

# Reading of Marginalization in Dina Mehta's *Getting Away with Murder*

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## Abstract

Male dominance and female submissiveness is a continuous process, and it has no end. Oppression and exploitation of women in a patriarchal society has been an ever-present theme in Indian literary field. Women's suffering is portrayed especially by women writers with realism. Only in the post-Independence period the Indian writers have begun to project the feminine consciousness and sensibility. Recent Indian women playwrights like Dina Mehta, tend to present oppression of women with greater self-consciousness, a deeper sense of involvement. In the inception of Indian English Drama, dramatists have taken up contemporary social and political situations for analysis. However, Literature thrives on innovations and experimentalism. The women playwrights in India today try to show an Indian women's orientation towards her sexuality. In postcolonial dialects, the term 'subaltern' or 'marginalized' occupies a prominent place. The act of writing for a woman is an opportunity to break her silence of ages. Drama of late has emerged as a strong medium for highlighting women's issues, an exclusive forum. This paper entitled "**Reading of Marginalization in Dina Mehta's *Getting Away with Murder***" discusses how women are denied the existence of living, as they depend on men for their livelihood. The issue of dehumanization is dealt here with realistic consideration. The sufferings of women continue even after so many decades of Independence. The physical as well as psychological consequences are focused.

**Keywords:** Dina Mehta, *Getting Away with Murder*, marginalization, chauvinism, dehumanization, forum, subaltern

Literature of any country is the store house of information on culture and sociological aspects of its people. In epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, we hear the tales of Draupiti being humiliated in Kaurava court, Sita entering into fire to prove her chastity and Akalya hardened into stones, awaiting her deliverance at the touch of the foot of Rama. A girl child internalizes these tales thinking that this is what it is to be a woman. The attacks on her body seem an inevitable aspect of being a female.

Drama emerged as a strong media for highlighting women's issues and an exclusive forum where women audiences could realize and connect the lives of women in sharing their

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perspective with the world. Feminist theatre evolved not only to share the tragically under-represented experience of women living in a patriarchal society, but also to create a theatricality that would subvert traditional theater's most sacred traditions.

Dina Mehta, a prolific writer, is distinguished as a playwright for the stage, radio and television for which she has been awarded several prizes. The play by Dina Mehta, undermines the classical Indian aesthetic in which a single protagonist follows a linear plot by focusing on an ensemble. In which, we have three to four female characters, thus dramatizing the feminist belief that the group is more important than the individual.

*Getting away with Murder* is a play which deals with a raging social issue, rape and its psychological impact apart from physical. The play strikes an optimistic tone, for the husband himself accepts her after learning about her sad story of his wife, Sonali - a childhood sexual abuse which has left her a nervous wreck. The play reveals the growing awareness of the violence being done to them- physically, mentally, and morally, the violence that women face is multifaceted. Women die many deaths, but death, in fact is very rarely a physical one rather than a moral and psychological one. The playwright confronts the sexist and rapes certain significant issues: why are women sub-ordinate in household hierarchies, kept in seclusion, subjected to discrimination in the job market?

Dina Mehta's *Getting Away with Murder* maps the life of three friends as they undergo the grueling journey through their own private life, as they deal with body blows like childhood sexual abuse, discrimination, infidelity and insecure relationships. They ultimately learn to free themselves of guilt, shame and humiliation to emerge as stronger women at the end of it.

The play *Getting Away with Murder* opens with a conversation of two friends Mallika and Sonali. Sonali's life is in disarray. She expresses her problems with her mother-in-law, to Mallika:

“She is a witch, sly, secretive. She spies on me, I know, she stores up evidence against me-with which to bulgeon me one day (intensely) my mother-in-law, hates me Malu” (58).

A difference in the approach of the male and female characters can be observed in the play that has its roots in human psychology. Women are mentally conditioned to obey their husbands and not to take initiative in any case. Mehta reveals the submission of female character through Sonali. In one of her recompositions Sonali records:

My mother used to exhaust herself over her household tasks- may be because she was grateful to uncle for taking us after

father died”. She drove herself and turned me into her opinions, feel her feelings..... of course, Gopal escaped all that because he was born with an extra set of accessories” (59).

These words establish, the traditional Indian mother who shows gender discrimination in her treatment of her son Gopal and her daughter Sonali.

Sonali’s childhood sexual abuse has stepped down her psyche as a bad human experience. She wants to get her female foetus aborted. Mallika finds it ironical that even female foeticide is being touched as a sign of liberation.

“Mothers award the death sentence to their unborn daughters in the name of liberation. They thereby prove their women-power! Their Omnipotence! They play God (63)”

Sonali lives under the strain of a serious psychological confusion. When Sonali arranges the death of her molester (her own uncle), her brother Gopal abets her silently. The woman here is not a passive victim, Dina Mehta strikes a note of optimism, men need not be indifferent observer they can help women getting over her trauma just as Anil does. The play takes as its central theme rape and its effects on its victim.

Mallika too has her own tale of woe. Her partner in business is a male chauvinist, Mr. Pankaj Pingalay. Mallika runs an agency for food stuffs, which is with the new processed food in the market. Her partner’s contribution towards the progress of the business is nil. He cannot accept nor tolerate women as leading business managers, he often tells Malu,” that women should stick to secretarial work-or, at best, P R work,” Sexual harassment against women remains widespread in farms, factories and workplaces. In *Getting Away with Murder*, Malu’s secretary Thelma reveals that she is harassed by Mr. Pankaj Pingalay.

‘he- he makes vulgar talk ... and wicked gestures ... Asking me to accompany him to hotels outside the city. (70)

though he too is aware that Malu is doing the front line business. Mallika wants to have a meaningful relationship with Gopal. But she is not able to shed all the notions into her from childhood, the fact is that she is six years older than Gopal makes her hesitate.

Raziya, a friend of Sonali, has her stockpile of sorrows too. Her husband Habib plans to marry a nineteen- year old girl as her mother- in –law has been agitating about it for a long time. “You see Malu, I can’t give him children” (77).

Raziya is not the one to exonerate her from the guilt, she is prepared to face the situation boldly, and she acknowledge that the villain is not man alone, but women also have been the agents of patriarchy all along .Indian Women find it difficult to break free from the shackles of the oppressive tradition. Raziya relates the position of a woman in a male-dominated society. She laments:

You think I haven't asked myself that? .... Man's desire for children must be satisfied. ...a man has the right to the body of a woman younger than he (78).

Dina Mehta, an Indian Woman playwright reveals the power imbalance that prevails in our society with the feminist thought. She has proved that, a creative writer should have a social conscience, a duty towards the society. This paper focused on the social awareness, the concern for the women gender. More such plays need to come to the forum, only then the process of empowerment will begin, as Ambai puts it, "a multiplicity of text must happen, and the meaning must descend like a giant mirror before people, reflecting their lives, their cultures".

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