

THE REAL LIFE DRAMA UNVEILED BY FLAVIA AGNES
IN “MY STORYOUR STORY”

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ABSTRACT

The book “My Story.....Our Story of Re- Building Broken Lives” penned by respected Flavia Agnes is a real life drama, unraveled with utmost sincerity, each and every moment of the struggle she had to undergo in her marriage. The author portrays with complete earnestness as to how she had to bear with a beast in the shape of a man and the society that preferred to protect always men and to condemn, question and suppress women especially in those days. Irrespective of all these daily doses of trials and tribulations inflicted on her, the battered, confused yet resolute Flavia could move on. It is none other than the love and concern for her children, their lives, their safety and more than everything else, her inability and helplessness to protect herself, sustain herself and her three little children that had urged her to suffer the violence of the abuses her husband inflicted on her physically and mentally. She is really a brave soul who could keep the cane of kerosene away, even during the worst of worse conditions. Just because of her courage and determination she pulled on and succeeded in protecting the lives of her three innocent children and enabled to act as a beacon to many women stranded by violence.

The language used by the author is simple and very touching. A perfect example for this is the description in page 9 where she depicts how her asthma had brought about a crack in the “ frail and fragile, ornamental show piece- marriage and how in course of time it had destroyed the show piece”. 1

It is really very heart rending to feel and experience the utter blow to her self- respect and personality in the initial days of her marriage when her husband told her that “I’ll beat you” 2 and the way he beat her with his hands, wooden hanger and with his belt. What an insane brute,

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how much does a man deteriorate into? How dare he beat her? It is none other than his inferiority complex before his intelligent and beautiful wife, had forced him to abuse and destroy her like this and the helplessness of the poor girl with no considerable assistance from any corner to save her or left with no option to seek asylum anywhere.

It is the duty of every parent to see to it that their daughters should not be beaten black and blue by their husbands and every wife should possess the boldness to leave such an abusive husband to fend for oneself. Otherwise if, like Flavia, one had to stay with the husband bearing all the cruelty, though out of her sheer helplessness, he will mistreat her more than before. The more one suffers and silently tolerates, the more the other will inflict pain and injury just like Flavia's husband did to her. Hence it is the duty of the parents to infuse self-respect and confidence in their daughters to resist, challenge such heartless husbands. Girls should also be given training in martial arts, karate, judo and different self-defense techniques to protect themselves from physical violence.

The best way to resist this menace (wife beating) is to let the girls be well educated and self-reliant so that they need not depend on their abusive husbands for financial assistance. It is really very touching and pathetic to feel and experience as to how much the author and her three children had to suffer just because she was only SSC. Destroying a woman's self-esteem, shattering her dreams, pride, personality and life....such husbands are really insulting the pure bond of marriage. Marriage is a sacred bond in every religion. In the Bible it is described that "after marriage the man and woman will leave their parents and family and become one flesh". 3

Once "I do" is uttered to the marriage vows in the presence of the priest and all the people who bless them, how can a man tarnish the frail woman put to his care, quite insensitively for satisfying his ego? It is violence not only against a human being but against God who had joined the humans in the holy sacrament of love i.e. marriage. It is total sacrilege. More than sympathy such men deserve punishment, alienation and truly they are not fit to live in a decent society. When a man can't respect his wife as an individual and treats her worse than a slave he is more fearful and despicable than a beast. Her husband would not have dared to treat her like trash if Flavia's father or elder brothers were there to protect her. Knowing her helplessness he had

exploited her and left no chance to torment her and the children making their lives like hell in every way possible.

To save poor and helpless girls from marital abuse it is high time for parents to understand that their responsibility don't end with the marriage of their daughter but should see to it that their daughters are well educated and are taught job oriented courses so that if need arise, they can be on their own. Even girls too should be aware of their rights and just as Flavia, irrespective of all the negatives in her life, fought for her and her children, must stand up for their due share in life. Being a woman does not deprive anybody of the rights and freedom to lead a secure life. Most of the times it is the fear of society and thoughts of what others will think? What they will say? etc., that prevent most women from coming out and forces them to suffer silently. It is a great mistake and no parent should force their daughters to tolerate violence and to sacrifice their pleasures and life also. They should be instrumental in ensuring her an alternate arrangement either in the form of a job or another decent marriage. Those who beat their wives and abuse them without any sound reason are abnormal and must be taught a lesson or brought to shame and punishment.

In this book, because of the helplessness of Flavia and her lack of resources and support from parental home, she had to bear three children and see their life too turned a hell in her husband's house. If she had somebody to protect and take her back the first day itself when she was cruelly beaten up and insulted, the book must have had a different end. Poor lady, how much had she suffered for no fault of hers! Even when the children were crying with chili powder in their eyes, nobody came forward to help them as it is a "family matter". How insensitive are our fellow humans! It is this inhuman and lackadaisical attitude of the society that encourages the perpetrator to act inhumanly and to suppress the helpless woman and children.

Now the scene has changed and there are many organizations to inform, help and protect women from violence. Definitely it is the efforts of iron women like Flavia Agnes who could introduce and bring about this change in society. But how many such battered and shattered women are in our midst silently bearing the weight of the burden and stumblingly trudge on uncomplainingly. Hence in page 44 of the book the author reveals and admits quite broken heartedly as to how different was her condition from other women. She painfully accepts "I had nowhere to go. They

(other women) belonged. I didn't. My home was broken, my life in fragments". 5 What an utter hopelessness!, even in this existential dilemmas also, she clung to life...and though it took her some time to come to terms with the situation and to react, after arming herself with educational qualification and with the strength of knowledge she revolted against her cruel husband and the heartless and hopeless system. It is quite admirable and praise worthy as to how boldly Flavia, ignoring all the brutal attempts of her husband to suppress and wipe her out of this earth, fought against and won her battle.

What a defiant fellow was the arrogant and belligerent husband who always taunted his wife and left not even a single opportunity to dominate and prove her insignificant is delineated in page 51. Here he threatens her "If I beat you, do you think a judge will come to your rescue?" he would laugh (rather grin like a wild animal) and go on "It's a man's world, after all. No matter how hard you try to run away from me, I have the power to get you back, without even moving my little finger". 6 How insolent, arrogant and heartless he is to exercise his superior power on a helpless woman in this cruel fashion!

From the beginning till the end of the book, it is brimming with examples of the cruel and heartless nature and actions of the author's husband. She narrates with complete openness and sincerity as to how each and every effort of hers to "make the marriage work" was proved futile. In all this hellish drama, none other than her mother, sisters and a few close friends helped her. She was alienated, targeted and forced to swallow the embitterment of her life silently and stealthily. Those who she approached with lots of hope for help ill-treated and doubted her earnestness. Neither the priests could help her sort out her problems or her confused life. All were scared either of her husband, the then prevalent social set up or the society in general and tried their best to distance themselves from her.

It seems it is her devout faith in god and the purity and sanctity of human life that deterred her from thoughts of suicide. The techniques of torture her husband employed from time to time were novel and different, still always she emerged victorious. Though very young, her children were ever in support of her. Their love and her craving to be on her own, had lent her the strength, support and vigour to resist all the brutal attacks of her cruel husband to defeat and crush her.

Ultimately the perennial source of strength in her had tasted victory. In the end, discarded by all, just because of his hopeless and beastly life, he meets his end unmourned and uncared for. After his death, quite symbolically, Flavia added the name of her mother to her name as Flavia Agnes. Now she is a fully satisfied and successful woman who could carve a niche for herself with all her valiant efforts, indefatigable spirit and endless hard work to see her children well settled in life and she herself contributing her mite to turn this society a better place to live in for some battered and shattered souls at least. Without education it would have been impossible for Flavia to achieve all the great positions she had ascended so far in diverse fields, be it political, literary, social, economic, financial etc. In the present scenario, maximum importance must be on women education which will empower and enable them to be on their own. This is what the author testifies through this small but great book and really it serves as a big inspiration for all wives who are tortured and victimized. Long live the author and may all her dreams and efforts to resuscitate women be materialized.

References

1. Flavia Agnes. (2014). "My Story..... Our Story". Majlis Publication. Mumbai. Page 9.
2. Ibid. Page 10.
3. The Bible, The New Testament. India Bible Publishers. (2009). New Delhi.
4. Flavia Agnes. (2014). "My Story.....Our Story". Majlis Publication. Mumbai. Page 25.
5. Ibid. Page 44.
6. Ibid. Page 51