

Breaking Boundaries: Urmila Pawar's *Mother Wit*

Sunita Kumari
MA English
MRIIRS

Dr. Swati Chauhan
Associate Professor
Department of English
MRIIRS

Abstract

When the universe was made, it was immediately split into two separate parts. People come in many forms, such as different sexes, social classes, races, levels of cleanliness, levels of superiority, and so on. Slavery, racial segregation, and other forms of cruelty have been talked about to the point where they are no longer done or are about to be thrown out as social norms. Still, there is a lot of sexism in the world because the people who do it are not directly involved in most other institutions and organisations. This is what's at the heart of the problem. But because it is so hard to figure out who is doing the sexism, it is almost impossible to start a successful uprising against it. Even though women have been fighting for their political rights for thousands of years, in many parts of the world they still have to follow the rules set by society. The purpose of this research is to find out if women in the twenty-first century can break free of patriarchal constraints on their own, who these women are, what helps them, and how they do this in a culture that is hostile to women. Urmila Pawar's *Mother wit* is being analysed in order to provide a response to the issue posed. Women's studies, Dalit feminist, and postcolonial perspectives will be applied to the text for analysis. This study shows that development for women has been accelerated since women no longer feel the need to hold themselves back. Incontestably, Dalit women have the ability to handle this on their own. A chance for freedom of thought and action is given to them by education and gainful employment.

Key Words: Women, boundaries, Identity, Self

Introduction

Women have always been restricted in a variety of ways, and this has been the case throughout history. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata, two epic tales, provide further evidence of the limitations placed on women. Sita, the protagonist of the Ramayana, disobeyed her captors by crossing the Laxman-rekha without Laxman's consent. Draupadi was similarly staked in a game of dice without her knowledge or permission in the Mahabharata. These events vividly illustrate the plight of ancient royal ladies, while the plight of common women goes without saying. Furthermore, women's standing was unequal throughout the world in the Middle Ages, and they often lived as second-class citizens. Women were seen as second class citizens, and their needs were always an afterthought. They were categorised as either totally dishonest, sexual,

innocent, or inept. Their living conditions clearly weren't any better than they were in antiquity. In the contemporary era, however, as a result of their assertion, they were granted the right to an education, the right to priestly services, especially in the West, the ability to vote, the right to an equal opportunity in the workplace, in government, etc. Following India's independence, women gained significant constitutional protections and equality in some spheres, but their lives remain precarious despite persistent efforts to advance gender parity. They have come a long way, but there is still a long way to go until they are free from discrimination, subjugation, sexual assault, and other forms of violence. Some constitutional protections exist, but whether or not they are enforced in practice is open to debate given that khap panchayats/caste panchayats still get the women paraded naked, order husband and wife to behave like brother-sister, and sometimes order the death penalty for violation of social codes.

The empowerment of women is a hallmark of a free society. Women's liberation is a barometer of societal progress. Neither society is liberated from a hegemonic ideology nor society frees the women. Despite generations of feminist movement leadership and some progress toward gender parity, women remain enslaved by patriarchy. The question of how women might achieve freedom from patriarchal tyranny at home and in society at large persists. Unlike the majority of women's characters in Indian works in English, the women in the short stories of Urmila Pawar break out of patriarchal bonds and take the reins. They finally speak up during the darkest of times, not only resisting but also passing judgment on topics of paramount importance. Based on her own mother, Urmila Pawar's narrative "**Mother**" depicts a woman who refuses to allow her brother-in-law sell her townhouse and keep the proceeds when her husband dies. She resists her in-laws' persistent prodding that she return to the village. She is also aware of her in-laws' various machinations. Unexpectedly, Taty, Urmila Pawar's brother, exclaims, "*Shantay [Taty's niece and Urmila Pawar's sister], wake up children. This is not your mother, and she means you harm. She has no interest in purchasing a house. She really wants to move to the city. She won't be happy until she sees you all dead.*"

And aaye [mother] knows all about their schemes to set up a good backwards migration scenario, so she says something very telling: "*My beloved husband...my master...my love.... I remember you warning me about your brother, Taty. You are quite correct, raja. During the night, he poisoned your son, raja. He knocked him down cold. Like a flock of hawks, all the crows have congregated in one place*".

Widow in Urmila Pawar's stories is not a weak person who gives up easily when confronted by adversaries; rather, she is a powerful person who battles firmly against them. She has the guts to stand up to the devil himself. It appears that the arduous effort of raising children strengthens women to take on other obstacles in their lives, both at home and at work. In addition, aaye, a female character in the novel, is adamant that she would not leave town. The children and the future of people like herself, Dalits, are just as important as the facilities themselves. Nalini, the protagonist of "**The Odd One**," receives an apartment allotment in the Pant Nagar neighbourhood of Ghatkopar, Bombay, pushes her husband to manage the cash jointly, and prepares to relocate from the chawl to the apartment in the hopes of providing a brighter future for their children. Her husband Vithal and her conservative in-laws saw her choice to leave the chawl as an attempt to steal away their successful son. Nalini's position, therefore, is like a pendulum, swinging between the dramatic threats of

suicide made by her mother-in-law if they moved to the apartment on the one hand, to the future and progress on the other. Nalini, unlike her husband, does not crumble but rather resolves to relocate after her mother-in-law has a sudden faint. She stands up with her infant in her arms and insists, "*Don't say we won't leave. I understand if you don't feel like going. But I'm going!*"

Nalini, not wanting to wait for an answer, took her kid and left. Her progressive outlook gives her the confidence to break out of patriarchy's restrictive norms. Unlike Sita and Draupadi, she doesn't submit to patriarchal norms and instead chooses to walk with(out) her husband. Nalini's husband is no longer a "sheltering tree" for her. Neither she nor her husband are "two bullocks yoked together". Indira, a 'choli,' is a victim of caste, class, and gender in the story "*Armour*," and her action conveys the message that contemporary women demand equality and progress. In the local village market, she sells mangoes among the other ladies. In light of this, customers purposefully and frequently ask the women where the mangoes are sourced from choli'. Customers tend to speak slowly and carelessly around women of lower castes and classes. Two stumbling, snickering inebriated men ask,

"Yes, yes. These are mangoes from choli, but your mother's choli .If you are so interested in checking them out, go and find your mother's choli. Go"

After hearing this, they got to their feet and shuffled out like a couple of geriatric canines. Women like Indira are unafraid to challenge the social norms established by their caste, socioeconomic status, and gender ideology. How women deal with the issue of bigamy is revealed in the "*Woman as Caste*" narrative, which shows how women who have established their own businesses are able to understand the ways of the world and fight back. Bigamy's victims can do little to change their co-behavior wife's while their spouse takes pleasure in the company of two women. Since patriarchy prevents them from fighting back, their silence says plenty. Tara's father's bigamy is exemplified by her husband Prabhakar, who has remarried secretly. Her mother and the other women around her are encouraging her to give up. But Tara is determined to teach him a lesson in court, and she hates her stepmother, Mai, for the way she has messed up her relationship with her mother.

"It is not true, ladies do not ruin or disrupt," Mai says. Men "*will sell their own daughters to anyone who will pay for them, and they'll happily marry anyone else's daughter if given the chance*" Since she can't confront Tara directly, Mai assists her in turning over the evidence of Prabhakar's second marriage, even though Tara's brother Sadashiv had duped her. Stepmother Mai, who is universally despised, boasts, "*The priest whowed them wrote this [marriage certificate]. Take this and deal with your husband and brother whatever you see fit*"

Mai's action demonstrates that women are not women's adversary but are made so by men so that they may continue to enjoy the benefits of patriarchy. Tara and Mai go to fight against the patriarchy because they don't give a damn about their prescribed positions. It's clear that elder women are unable to break down barriers because they lack the benefits of education and employment enjoyed by modern women. Considering women's right to property, government policies are mixed. Nonetheless, when women get the

chance, they act like Mai does. Government has passed legislation, however it has not taken effect in practice. They are viewed like outsiders in both their parents' and spouse's families. There is no transfer of ownership to them. So, their stance on ownership of resources amounts to zilch. Instead of being seen for who they are as human beings, women are seen as objects. In *"One in Hand"* Kaka needed a kidney and assumed his wife, Kaki, would be a suitable donor. Kaka got the will made because the procedure was hazardous, but she found out that she was excluded from inheriting any of the family's assets. Kaka requested her to sign the will the night before the operation. He explained, *"I have stored those documents in the drawer inside that cabinet. Take a look at them, and then sign below my signature"* As selfless Kaki had no legal claim to any of the property, she *"picked up the papers, walked out towards the water-heater, and dropped each page in the orange light."*

This is how Kaki challenges the patriarchal norms that have existed for centuries. Following this, All she had endured was over. She seemed like a totally different person now, someone she hadn't met before. Kaka was in a coma after surgery, but Kaki managed to pull herself out of the lifelong patriarchal slumber into which she had been compelled. This proves that older women, regardless of their level of education or career, gain confidence and may transgress like Mai and Kaki.

In the short story *"Public Disgrace,"* Dalit women suffer violence and sexual assault because of their social status. Mahipati, a respected community leader, desired to demonstrate the plight of their women to a visiting leader. Indeed, upper caste had previously publicly shamed the ladies, and now the males of their community wish to portray them as they truly are: *"hair disheveled, afraid, features gaunt and sorrowful, and saris tattered"*

Despite Mahipati's repeated warnings that they should stay at home the following day, the women continue to work in the fields. These women are able to free themselves from patriarchal dominance and hidden gender and caste politics because of this. Time and time again, upper-caste males are portrayed as exploiters, whereas Dalit men are portrayed as saviors. They won't comply with Mahipati's request since they're Dalit women, and shamed people don't cooperate. Similarly, in *"The Cycle of Dhamma,"* an elderly woman defies religious rules and the council's ruling by refusing to burn or bury her husband's body. While her son and other relatives were waiting for the council's decision, she buries his body alone without informing them. After being admonished by her son, she says, *"The body is dust and must go back into dust. Why do you have to burn the skin, flesh, and bones to make smoke? Dust gains more power when that which is born of it is put back into it. This is a cycle..."*

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that Urmila Pawar's female protagonists transcend barriers of age, education, socioeconomic status, and religion in the works that she writes. These women are not fragile, submissive, unproductive, or insane; on the contrary, they are powerful, self-reliant, productive, and sane. They boldly make the decision to act without giving any thought to the potential consequences. They are in charge of

their own lives and do not put the authority of patriarchs above their own judgment. In addition to this, these women have a positive outlook on the future, believing that either they or their children will have a prosperous life. They eliminate the mental, emotional, psychological, financial, and social barriers, as well as any other obstacles, that are in their path to expansion. They are skilled at maintaining their dignity despite the unusual circumstances they find themselves in. These ladies are as shrewd as they come and know exactly what they should be doing at all times. As a result, other women who are motivated to end oppression on the basis of gender can look to these women as models to emulate.

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