

I am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced: A Detailed study of how hazardously the institution of marriage works in a patriarchal society

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Abstract

Our ancestors studied women from a predominantly male perspective. We can define all theories of the world are established by 'man'. As a consequence of that feminism was emerged to point out various aspects of women's oppression through woman's point of view. Feminism is a politics guided to alter the power relations between women and men in a society. All feminist theories uphold women's rights including basic rights such as opportunities to make choices, opinions, decisions, love from their partner and have a life better. Recently, there are abundant issues about severe domestic violence. Domestic violence is considered as a criminal behaviour which causing trauma on mental health.

This article is an analysis of *I am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced* written by Nujood Ali and Delphine Minouni. This memoir is based on the true story of a child and a detailed account of patriarchal culture of Yemen society. Nine years old Nujood forced by her father to marry a man who was 30 years old. She faced domestic violence from her husband and imposed to do housechores. As a well determined child, she escaped from miserable fate and get divorced in 2008. Glamorous America Magazine opted Nujood Ali as 'Woman of the Year' in the same year.

Key words : Patriarchy, gender roles, child marriage, domestic violence, trauma, feminism, women's rights, Yemen culture

Introduction

Childhood is a beautiful phase of human life and children are the most innocent and purest of humans. Their world is full of games, toys, chocolates and friends. Unfortunately, all the children's life story is not the same. Some are subjected to face all the brutalities and misfortuned to work for their livelihood. Good education, clean clothes, healthy food, nice toys and play time are unimaginable for them. This book *I am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced* is a story of nine years old girl who changed her miserable life into a beautiful one through her courage. Instead of gifting a beautiful toy to Nujood Ali, father gave her a husband. Her nightmare began there.

"A tiny wisp of a thing, Nujood is neither a queen nor a princess. She is a normal girl with parents and plenty of brothers and sisters. Like all children her age, she loves to play hide-and-seek and adores chocolate. She likes to make colored drawings and fantasizes about being a sea turtle, because she has never seen the ocean. When she smiles, a tiny dimple appears in her left cheek." (IANAD, 2010:2).

This is a beautiful description of little girl Nujood Ali. In February 2008 Nujood Ali's father declared about her marriage to a man three times older than her. She tried her best to avoid this marriage. She forced to accept the decision made by her father and brothers. "And in Yemeni homes, of course, the real law is laid down by fathers and older brothers." (Minoui (in IANAD,2010:2)Primarily girls from poor families are getting married early because their family consider girl child as a economic burden. Like that Nujood Ali married to Faez Ali Thamer. Later her father told that her sister had been kidnapped and raped, he considered Nujood Ali's marriage as a good way to protect her.

"Besides, neither he nor my mother knew how to read or write, so they didn't really see any need for their girls to learn, either. Out in the countryside, most of the women are illiterate." (IANAD, 2010:7)

Like any other Yamen family Nujood Ali's father allows his sons to go to school. They usually consider girl child as burden. So her father does not allow his daughters to seek education. He thinks that house is the safest place for his daughters and he should keep them safely without let them go anywhere. Not only Nujood Ali and her sibilings but also her mother could not read or write. It lights into the dark reality of Yamen village culture.

After marriage Nujood Ali relocated to a small village in Yemen where child marriage is very common. Faez Ali Thamer had promised her father that he would not touch her until she had been through puberty. He collapsed all the promises. He often raped, physically and mentally tortured her every single day. As a follower of patriarchal norms her mother in law emotionally tortured her without considering Nujood Ali's age. Husband's family argue that woman should accept the words of her husband. They added that if a woman wants divorce, it will damage honor of family. people are ready to do everything to protect the 'honor'.

"If you divorce your husband, my brothers and cousins will kill me! Sharaf, honor, comes first. Honor! Do you understand?" (IANAD, 2010:30)

Whenever Nujood resisted the commands of her husband, she would get heavy punch to the body. It effects trauma in Nujood's mental health. There are many theories of causes of domestic violence by Wolfe and Jaffe. Couple and family interactions theory, social learning and development theory and societal structure theory are the prominent among them. These theories strongly proved that Najood Ali had experienced heavy domestic abuse. domestic

violence caused by bad communication of a couple and family system is known as couple and family interactions theory. Nujood has no idea about her husband's character and no one introduced him before their marriage day. She has no proper communication with her husband and family. Even after the marriage she felt her husband like a stranger because they don't have emotional connection. The second theory explained domestic violence can take place by the support of family and culture of society. Nujood Ali experienced physical and mental abuse from her husband. Her mother in law emotionally tortured her. All members of Faez Ali Thamer's family supported that. According to societal structure theory domestic violence is caused by unequal distribution of power in a society with the support of culture and institution. In Yemen culture all laws are powered by men.

child marriage certainly is an issue influenced by intersectional identities. Religion, ethnicity, class, nationality, and other factors. Nujood Ali's father is a follower of Islamic faith and the teachings of Mohammad. He often added a dialogue, Mohammad stated that it was acceptable for girls of the age of nine to be married. Child marriage causes girls vulnerable to abuse and it increases girls' risk of serious health problems.

Widespread abuse of girls and violation of women's rights are common in many parts of the world. What is unusual about Ali's story is that she escaped from her abusive husband, she went to courthouse and met an advocate Shada Nasser who changed her life. Finally she was divorced at age ten.

"Ali became determined to return to her family so that she could protect her little sister, Haifa, continue her own education, and work to change opinions in her community about how girls should be treated." (Ali 159). Eventhough her family and community are not supported her, she continued to make her own decisions and choices. She come back to her home and involved in her community as a brave human who stand up against patriarchy.

Conclusion

Nujood Ali's decision to come back to home is a powerful step. Her decision is a surprising and courageous one. Nujood Ali as a little girl she does not know what feminism is but, her actions are deeply feministic. So I identified her as a feminist who stand up against child marriage and domestic violence. Her life story is an everlasting inspiration to other women. This memoir displayed social, political, cultural, economical and physical sufferings of Nujood Ali. The society's biased attitude towards women make the readers halt and ruminate. Her tale of gallantry attained world wide recognition. This book publicises the barbaric norms of a highly patriarchal society. The maltreatment of children become very major issue even in the 21 St century.

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