

ANATOMY IS DESTINY FOR WOMEN A CULTURAL CONDITIONING FACET OF FEMINIST SENSIBILITY IN INDIAN CHAVINISM AMBIANCE

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Abstract

The Cultural Conditioning is just as the wind shapes a sand dune. In India, the family is the elementary unit providing a sense of belongingness, companionship and security. The cultural structure of the society shapes the being into organization of family life, and that is why a human being is considered as the social animal who cannot exist without family and its relations in which the person breathes. The human relationships are the outcome of cultural conditioning. Many Novelists successfully portrays this journey of woman through their novels with extreme sensibility. The different relationships be it man-women parent-child, are the outcome of cultural conditioning to which each individual is subjected too.

Keywords: Cultural, Women, Patriarchal, Human-relationship, Sensibility.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural Conditioning is the social process in which authority define our cultural values, beliefs, ethical systems, and ultimately the way we perceive ourselves in the world. The Cultural Conditioning is just as the wind shapes a sand dune. The environment in which individual grows up and shapes one's personality is culture of which he/she is surrounded with from birth till death. Cultural conditioning differs within and between cultures. For instance, if you are familiar with male-female equality, you would find it odd to live in a societal cultural where women don't have the same rights as men. The cultural conditioning continues for as long as a human being lives. The situation and the environment in which human lives will never cease to condition the individual being.

In country like India, the cultural conditioning has a profound influence on people. Since ancient times the societal dictates has pushed women to the periphery and considered as mere child bearing machine which is authenticated by cultural scriptures also. It is Indian culture that marks the existence of gender differences in society which acts on the system of power relations (i.e. man) and puts light on the subjugation of women irrespective of class, religion and socio-cultural practices. In cultural context, it is important to know how a woman is seen in the socio-cultural world as patriarchy has always projected women as weaker sex whose sole duty is to comfort men and attend to his needs. This cultural system always kept women in control that is within the boundaries by chaining her to the duties as a wife, a mother, a daughter and at some level tries to control the intellectual growth of women.

Literature is considered as the mirror of the society, it discusses thoroughly all the aspects of human life including their relationship and its role, norms and value of which they are culturally bounded in order to lead a significant and sensible life. The elapsing of time, owing to changes taking place in surrounding and with emergence of new technologies, we observe that in terms of relationship, the societies have not remained stubborn with regards to their norms and values as founded earlier and these reflections are to be found in different forms of literature like poetry, story, drama, novel etc. In India, the family is the elementary unit providing a sense of belongingness, companionship and security. The cultural structure of the society shapes the being into organization of family life, and that is why a human being is considered as the social animal who cannot exist without family and its relations in which the person breathes. The human relationships are the outcome of cultural conditioning.

The Indo-English novel started exploring the theme of human relationship based upon cultural conditioning in patriarchal societal culture with the publication of Bankim Chatterjee's first fiction Rajmohan's Wife. The Women novelists like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal and Shashi Deshpande focused on the inner world to assess the nature of relationship cultural conditioning which are changing in contemporary Indian society. A close study of these novelists works reveals the struggle for female autonomy, to expose the chauvinist cultural pattern. Their writing can be viewed as a self-conscious reaction to overpowering masculinity of privileged dominant gender and also lays emphasis on psychological, sociological and cultural factor to which women is the silent victim and sufferer. It is noticed that these novelists have explored different component of feminine

sensibility and its effect on human relationship which have definitely given a new depth and meaning to the culturally molded human relationship .

The novels of Anita Desai are based on the culturally conditioned of husband-wife, father-daughter and mother-daughter relationship. She has dealt in detail the inner turmoil of her characters in a very specific manner. She gives a new dimension and vision to the theme of relationship. Anita Desai's first novel, Cry, The Peacock follows the theme of the marital discord and its impact on women's life. Maya and Gautama, and all the other couples around them, are the victims of the poignant problem of maladjustment in marriage. Father-daughter relationship is another leitmotif in the novel and cause for Maya's tragic end. Maya suffers from father-fixation. She marries Gautama who is much older and a friend of her father so that she can have a sense of father figure in her life, as a result they have marital discord which leads to her killing Gautama and her committing suicide. In Voices in the City, Monisha- the protagonist is childless and is a victim of a mismatched marriage who according to Indian culture is considered socially inferior or incomplete. Jiban and Monisha had nothing in common between them. She is happy neither with her husband nor with his family members. Her ill-matched marriage, her loneliness, sterility and stress of living in a joint family with an insensitive husband pushes her to a breaking point. Fire on the Mountain, deals with marital disharmony. Nanda Kaul's relationship with her husband, Prof. Kaul was nothing beyond the duties and obligations they had for each other. The novel Fasting Feasting, recounts human relationship especially of mother to her daughter. The mothers of the first generation consider their daughters a burden due to their rigid societal set up. Mothers of the second generation are victims of patriarchy and they fight for the rights of their daughters. The third generation mothers are like sisters to their daughters. They share their feelings.

Shashi Deshpande's novels narrate the story of the women who are the victims of exploitation, separation, negligence and even rape by their own family members and husbands. Deshpande motivates her female heroine to build a harmonious relationship between man and woman in a spirit of compromise and reconciliation rather than the role assigned them on cultural basis. Her novels also focus on mother-daughter relation. The characters like Jaya of In That Long Silence and Saru of The Dark Holds No Terrors show dissatisfaction in married life and sexual relation. Another aspect of Deshpande's novels is the lack of cordial relation between mother and daughter. In The Dark Holds No Terrors, the mother daughter relationship occupies the centre stage. Saru's mother's cold and indifferent attitude towards her develops a sense of antagonism in Saru's heart for her mother. In That Long Silence, Jaya also does not have any cordial relationship with her mother, and in turn her mother also does not have any strong maternal feelings towards Jaya. Deshpande's women protagonists are victims of the prevalent gross gender discrimination, first as daughters and later as wives.

Nayantara Sahgal's novels deal with various aspects of human relationships reflecting Indian culture as an obstacle for women to lead a successful life. She is deeply concerned with the failure of marital relationships and the solitariness of living. Her women characters suffer due to the social dogma, which is against the women and promotes the patriarchal system. In This Time of Morning, through the characters of Nita and Dr. Narang, the novelist explores the relationship of father-daughter. She depicted the male domination and socio-cultural norms even in the precious bond of father-daughter. Sahgal deliberately sketched out the man-woman relationship with various dimensions. She dedicated her novel From Fear Set Free to her husband Gautam Sahgal while she was trying to save her marriage and draws every minuscule detail to the picture of Gautam's world which was new and different to her. A Time to be Happy reflects Kusum's unhappiness and the coming together of Sanad and Kusum. In the next novel This Time of Morning, Rashmi feels smothered in her marriage to Dalip and in the end they are separated. In her next novel Storm in Chandigarh Sahgal focus attention on the relation between Saroj and her husband Inder. Saroj was unhappy with Inder. In The Day in Shadow Simrit was sad with marrying Som. There is no understanding between Som and Simrit. So they want divorce. In her novels, Sahgal reveals the changes in relationship before and after marriage which sometimes cause disintegration and make women rebellious.

Kamala Markandaya's woman characters represents an ideal Indian wife who stands with all strength to bear the onslaughts of cruel nature and an all-pervading industrialization that invade her life. She has successfully described their problems and plights, yearnings and aspirations, failures and weakness. She fights with firm determination for the oppressed women in male-oriented society. In Markandaya's novel first novel Nectar in the Sieve, the husband wife relation of Nathan and Rukmani is strongly portrayed and which never wavers in any of the circumstances. The feeling of a daughter has been described in a very touching manner. Rukmani appreciates the positive contribution of her father and mother and feels grateful to their foresight although they are economically weak. In Silence of Desire, Kamala Markandaya explores the theme of human relationships through a clash between traditionalism and modernism, between faith and reason represented by Sarojini and Dandekar. In A Handful of Rice, discord is depicted in parent-child relationship through Ravi. The Golden Honeycomb can be regarded as her masterpiece because it presents the theme of human relationship superbly in a historical context.

It is culturally assigned that women were subordinate in position and were considered as mere possessions. A woman was mainly valued for her beauty and the comfort she offered to her family. Mary Wollstonecraft

remarks, “Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that softness of temper, outward obedience, and or scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of prosperity will obtain for them the protection of man”(Wollstonecraft: 23). The Cultural-traditionalist view accepted patriarchy as a biologically inflicted difference and the social roles assigned to women were also based on their physical capacity. Not only this, societies gave men the centre stage and women were nothing more than silent spectators essentially when she performs her duties as a daughter, a wife and a daughter-in-law. The realization of rootlessness and marginalization provides her energy to protest against the injustice she faces in the society. She rejects the idea of being meek and therefore objects to the injustice being meted out to her by the society. Many Novelists successfully portrait this journey of woman through their novels with extreme sensibility.

As an analysis, these novelists addresses many cultural issues that are related to human relation. They portrait both the submissive and rebellious behavior of their women characters and explores their bonding with their mother, husband, siblings, friends and other relatives. They also explains the traumas of the urban, middle-class educated/ uneducated women who are trapped between tradition and modernity especially because of culturally conditioned relationship they are surrounded with. These novelists endeavour to trace new women who try to unshackle themselves from old cultural convention they are bound since their birth, through education and employment and enter into new relationships. These novelists have shown factual reality in relation of husband –wife which does prevails in existing Indian society. As Rashmi Gaur says, “The haunting riddle of the ultimate purpose of a woman’s life within the family can be solved when she learns to assess her worth as an individual and shuns to be guided by pre-fixed norms about it” (Gaur:179). Pre- marriage education, orientation or any professional exposure ends up miserably when their life is fragmented into post marriage roles of wife, daughter-in-law even of mother and continue their struggle for self –independence even after marriage with different reason and purpose. The different relationships be it man-women parent-child, are the outcome of cultural conditioning to which each individual is subjected too. Their novels reflect the cultural conditioning of women as a part and parcel of the society.

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