriage. Phoolan was crying and shouting at Puttilal when she was beating him severely. It was a tragic moment when a lady almost killed her husband and took revenge of injustice. Robberies, dacoit actions were on great heights. Phoolan Devi's fame was revolving around the whole area. After Sometime, Sri Ram and Lala Ram (two upper caste Thakur brothers) who were in jail, previously belonged to the gang, and decided to rejoin the Phoolan's gang as main leaders. They were outraged to hear the death of Babugujjar and held Phoolan responsible for inciting the act. Sri Ram berated her for being a divisive undisciplined woman. And she answered them back with her characteristic foulness of tongue. Sri Ram then grabbed her at neck and slapped her hard. He touched her body parts, and molested her during the scuffle. As leader of gang, Vikram Mallah berated Sri Ram for attacking woman and made him apologize to Phoolan. Sri Ram and his brother Lala Ram were burning in the fire of humiliation, known by the fact that Vikram and Phoolan being of Mallah caste humiliated them in front of gang members.

After this incident, whenever gang robbed a village, Sri Ram and Lala Ram always make it appoint to insult and beat mallahs of that village. This displeased the mallah members of gang. Many Thakurs joined the gang. On the other hand, other mallah members who were remained in the gang were also not happy with Vikram. The fact, Vikram alone had a woman living with him incited JEALOUSY. A few days later, A gunfight begin and the result was that Vikram and Phoolan with not even a single supporters, had to make their escape with some money with them. Vikram was wounded, so Phoolan took him to Kanpur city and made him to consult doctor for his treatment.

It was 13 August, 1980, they returned back to Phoolan's marital home. There, Phoolan was lost in previous memories in which she was an innocent child. She hugged her mother and tears came automatically from here yes.

Words came on tongue; of the dark past she experienced but could not take shape reaching upto her mother's sears. With hanging words, she returned back to Chambal river side with Vikram. At that place, Vikram shared his thoughts to Phoolan. He told her that *"if you kill one or two men, you face a death sentence but if you kill 20 men, the government will have to pay you to surrender"*. After some moment, Vikram was shot dead by Thakur Sri Ram. Phoolan was entirely lamented. She was in passionate grief. Phoolan was taken back to Behmai village by Thakur Sri Ram and his gang. She was locked in a room in one of the houses in village. She was beaten extremely. Hard beating was a first level. The black hearted gang members of Thakur Sri Ram and Lala Ram RAPED her one by one.

31 Men RAPED her at a time. This shameful and disgraceful action continues over a period of 3 weeks. She was made to have writhing pain. She resisted as much as her strength allowed. Three weeks were curse for her. Her life was not simple as any other woman, it was hard to explain. After facing those thorns, she was emotionally, mentally and physically destroyed. Phoolan Devi was taken to her cousin's village by the gang, where she was ordered to fetch water from well. Instantly, Thakur Sri Ram removed her clothes in front of the whole village. She was molested by grabbing her hairs while she was naked. This disgraceful action was done to create terror of Thakurs' in front of other people.

But No-one dares to do anything against that deed. Every male person was watching it as a scene to be published by Thakur Sri Ram.

Phoolan was mentally sick and stress was at highest level. It was out of limit. She couldn't

resist it anymore. The *"REVENGE"* was in her *"NERVES"*. The condition was that for every question, her answer was *"REVENGE"*. Phoolan Devi with her cousin met with Maan Singh. Maan Singh was comrade of Vikramallah. Phoolan Devi and Maan Singh created a new gang composed solely of Mallahs. The gang carried out series of violent robberies across Bundelkhand, usually targeting upper caste people. After seventeen months, Phoolan returned to Behmai village instantly after getting news about which she was waiting for. Sri Ram and Lala Ram with his gang members were attending a wedding at Behmai. Phoolan came to seek REVENGE.

On 14 February 1981. Phoolan and her gang marched into Behmai dressed as Police officers. Phoolan was so much frustrated that no actual culprit had been apprehended. Nevertheless, she had, by this time developed a deep revolting hatred for the entire caste of Thakur; a few of whose members had protested killing Babu Gujjar, and then gang raped Phoolan. Phoolan ordered her gang members to line up each and every man belonging to Thakur caste. They were shot dead by Phoolan's mallah gang members. Twenty two Thakur were killed. But Sri Ram was successful in running from Behmai village.

Her revenge was achieved with blood in her eyes, with LOST future, with LOST past, with DESTROYED present and NO reason to live for. Whenever Phoolan Devi raided a village, she always tells the little girls, *"you can fight against all this. You don't have to live like this way, as slave. You can become bandit"* The Behmai massacre provoked outraged across the country. V.P. Singh, the then chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, resigned in the wake of Behmai killings. A large mass of police cops was sent to hunt for Phoolan Devi. The poor villagers supported Phoolan Devi and made police cops unsuccessful. In media, stories of ROBINHOOD were compared with PHOOLAN DEVI. Phoolan

was began to be called as *THE BANDIT QUEEN*. Police started killing Phoolan's gang members, also. Phoolan was in poor health condition. For the sake of her gang members, Phoolan Devi decided to surrender.

Phoolan Devi, who wore a sash of Devi on her head, a gift from her comrade surrender in February 1983 with a golden parachute. She said that she didn't trust over Uttar Pradesh police and insisted that she would surrender only to Madhya Pradesh police. This was the condition of Uttar Pradesh police at that time. She laid down her arms before Mahatma Gandhi picture and goddess Durga, not to police. She demanded free education for gang members' children, protection for their families and place to live.

Phoolan Devi was charged with 48 crimes. In 1993, the government of Uttar Pradesh, led by Shri Mulayam Singh Yadav, withdrew all cases against her. Phoolan Devi was released from jail on 10th February, 1994 under heavy security. The Thakur Sri Ram who escaped the Behmai massacre was killed in inter gang warfare, while Phoolan Devi was in jail. But Sri Ram's brother Lalaram was alive, the day Phoolan Devi was released.

In 1996, Phoolan Devi stood for election representing Samajwadi Party on a platform of helping poor and oppressed. She won the elections from Mirzapur. Though, Phoolan Devi was illiterate, she composed her autobiography

entitled. "*The Bandit Queen Of India: An Indian Woman's Amazing Journey from Peasant TO International Legend.*" with the help of other writers.

On 25 July 2001, Phoolan Devi was shot dead by three masked gunmen outside of her Delhi bungalow. She was hit 5 times. Among the murderers, Sher Singh Rana alias Pankaj later surrendered to police. Rana took revenge for the upper caste men; she gunned down in Behmai massacre.

This ended THE LIFE PAGES of Phoolan Devi, which were WRITTEN, TORN, TORTURED, BURNED and made DIRTY; would not be made clear by any type of RUBBER. They were permanent dark spots in her life. WE saw that LIFE is unexpected at each and every moment.

She was given much harm. She experienced, child marriage, house hold works at early age of 11, molestation, rape, beatings...But, RAPE is a type of crime or a sin, which opens no option for the person being raped. Neither he/she can LIVE, nor can he/she PROTEST. The men who raped Phoolan Devi were animals. But today also there are such animals who are wandering freely with their dirty and filthy thinking with support of politicians and other rich people. Every woman should learn from Phoolan Devi, that How *brave, courageous and dangerous* a woman can be if forced or harmed.

An upcoming courage can cultivate a farm land....

But up roaring courage can destroy it to nothing....

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