



AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WORKING GIRLS IN ANIRUDDHA ROY CHOWDHURY'S MOVIE *PINK*

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ABSTRACT

Girls have always been targeted in the name of good conduct, normal human behavior, social and religious norms since centuries. These norms have created good women and bad women i.e. those who abide by the various rules of the society are supposed to be normally good whereas those who resist and want to create their own rules of life are dubbed as abnormal anti-social bad girls. Working girls in metro cities have been the soft target for these feudal minded people. They guess that such girls are easily available because they are coming out of their houses for enjoyment and not for work. Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury's movie, *Pink*, depicts this illegal, unethical physical and psychological exploitation of three working girls- Meenal Arora (Taapsee Pannu), Falak Ali (Kriti Kulhari) and Andrea (Andrea Tariang). It is the story of these three girls who opt to live in a rented house in order to earn their livelihood and be self-independent in a posh colony of South Delhi. They suffer a lot not because of their own reasons but because of the various social structures. These social structures prove to be the chief reasons behind their exploitation. Johan Galtung, a Norwegian sociologist and the principal founder of the discipline of the Peace and Conflict Studies, points out towards various social and religious structures which curtail the freedom of those people who deviate from such structures. Thus, these structures inflict violence on people without any clear actor behind it. This movie has shown various such social norms which become violent for the working girls.

Keywords: Working Girls, Structural Violence, Norms and Criterion, Exploitation, Obliteration.

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The life of a girl is rather more difficult than that of a boy in any patriarchal society of the world. She has to face problems even from the time she has not come on this Earth. Female feticide and the decreasing sex ratio are the examples of it. Even after her arrival on the earth, she is made to believe that

she is no more than a mere puppet in the hands of men since her childhood till death. When she comes in her senses, she has not only been castrated of penis (which Freud thought a symbol of power) in the Freudian term but of many other humanitarian rights which are necessary to lead a life of dignity. A girl feels

castrated not because of the reason that she lacks male sexual organ but because she is wrongfully denied access to various necessary facilities of her own life. She is moulded in a certain way so that she can forget her own identity and tries to become a good girl, good wife and a good mother. Very ironically these 'goods' have been constructed by the males of the society. Many of them, in the pursuit of these goods sacrifice their lives and become a living robot. And others who defy, they have to bear numberless difficulties in their lives which may not be their own but either hurled or imposed over them from the male dominated society.

Working girls are such girls who are more vulnerable for these societal rules of the patriarchy. They have to face numberless problems not because of their own reasons but because of various traditional social structures and norms which we people always consider normal and in some cases divine. Johan Galtung who has been the founding member of the discipline of the Peace and Conflict Studies, talks about such structures which inflict violence over innocent people. He originally framed the term 'structural violence' to refer to any constraint on human potential which occurs due to various unjust social, religious, economic and political structures (Galtung 1969). It is almost always invisible, embedded in ubiquitous social structures and normalized by stable institutions and regular experiences. Structural violence occurs whenever people are disadvantaged by various political, legal, economic, religious, social or cultural norms and traditions. It has no specific person or persons who can (or will) be held responsible for such violent actions. It is harmful because it frequently leads to direct violence.

Pink (2016) is a courtroom drama movie which depicts the lives of three working girls i.e. Meenal Arora (Taapsee Pannu), Falak Ali (Kriti Kulhari) and Andrea (Andrea Tariang), in a posh colony of South Delhi. The story opens in a rock concert where these three middle class working girls have gone for a regular night fun. When it is over, they accept a dinner invitation from Rajveer Singh (Angad Bedi) and his two

friends in R.S. Resort in Surajkund (Faridabad, Haryana). Unfortunately the night takes an ugly turn when after a few drinks, Andrea finds herself being touched inappropriately by Ankit Malhotra alias Dumpy (Raashul Tandon) and Minal is being forced to accept obscene advances of Rajveer despite her clearly and repetitively saying 'NO' to his advances. Finding no other alternative to release herself, Minal attacks Rajveer with a bottle in self defense which results in grievous injury above one of his eyes. When he starts bleeding, other boys carry him to a hospital whereas, in a rush, the girls return to their flat by choosing a different way with the hope that everything would fade with the passing of night.

With the dawn of the next day, the lives of these girls turn into a living hell when these egoistic boys start maligning the image of these girls in every possible manner. They start intimidating them directly on mobile. They hurt their house owner in a purposefully planned accident on the road and threaten him to remove these girls from his house. They pick up Menal and molest her badly inside their locked vehicle and then leave her on the road with a clear threat, "Don't tell anyone what has happened. It is only intro..., catch you later." The ultimate blow comes when Rajveer, with the help of his powerful connections, becomes able to file a wrong FIR against the girls labeling them prostitutes in general whereas Menal is specifically charged under section 307 IPC, attempt to murder. Menal too has gone to lodge an FIR after being threatened but she is made to listen a good lecture on what would happen when the case is filed. Somehow she manages to lodge a zero FIR in Delhi with the help of some higher authorities in police department but no charge sheet is filed against the culprits.

A war between the genders starts where the police, society, friends, relatives, and everyone else become a party to suppress the voices of the girls. Viswa a.k.a. Vishwajyoti Ghosh (Tushar Pandey), a friend of Rajveer and Falak requests Falak that she should beg pardon and finish the matter. He says, "Yarr, you are girls. If matter is intensified, who will be insulted? Let's compromise" (*Pink*). When Minal goes

to lodge an FIR, the police inspector suggests Minal to think it with cool mind because once the file is opened; the whole life of the girls would be finished. Instead of lodging an FIR, he too intimidates her of a counter FIR form the other side. This shows the nature of our police who try their best to bury the matter of girls' intimidation, molestation and threatening. Even the lady police do not support these girls. On the one hand where these girls are taught not to raise the matter, on the other hand the boys are adamant to retaliate. Rajveer's friend, Ankit Malhotra (Vijay Verma), says egoistically that he is doing nothing but following the tradition. He says, "Girls need to be told what they are" (*Pink*). This indicates the double standard of our society where the girls are taught to suppress their voices in the name of their honor where boys are free to torture them physically and psychologically to satisfy their ego.

When Minal is caught and sent to jail in front of the eyes of the neighbors, they do not come ahead for support. They, instead, allege these girls for coming late in night as if it is a sin. It is just because of the reason that patriarchal social structure hardly allows girls to go outside for work and even if it allows, it does so with many constraints. The norm that girls should return from their work before it is dark, leads people to formulate an idea that those who come late in night are not good girls. A girl's character and conduct is verified by her late coming to her house whereas there are no such compulsions for the boys. They are free to come anytime they like. This shows the traditional mindset of a majority of India where girls and boys are judged by different yardsticks.

The other two girls have to run from post to pillar to release their friend. They meet Deepak Sehgal (Amitabh Bachchan) who was a onetime prominent lawyer and now is suffering from a bipolar disorder. He, after consulting his wife, becomes ready to be the lawyer of the defense to help the girls. They manage to release Minal and the first half of the movie ends here. The story of the second half occurs mostly inside the courtroom where the girls are being frequently labeled as prostitutes who enthrall boys of decent families to extort money.

The lawyer of the prosecution, Mr. Prasant Mehra, (Piyush Misra) tries to implicate the girls under the charges of prostitution and attempt to murder in his manipulative style. When the first courtroom hearing is proceeded, the lawyer of the prosecution calls many witnesses in the witness box and all of them speak against the girls. The most ironic point here is this that all the witnesses have furnished information in the court not on the basis of concrete evidences but on the basis of some certain social structures which help to define good and bad girls i.e. their dressing sense, way of speaking and behaving with others etc..The only charge that Minal attacked Rajveer need not to be proven because she already accepts that she did so in self-defense. What is left to be proven here is the fact that these girls are prostitutes and attack Rajveer to extort money? They want to tarnish the image of these girls with support of the general public opinions about good girls.

When Andria is called in the witness box and asked, she accepts that she had gone with Dumpy to the other room for using toilet because the flush of Rajveer's room was not working. She had closed the door of the room but all this was instinctive. But Dumpy gives the other version of the event. He tells to the court that Andria suddenly started kissing him and unlocking the buttons of his shirt. He did nothing of the sort but made her understand that such things were wrong. He justified himself that he did nothing because he comes from a decent family and he has a girlfriend to whom he is committed to. But the lawyer does not ask why Dumpy, instead of girls, had accompanied her when she went to use the toilet. Moreover, it is Rajveer not Andria who suggested Dumpy to accompany her. It is supposed in our society that if anybody comes from a decent family or has a girlfriend, he would never sexually assault any other girl. No logic proves this insufficient statement. This leads defense lawyer, Mr. Sehgal to comment, "I object to this awkward performance, he is overacting" (*Pink*). In the case of Falak Ali, the learned lawyer of the prosecution concludes it very easily that if a girl has not any other financial support except her own salary and she in need of money, she will become the

professional prostitute. He drags her personal relations in this matter. Rajveer says that Minal gives him some hints. On being asked what those hints were he says that she laughingly talked to him, touched him and being more frank with him. This is the problem again with the social structure of the society where such normal natural human behavioral traits are supposed to be the signs of flirtation.

When the neighbors are called into the witness box, they simply presume that these girls are of questionable characters because they usually come late in night. They without any concrete evidences malign the image of such working girls because, for them, they are like a threat for the concept of good girl. The learned lawyer of the prosecution alleges Minal that she lives separately to carry out her illicit and unethical deeds even if she has her parent,s house in Delhi. He concludes this by comparing her with other girls who are supposed to be the norms in the society. Prosecution lawyer constantly takes the support of the defective social system and its laws to prove that the girls are the guilty of prostitution. This system does not allow girls to live independently and earn their livelihood. Minal clearly accepts that she felt that the boys were good and they were safe. A girl's normal natural thinking is presented in such a manipulated way that she feels that she has really committed a sin or serious mistake by being frank or enjoying a few drinks or having a late night dinner or talking with a smile with some friends of a friend. Minal never thought that eating and passing a few moments with some friends on consistent resistance would lead someone to conclude her a girl of mean character who extort money from someone for sexual favor. She only followed the natural human behavior but some certain people and patriarchal rules of the society exploit her heavily.

The situation inside the courtroom has become so tense when Minal has to accept to prove herself right that she has a boyfriend and she lost her virginity at the age of 19. She had sexual relations with some other boys but all these relationships were totally forceless and unpaid. She did because she liked. Rajveer singh and his friends, on that night, guessed

that she was a fairly promiscuous girl and nothing would happen if it had happened again. But they forgot that earlier relationships were made on mutual consent. But on that very day, Rajveer Singh forced her for sex in spite of her consistent denial. Finding no alternative to save her, she assaulted Rajveer with a bottle in which he was injured. But the prosecution has proved her a girl of questionable character because she had taken wine and talked with a smile.

When Rajveer Singh is called in the witness box, this patriarchal feudal thinking comes out from the very mouth of him. A student of King's College London does not even know how to behave with the elders. When he is instigated a little by the defense lawyer and asked whether women in his family drink, he replies, "Only the men drink," and, "women of reputed families do not drink" (*Pink*). They do not go in parties but attend family gatherings. This is exactly what led Mr. Rajveer Singh to decide that Minal Arora was not a good girl and was easily available. He did not think that these girls come on such occasions out of their own choice, not as a signboard of availability. This is not the problem of one man or other but a large group of people who like Rajveer admit that, "To drink with someone and go without any hesitation are such acts which these girls do, not the girls of the decent families. Such girls are known as call girls and this happens with such girls" (*Pink*).

It is not the legal system or constitutional laws which help him in this practice. Instead, he takes support of various popular societal norms which have been normalized after being practiced since a long time back. If a girl goes to have party with a boy, it is nowhere written in the legal books that it is an illegal act. If a girl has taken a couple of drinks with her friends, it never leads to conclude that she is a girl of questionable character. But in Indian society, these norms are very difficult to digest and this is where he finds the support of not the law but popular public opinions and tortures girls physically and mentally to a great extent.

The story ends with some key suggestions that girls have their own choices, their own liberty and they should not be generalized in one common

category on the basis of some traditional societal norms and structures. 'No' means 'No', it is not a word but a whole sentence in itself. It does not need any clarification or explanation; it has its complete meaning. Deepak Sehgal, the defense lawyer states, "My client said 'No', your honor, and these boys must realize that 'No' means 'No' even if it is a familiar girl or a friend or a girlfriend or any sex worker or one's own wife. 'No' means 'No' and when someone says so STOP" (*Pink*).

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