

DARRIEUSSECQ'S *PIG TALES*: DELIBERATION ON WOMEN AND THEIR HEALTH IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

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Abstract

Marie Darrieussecq is a French contemporary writer whose radical views are highly appreciative, crucial, thought-provoking, well defined, logical events in the disciplines of feminism, gender, individuality, society that she has undertaken and worked tirelessly to present, analyze and raise issues in her critically acclaimed writings. Her novels are a great platform to decipher, understand, and deliberate on such issues comprehensively through various perspectives. In the present communication, her work *Pig Tales*, is taken as a ground to explore the various issues pertaining to women under the umbrella of feminism in France and subsequently in general. The various ideas, concepts deliberated upon by feminists like Beauvoir, Adichie, Irigaray will be taken into consideration to strengthen the views regarding the same. The contemporary time is witnessing a lot of debates on workplace discrimination and inequalities among women that will also be highlighted in the present communication.

Keyword: Feminism, Darrieussecq, *Pig Tales*, discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

The lines of the narrator aiming at Honorés perception towards presence of women at work “But he didn’t want me to work. He said work corrupted women (Darrieussecq 9)”. The concerned opinion can be seen as a testament regarding the downfall of female society even in modern times as it is always on the receiving end. There is a dire need to understand that all are equal, irrespective of the sexes. One is free to work in whatever domain one is willing to without any sort of discrimination irrespective of caste, creed, religion, sex. The presence of domination is always there as reflected in the words of Paulo Freire because of the constant conflict between the oppressors and the oppressed through conquests relying on divide and rule, manipulation or cultural differences. This is what is clearly echoing when one analyzes the presence of women at present times at work or at home.

The commodification of the women’s bodies in the capitalist world is strikingly alarming and the same is exhibited in the voice of the narrator in the novel when she says “The director of Perfumes Plus was holding my right breast in one hand the job contract in the other (Darrieussecq 3)”. The exploitation of women under the guise of providing them a living is highly objectionable. How can a living being be transformed into a consumer product? The product that can be consumed by anyone with the power of money, influence. The thoughts of Simone de Beauvoir pertaining to woman in *The Second Sex* is worth deliberation seeing such heinous, pathetic environment prevailing towards them. She affirms “Here is an important fact that recurs throughout history: abstract rights cannot sufficiently define the concrete situation of woman; this situation depends in great part on the economic role she plays; and very often, abstract freedom and concrete powers vary inversely (Beauvoir 45)”. Her views reflect that a woman’s freedom is restricted when she tries to a part of the society, accepting all the norms

established by it but by doing that she finds herself in a dilemma. The norms such as marriage, dressing sense, household works restrict them to feel the notion of freedom but if she opposes it then too, she will be imposed with titles like a prostitute, an ill-mannered being who is a stigma for the society. Few questions that are persisting in my mind observing the above issues are: The society cannot be flourished in such spaces where one is trying to dominate, colonize, suppress, dehumanize and divide the other to exhibit its power. One needs to understand and there is a disastrous need to sensitize people by the sections of society who are logical in approach that unity needs to be taken as the sole objective to uplift the nation by cutting all the barriers that come in its path. The division on any account cannot be the medium to progress for any sections of the society, in fact, it is like a termite that can ruin the whole system to such an extent that it wouldn’t be possible to even think of the growth.

The phrase emphasizing the importance of attractive look for women exhibits their treatment as commodities. “The director told me in the boutique, the important thing was to look lovely and well groomed at all times. (Darrieussecq 15)”. The need to please everyone with the look and attire expresses the suffocative life women are living where they are being presented as a commodity which is beautifully decorated to satisfy the thirst of its customers irrespective of their feelings. These instances strangle their life and make them slave who do not resist under the influence of power but act as a robot. Why hurting one’s sentiments for selfish motive when one cannot keep one happy which is the true essence of life that one needs to incorporate?

The lack of opportunities that too marred with discrimination is a real setback for this section of the society who are exploited, forced to sell their dignity to earn their livelihood. The words of the narrator “I read and reread it over his shoulder: part-time employment paying almost the minimum wage which would

allow me to contribute to the rent at home and buy myself a dress or two. (Darrieussecq 3)”. The atrocious feelings towards females, biased perception about them in dignified jobs and the compulsion to fulfill the basic needs are forcing women to involve in acts that are not respectful in nature. How can one be troubled, discriminated, doomed under the guise of work that they deserve on their merit and carrying out with utmost sincerity.

Honoré was a teacher in a big suburban junior high school. “That is when Honoré said that with a body like mine and such a blooming appearance I would get all the ritzy boutiques I wanted (Darrieussecq 8)”. The thought of Honoré itself indicates the subjugation of women in a male dominated society. The only perception they have about the opposite sex is body as a commodity to satisfy their insatiable hunger. The incident mentioned by Adichie in her text *We should be all Feminists* “If we do something over and over, it becomes normal. If we see the same thing over and over, it becomes normal. If only boys are made class monitor, then at some point we will all think, even if unconsciously, that the class monitor has to be a boy. If we keep seeing only men as heads of corporations, it starts to seem “natural” that only men should be heads of corporations. (Adichie 12)” This instance discussed by Adichie sharply reflects the misogynistic mind set of the patriarchal society and that has to be changed to prevail equality, justice, harmony, liberty in the female sections of the society. Such prejudice will always be harmful and may lead to havoc in the nation.

The flourishing of sexual activities as a profession is on peak because of the unprecedented demand for it accompanied by huge profit that it generates, which is felt in the thoughts of the narrator “I was disappointed to discover however that despite his prestigious profession, his salary allowed him to rent nothing better than a lousy one-bedroom apartment in a nearby suburb. I told myself immediately that it was only fair that I get my rear in gear and help him out. (Darrieussecq 21)”. The thought of the narrator exhibits the constant repetition of something leads to its normalcy. It is clearly seen in the attitude of the narrator who after finding herself surrounded by people who define women as a commodity and ready to spend huge amount to buy it that she started thinking to engage in it to support Honoré financially. The further lines of the narrator “It’s my body that controls my head –I know that only too well now... (Darrieussecq 18)”. The obsession of the narrator with the body affirms it unconditionally.

But the clients continued to find me terribly sexy, that’s all that mattered (Darrieussecq 42)”.

The stark reality that destroys the life of a girl who is being used as a commodity until she becomes pregnant, which brings changes in physical appearance that is considered a hurdle in her beauty is a matter of grave concern. The narrator says “In any case if they had known I was pregnant I would have been fired. “ The pregnancy would result in losing the job and that shows the weak presence of women in such societies who are being treated as use and throw products. Each human body is naturally formed and no one has the right to criticize it and if it happens, it’s firmly condemnable. She further adds “I am still grateful to him for his kindness, his patience, he had no reason to keep me, since he no longer found me sexually attractive (Darrieussecq).” How can such incidents are prevailing in a society in the 20th century which is well advanced in terms of technology, knowledge, opportunities, learning...How can women be treated as a sexual product? How come their feelings are being

suppressed in a society which talks about enlightenment, liberty, equality, fraternity?

Now I was making only enough to pay for food and public transportation (Darrieussecq 42)”. The easy earnings in such unlawful activities in compare to activities that are meant to be practiced is obviously playing a major role in functioning of its activities which need to be stopped by providing reasonable opportunities and earnings in lawful activities.

The one-sided atrocities being faced by women in sexual acts is extremely painful. “As soon as I nodded off on my stool, images of blood and butchery flooded my mind. I saw Honore looming over me, opening his mouth his mouth as for a kiss, then biting me savagely in the bacon. I saw my clients pretending to nibble the flowers at my cleavage so that they could sink their teeth into my neck. I saw the director ripping off my uniform and howling with laughter at discovering six teats instead of two breasts (Darrieussecq 46)”. The barbaric reactions towards the narrator are highly condemnable who are being violently attacked under the power of money for sexual hunger. As Beauvoir says in *The Second Sex* “ It’s the society that creates prostitutes, it’s the demand that leads to running of prostitution.” The presence of clients are eventually the reason that force women into such violent acts.

“I had to look at myself in the mirror, to recognize myself, in a way. I saw my poor body, saw how damaged it was. There was nothing- almost nothing left of my former radiance (Darrieussecq 49)”. The condemnable approach towards one’s body is not praiseworthy. The thought that constantly strikes in the narrator’s mind evokes her obsession towards the money that her body was generating until she was young but once she becomes pregnant, she started developing hatred feelings towards her body as it stopped gaining attraction in the eyes of the customers. The negative comment even by the doctor evokes the vulnerable presence of the women in our society “The dermatologist exclaimed indignantly when she examined me, saying she had never seen skin in such condition before. (Darrieussecq 51)”. This narrow mind set needs to be changed towards women.

The following incident that we come across in the novel “ A boy reached out to me and I grabbed his hand, but the little creep let go with a shriek of laughter, calling me a fat cow. I began to cry. Honore left without looking back probably dying of shame (Darrieussecq 55)”. She is in a constant state of deliberation regarding her body that she thinks it has become useless once she becomes pregnant as people don’t approach her the way they used to before her pregnancy which was a good source of income. “He sent the receptionist away, so no one would see, I guess, and told me that I had fooled him but good, that I was absolutely the pits and a disgusting whore. That’s what he said.” Such harsh attitude reflects the chaotic environment in which women are living who are constantly in a state of anxiety of losing their demand after reaching certain age.

CONCLUSION

The paper can be concluded with the opinion that to find, see, feel, enjoy unity in diversity, one needs to love, respect, support each other in all spheres of life rather than exploiting one for one’s mean, selfish motive that is what is disturbing our society, community and eventually nation in their path of progress. Darrieussecq has firmly deliberated on it in her work with several examples and now it’s up to the readers to ponder upon it to learn to respect each and every one irrespective of differences that we find to build a happy and prosperous society.

RESEARCH

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