



Vol.5. S1., 2018

ISSN

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

DISCRIMINATION OF WOMEN IN *BROKEN* BY SHY KEENAN

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Discrimination against women has sociological impact as it describes about the issue of a female to seek their human rights. The gender discrimination is pervasive across the world which is found to be all the strata of the society. Patriarchal norms have marked that male child is superior to the female child. The girl child is being discriminated against boys from the earliest stages of life from her childhood to her adulthood. In the society, even the girl children are unable to voice out their problems like abuse. They undergo physical or verbal maltreatment, injury, assault, violation, rape, crimes etc.

Shy Keenan is a British Author, a child sexual abuse survivor and founder of Phoenix Survivors, an advocacy group of victims of sexual abuse. She has written many books like *Broken*, *The Stolen Ones*, *United Shy Keenan Novels 2*, *Shy Keenan*, *Broken Sab*, *Where Angels Fear SS* and so on. She has received the Women Of The Year award in 2008 for her book, *Broken*. After the death of her son, Keenan maintained that her son was "bullied to death" and she started a campaign called "Ayden's Law". She requested the Prime Minister to create a new anti-bullying law. These laws have been enacted to eliminate the bullying. The organization called Phoenix Survivor by Shy Keenan was founded only after undergoing sexual abuse by her stepfather Stanley Claridge.

Shy Keenan co-founded Phoenix Survivors to campaign the justice for victims of sexual abuse. Her memoir *Broken* is considered to be the heart-rending and courageous book. It is the

most hard-hitting memoir of overcoming abuse. This novel is both a challenge and an inspiration. Her work has been considered by the British Government as a crucial part of the battle to protect children. As a child, Shy Keenan was beaten by her mother and raped by her stepfather and his associates from the age of four. Her mother beats her so severely and so she suffered as a deaf and nearly blind by her first day in the school. Her childhood was stolen. When she was ten, she was gang raped, viciously attacked and almost left to death with a fractured skull by a gang of dockworkers to who she was sold. Since her childhood, she had an internal and an external monologue playing. Her internal monologue seems to be like an irreverent, cynical and self-doubting mind which unwelcomes the visual flashbacks whereas her external monologue is insightful and diplomatic as she finds it literally impossible and not to voice out her problems. Due to many problems, she attempted suicide. Even though she had spent years trying not to think about all of this, the blocking painful memories triggers her to fight back. The fire inside her burnt like the Phoenix fire as a will to survive.

"I don't really have a god; I'm not the religious kind, but I do believe in good, which is just one more 'o'...I believe in the good and the bad that humans can do in the here and in the now." (Keenan 4)

Later Keenan participated in an investigation about Stanley and her associates with journalist Sarah Macdonald. Macdonald stated that Keenan has send an explicit and disgusting tape recording of her stepfather about abusing children to the police and the social services where they did nothing against the abuse. Finally the investigation was successful and her stepfather Stanley and his associates were sent to jail for the catalogue of crimes against children. At present, she is an international respected advocate who is fighting for the justice for victims for the child abuse. Her success was achieved only after a journey through extensive

psychiatric care, prison and suicide. Her experience exposes the extreme wickedness that are capable to describe the story of hope, strength and courage.

Child abuse comes under the "Theory of Etiology" where it is said to be a psychological etiology. It is the study and the investigation into the root causes of a psychological disorders so that it might be resolved. Psychological disorders can be caused due to the environmental factors like poor nutrition, exposure to toxins, stressful life events, chronic stress, culture, abuse etc. The genetic contribution to depressive disorders with a variety of environmental characteristics have been identified as risk factors of depression, early life stresses like childhood physical or sexual abuse, parental neglect etc. As the theory of etiology can be applied to the memoir, *Broken* in which the protagonist Karen undergoes psychological disorders since her childhood.

"A profound loneliness and fatigue descended on me. I was too bruised to go to school and it felt like I had been forgotten completely. My world narrowed until I felt like the only place I'd ever known was my bedroom". (Keenan 59)

She was brutally raped and beaten which leads to depression and early life stresses from the age of four. She also faces the parental neglect when her mother disbelieved her when Karen shared her worst part of childhood that her stepfather was raping her; at that time, her mother had beaten her and she was left to depression. Her childhood was ruined due to the physical and the sexual abuse where she was beaten, sold, swapped, photographed, left for dead, betrayed, ignored, orphaned and booted into adulthood as she was left alone to face it.

The other theory that can be applied for the memoir *Broken* is the "Feminist Theory". It is the theory that aims to understand the nature of gender inequality. It also describes about the social role of women and men's experiences, interest in a variety of fields such as anthropology, sociology, communication, media studies, psychoanalysis, education, philosophy etc. Themes have also been detected in this feminist theory; those themes are discrimination, objectification (especially sexual objectification), oppression, stereotyping etc. In this novel, the theme of sexual objectification is applied as Karen's stepfather treated her as a mere object to fulfil his sexual desire rather than treating her a child. When she voiced her problems out to the police and the social service, as a female child they did not consider her and filed a case against her. The gender inequality ruined Karen's childhood as a girl. She was dumb to voice out her problems. It also makes an impact in the society that the male is superior to the female.

The strong aspect on the commentary about the feminists is to emphasize on breaking the silence around rape as Karen voiced out for the justice for the victims of the child abuse. They were treated less valuable as a property as male thinks that women are the property crime. Women should oppose sexual objectification, violence and the notion of gender roles where Karen won the justice over her case only after facing many obstacles in her life.

Works Cited

Keenan, Shy. *Broken*. Edinburgh: Hodder and Stoughton, 2008. Print.