

## Empowered Identities from Marginalization in Dina Mehta's *Getting Away with Murder*

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### Abstract

Marginalization is always about the exclusion of a community or the exclusion of women in which their identity is brutally massacred in different ways. Those marginalized, especially women struggle for their life and their survival becomes a big question. Those who emerge from that marginalization are said to be the empowered identities. This research paper discusses about three friends, how they detangle themselves to create a new world for them and live happily ever after. They are the empowered marginalised women in literature proving their identities.

Dina Mehta's play *Getting away with Murder* portrays three friends Mallika (Malu), works with a male chauvinist, Sonali, grows up with the trauma of child abuse, Dr. Raziya has a troubled relationship, who are from three different marginalized background, who break the shackles and prove their identities. Malu is the one who starts to create a new world and ascertains that the marginalized to have their own identity. And the other two join hands with Malu and they are happy about it. They all empower themselves to their new world by letting go off the subjugation and the resentment of the society.

**Keywords:** Dina Mehta, *Getting Away with Murder*, Marginalization, Identity, Empowerment, Feminist, Subjugation.

### Introduction

Literature thrives on innovations and experimentalism. For ages, Drama in Literature has become the strong media for highlighting the social issues. Drama reaches to the people effectively because it connects the lives of people in the society. After the Feminist theatre, drama had the part of women and their problems as major social issue. Literature, many a times probes the marginalisation, subjugation, gender discrimination, female foeticide, dominant social hierarchy, childhood sexual abuse towards women and these above all evils of society has been well portrayed by the prolific writer and the playwright Dina Mehta in her play *Getting Away With Murder*.

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“*Getting Away With Murder*” is a play which deals with rape and its psychological impact and also the social issue. The violence that is faced by women damages them physically, mentally and morally. This play reveals the strength of women who face such problems but emerge out of their marginalisation. This play shows how the women struggle to come out of their seclusion to prove their identity. Dina Mehta’s “*Getting Away with Murder*” traces the life of three friends who undergo the violence and it's about their journey through these evil practices of the society and how do they emerge out of their marginalisation and reveal their true identities. They become the stronger woman with their new identities after emerging out of their marginalisation.

The play opens with the conversation of two friends Mallika (Malu) and Sonali. When Sonali expresses her feelings about the problems that she undergoes with her mother-in-law shows that her life is in disarray. As the play moves the problems of Sonali has been revealed. Sonali grows up with the trauma of sexual abuse which lingers in her mind even after happily married with a prospering businessman Anil Bhatnagar. Sonali’s childhood sexual abuse and gender discrimination by her mother has drastic effect on the psyche to the worse side. Sonali pities herself for being a woman and she records:

My mother used to exhaust herself over her household task maybe because she was grateful to uncle for taking us after father died. She drove herself and turned me into her opinions and feels her feelings.....Of course, Gopal escaped all that because he was born with an extra set of accessories. (59)

Sonali has a psychological confusion because of the bad treatment at her childhood. Because of that she forces her friend Malu to persuade their friend Dr. Raziya to do amniocentesis, so that she would know the gender of a baby in her womb. She wants the baby to be a boy child since the girl child must face the problems of the vicious world. She doesn't want her girl child to be a sufferer like her in the future.

Malika has her own tale of sorrows. Malika is a working woman and she faces the problem that is entirely different from that of Sonali. Even though she's in the front-line business she faces the problems through her business partner Mr. Pankaj Pingalay who is a male chauvinist. His contribution to the business progress was meagre but he makes Malu to do all work and pressurizes her. His thought is that the women are supposed to be at home or stick to the Secretarial work. Mr. Pingalay tries to sexually harass Malu’s secretary Thelma. Thelma sorts the help of Malu who indeed helps her out from the tangles of Mr. Pingalay. The sexual harassment that is widespread in the male dominant Society is well portrayed by the character Mr. Pingalay’s idea of women and his way of treating Malu and his behaviour towards Malu’s secretary Thelma.

He... he makes vulgar talk.... and wicked gestures asking me to accompany him to hotels outside the city. (70)

Because of this pre-set societal notions Malika is unable to shed all the notions that was into her from childhood. Because of that she couldn't have a meaningful relationship with Gopal brother of Sonali since Mallika is six years older than Gopal that makes her hesitate to approach Gopal.

Dr. Raziya, third friend is not an exemption from other two but with a different problem. She has a troubled relationship with her husband Habib. Raziya relates the position of women in a male dominated society, it is not only men but also women cause the trouble to other women. She acknowledges that the villain is not man alone but women who also serve as the agents of patriarchal society. Women find it difficult to detangle themselves from the barriers of the tradition which oppresses and makes them fall into the marginalised sector. Raziya is well of her husband's extra marital affair with Zamina, his niece Fatima's friend who is nineteen years old. Habib plans to marry Zamina because of the problem that Raziya cannot have a baby of her own. And Raziya's mother in law has been agitated because of this a long time ago so Habib succumbs to the decision of his mother and decides to marry that young girl.

You see Mallu I can't give him children. (77)

As the play comes to the end, the three friends emerge out of their marginalisation when they find solution for their problems. As a businesswoman Malu takes initiative step she decides to look over the tradition and talk to Gopal about her relationship. Because of a straightforward nature she can deal all the business dealings in a successful way and she becomes a bold woman. She by her boldness emerges out of the age-old tradition and notion that was followed which was a barrier for the development of women in the society. Malu is the first among three friends to create a new world for themselves to showcase their original identities.

Next to join hands with Mallika is the Dr. Raziya. Even though she decided not to react for the wedding announcement of her husband with Zamina, her decision and her empowered thoughts are revealed when she has a conversation with Mallika doctor says:

Don't fool yourself that you and I are no different Malu! or that by identifying man as villain we have won our fight for equality! The Enemy within, don't you see? It is in our minds, Mallika we are underlings! (78)

The moment when Raziya realises that women are underlings there starts their empowerment from marginalisation. When mistakes are realised then the justice is restored.

Likewise starting point of proving her identity is when she realises her subjugation and marginalisation as a woman. And it is for sure that she would break the shackles and be empowered and prove her identity as a successful doctor in the future.

Last to join the group of empowered identities from marginalisation is Sonali. At first, she justifies the female foeticide and amniocentesis to know the gender of her foetus. And she smokes regardless of the baby in her womb. But at the end when she understands her husband who is not against girl child like some others in this wicked world who doesn't want a girl child in their family, she emancipates from all her wrong notions that she had. This change occurs only after listening to her husband Arun who says that "he doesn't mind even if we had a girl child and that he wishes for a girl child only". Sonali breaks through the nightmarish thought of being a girl in the society is difficult. She didn't believe there are people like Arun who care their woman. And thus, Sonali breaks the shackles and becomes empowered and forgets about the female foeticide and the amniocentesis which is banned.

This play "*Getting Away With Murder*" by Dina Mehta has two Acts. The first act talks about the problems and the marginalisation of the women in the society and then the second act is about the solution they empower and emerge out to prove their identities. The play ends where it started. It is the same restaurant where Mallika and Sonali met when the play opens and discussed their problems their difficulties and frustration to one another. At the end of the play, they meet at the same place but as the empowered identities. Mallika decides to marry Gopal and adopt the little girl Minzari who was rescued by Gopal. Dr. Raziya decides to live her own life and doesn't want to be dependent on her husband and let him live happily with her second wife and finally Sonali is happy and ready to welcome her daughter and she says she has quit smoking for the good health of the child. These changes in the characters show that there are empowered identities from marginalisation and that they are strong to face the world in a different way so that they can be independent and prove themselves.

These chosen characters by Dina Mehta in "*Getting Away with Murder*" stands by the slaying of W.E.B. Dubois that 'There is no force equal to a woman determined to rise'

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