



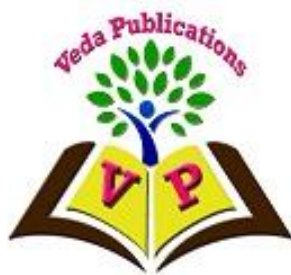
WOMEN - THE ROOT OF CULTURE

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ABSTRACT



Women as a representative share the major role in the function of the society. The women characters are depicted from the perspective of the society. Our Indian society is made up of more unwritten rules in which women have always a subordinate part to play in it. In Anita Nair's 'Ladies Coupe', Akhila informs her mother that she is planning to go away for the weekend, her mother insists her to seek brother's permission. Though she is the eldest of all, her mother responds as she is a woman. On the other side of her life is that she is the only breadwinner of the family. Her father passes away at her young age and after that she takes care of the entire family. They anticipate her to be dependent on everything but in turn she was the only earner of the family.

In Manju Kapur's A Married Woman, Hemant changes to be a completely Indian spouse. Astha's father passed away soon. Hemant becomes the dominator of the family in all the financial transactions. After retiring from the job, Astha's mother disposes most of the objects except books because Astha does not like to dispose them. The books are donated to a library as per Hemant's desire. He has no interest in retaining the books. Astha has a better understanding of her life that it runs smoothly till she raises no controversies against her husband.

The females would never attempt to ride unpleasant on customs. Both Kapur and Nair, in their fictions, have successfully drawn out the socio-traditional approaches and qualities that have given Indian females their role and function combined with their responsibilities to accomplish a tuneful connotation with their environment.

Keywords: *Women representation, domination of the society, expectation, self-esteem, family, responsibility.*



INTRODUCTION

The identity crisis of women emerged from womanism. It exhibited womanist writers as isolating male society. The popular women are successful in the world, outside their family but utter letdowns in their home. Being a successful super image in the world is not that easy. To ascertain their caliber, the women have to shoulder extra responsibilities (burden). They have to perform dual roles. Whatever career they undergo as well as their family duties, they have to act as if they can balance both the roles. As a result they are subjected to more work, stress and lack of self-fulfillment. As long as the women are confined to their home they experience a sense of security which they lose when they step outside their home. The women go out into the world in order to escape from the suffocating feeling at home. On the contrary, they get frustrated as men are not ready to share their household chores. When women start to endeavor the pursuit of power and freedom it is not their inner aspiration but external one.

WOMANISM AND LITERATURE

Literature serves as a vehicle to bring social awareness among people, to bring revolution in the community, which nullifies the prevailing drawbacks in future in the society. Pom Morris analyses that, "It has been traditionally believed that creative forms of writing can offer special insight into human experience and sharpen one perception of social reality. Literary texts may therefore provide a man powerful understanding of the ways in which society works to the disadvantage of women".

A cautious analysis into the portrayal of women by women novelists would prove the emergence of women empowerment. It is exciting to note that the forerunner in bringing this women individuality to the surface is William Shakespeare. His characters namely Portia, Beatrice and Viola exhibit an extraordinary talent of intelligence and feasibility. They possessed the soul of an independent woman who encounters situations without any fear or hesitation. They serve as the antecedents to Jane Austen's female protagonists who expose a vibrant personality and stamp their identity. Similarly the protagonists of Bronte Sisters and George Eliot, these female protagonists never did compromise with their identity pursuit and

sacrifice of self-respect, freedom and verdict because they have a desire to develop their own knowledge and thereby improve their position. The ego exercised by the men pushes women to persist through narration of their story and fancy.

This paper embarks to discuss the awareness among the women population, the analysis of the women characters as exposed by the two women novelists Anita Nair and Manju Kapur

BURDEN OF AKHILA

In Ladies Coupe', Akhila's mother was very keen on seeking permission from her son when Akhila wanted to go out with her colleagues for a weekend. Akhila did not show interest in doing so as she was the eldest one, her mother's response was that even though Akhila was the eldest of her siblings she has to be submissive to her younger brothers as they are men. Akhila's father passed away very soon. After her father's demise, she takes up all the responsibilities of the family. She was the only woman who earned for the whole family. Even then her brothers did not show any interest in earning for the family. So ultimately all the responsibilities had to be shouldered by her. Though she was the only breadwinner of the family they refused to accept her as the head of the family. They expected her to do all the expense of the family but wanted to be dependent in all her personal decisions.

THE ROLE OF CONSERVATIVE WOMAN, KASTHURI

In Manju Kapur's novel, Difficult Daughters, Kasthuri sought happiness in satisfying all her responsibilities as a disciplined daughter-in-law, a very caring wife and a lovely mother. If anything wrong was going to occur in the family she could easily identify it through some intuitions. So these things proved that she was not married to a man but to the whole family. Her daughter had an illicit love affair with a man who got married already. This became a shock to her and she could not digest the effect of her action as it was a shame to her complete family. She even feared when her family members come across her daughter's illegal affair. Kasthuri accuses her daughter Virmati stating that she departed a good education to the Arya Samaj girl children. But if she remained the illicit affair it would



be a black mark on her career and life as well. She further stated that it would destroy her family. She was in affair with a professor, "A man who is already married and a traitor to his wife can never give happiness to any woman. He is a worldly person caught in his own desires. Nothing solid." (85), whereas she did not understand such consequences due to her adolescent age. As a result, she experienced isolation which was acknowledged by her, "I feel strange, one pea alone in a whole long pod, no use to anybody. I have to get used to it, for this is my fate." (92).

KASTHURI'S TREATMENT OF HER DAUGHTER

Virmati showed her interest in living with a married man, her mother Kasthuri, kept her in a private area aloof for several days. Kasthuri valued more the elder people at her home than her opinion. But when her daughters refused to abide such tradition, it becomes the revolt against her. India is known for its tradition. It is not easy to distinguish between India and tradition. Similarly, Kasthuri was the emblem of the culture and custom of Indian society. Generally, women in India cannot enjoy the same happiness as they did during their childhood. This happens maybe due to the physical change as well as the significance of the culture and custom followed by Indians. It is more vital in a woman's life than in the man's life. An Indian woman is brought up with the traditional principles, and also instructed to maintain the dignity of the home, father, mother, spouse, and children though they lost their individuality. They are even brought up with much care by not letting them a proper exposure. They are pampered a lot and made to be stayed inside of the house. So they are not matured mentally to face the societal issues. As well as they lack in knowledge of the married life. They were almost deaf and dumb, maybe speechless in most of the situations. There was no significance given to their wish and imagination.

According to the Indian tradition, there was no need for the girl children to take care of their parents at their old age. But still, their expectation was the girl to be getting married to a respective family which was the primary duty of the parents. The girl as soon as she matured she becomes one of the commodities in the market which is to be sold

soon or else it would not be forever. This was the ultimate thought of the traditional Indian parents.

After attaining maturity physically, the girl children were not allowed to roam anywhere outside which would bring any harm to her life. This happened in Virmati's life, which was considered a shame to her family. But in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe'*, Akhila's mother allowed her to work just because they are interested in her income. Akhila puts her boundary named "Akka", a term used by Tamil people to show respect for the elder woman. It was acceptable by everyone inside as well as the outside of the home. It acted as a barrier for any strangers to letting them in one's life. Nobody in India has the right to ridicule a woman which is an illegal act.

In Anita Nair's *Mistress*, once Saadiya violated the tradition by showing her face to an unknown man which became a serious issue in her family. Her father chastised her with a hot iron material in her forehead.

Similarly when Saadiya expresses her love to Seth, her father announced to the whole family members as, "I will disown her. Tomorrow morning she will be left outside the gates and thereafter, neither I nor anyone else in my family will have anything to do with her. We will wipe her from our lives and memories. As penance for dishonouring our ancestry, we will accept whatever punishment you see fit to give us. (147)

REVEALING PROFESSOR'S CHEATING

In Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, the professor avoided his first wife as she covered her face by not exposing to the strangers even to her husband's friends; it was his mother who advised him that she was not an exhibiting thing but his spouse, a better partner. The Indian husbands cannot bear if their wives involve in any things and also the spouse thinks those things are inappropriate. This type of opinion is not only by the husbands but also based on the societal belief. Women have to play the role of a mother as well as a wife. They were brought up with the same mentality by not indulging themselves in any other issues. Similarly, once Virmati happened to meet the Professor in Lahore, she claims her authority to be his spouse stating that they were in relationship beyond three years. "Be honest with me.



I can bear anything but this continuous irresolution. Swarna is right. Men do take advantage of women!" (149). It is important to note that Virmati was badly in need of getting married to that Professor and also to be involved in the traditional life style. Virmati told Swarna that in her family marriage was so important and the necessary part of life. Through these words it is clearly understood that women should get married to a man and that environment was the perfect and secured place for women. It is the unwritten law that every woman of India should consider their husband's wellness alone. Similarly, Virmati was also able to do according to her husband Hari authorized. The identity was humiliated and defeated which lowers the human values.

GANGA- A TRADITIONAL WOMAN

Child marriage was one of the customs of Indian tradition which is not in practise now. The girl child was married to a boy child at a young age itself. Henceforth they were not permitted to develop their knowledge as well as considered just as a being. In *Difficult Daughters*, child marriage has taken place as Ganga and Hari got married during their childhood. Ganga was not an educated woman but she was very loyal to her spouse, a conservative woman. Ganga at her young age itself was aware of how Indian wives lead their lives by compromising and enduring themselves. She led such a similar life from an ordinary family. She encountered a very bad experience after the entry of Virmati to her family. She was quite aware of her position and how to retrieve for her own rights in the family even though her husband treated her as a servant maid. The Professor further writes:

Who is responsible for this state of affairs? Society, which deems that their sons should be educated, but not their daughters. Society that decides that children – babies really should be married at the ages of two and three as we were. As a result, both of us needlessly suffer for no fault of ours. (103)

According to the Indian culture, parents develop a bad opinion and also a bane when their married daughter comes back to her maternal home due to some other issue. At the same time there was

no change and nothing could be altered if a woman tied the rope of matrimony. The society acknowledges the woman only with her husband either he was a good human or a evil person. There was no recognition for an unmarried woman in the society. In early days, women who are separated from their husbands were treated badly by the society. The separated women were avoided by their kith and kin and they even scandal ill of them. Due to such environment women never have a thought of divorce even the married life was not a happier one. They were supposed to accept to the life as it was a safety zone for them.

SIGNIFICANCE OF MARRIAGE

Likewise in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe'*, Margaret recollected her memories at the time of her marriage, her parents advised on the wedding ceremony. She disliked her spouse and at the same time she was not able to step out from her family. She believed,

No one had ever been divorced in my family. What God had put together, no man or woman had cast as under. In respectable families such as ours, no one gave up on their marriage. They grit their teeth and worked harder to preserve it. If I left Ebenezer Paulraj, I would have to be prepared to lose my family as well. (102)

Henceforth she made her husband addictive to her cooking and physical pleasure. She attained a good outcome of it. When a woman was not happy with a married life, they were not permitted to remarry. Yet their family members did not understand their difficulty and severely convicts that woman. In India people protect widows at the same time they harass them through the worst treatment. Most of the times, even her own family atmosphere turns to be an unprotective one. Sometimes the young widow becomes a prey for the lustful feelings of some known or unknown beasts. Moreover, she was considered as a bad sign of the family whenever they have any traditional functions. Due to such treatment, she has to face all such tortures by the people. On the whole, she was unfortunate woman of the society and she had to work like a slave or daily wage. In other words, she was a worker without



any income. In terms of protection, she was forced to face all such difficulties in life.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF AKHILA

In Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe'*, the main character Akhila spends her whole earning for the family in taking care of her siblings' employment and marriage. She was the only person who has taken the entire responsibility of the family and nobody cared for her future and married life. As days passed on, her mother also expired. After such incidents, she desires to live independently but again compelled to lead the life with her siblings. Akhila desired to lead a life with her loved ones which she longed by ignoring her family members and environment. But in turn, anxious and the society, she did not lead such a life. Further she determined to abandon Hari.

'Are you done?' Hari asked. Akhila could see that he was angry. Hurt and upset too. But she was older than he was and it was up to her to sever the ties. 'Yes', Akhila said. 'I'm done and I will never see you again. Please don't call me at my office or try and meet me. You will leave me with no option but to leave this city. I love you, Hari. I will perhaps never love anyone else but this is not meant to be. (153)

Similarly, Margaret too compelled to lead a life like a puppet. Though all the Indian women have dreams, they have to undergo such a life with no other option.

IDENTITY CRISIS OF PRABHA DEVI

In the same novel, Prabha Devi was characterized as a typical Indian wife. She did all the domestic works at home such as washing clothes, cooking and so on. She got married at the age of eighteen, she was awaited for her spouse to come to home and then her children then very later she identified that she had no importance in the family. Finally she lost her own identity.

Janaki, one such character in *Ladies Coupe'*, experienced the similar type of life but she modified her own life by making her spouse to be addicted to her cooking and sexual pleasure

The characters of these novels are an influence of the position of Indian women based on the difficulties they undergo in the society. These characters are an impression or replica of the society.

This does not mean that these novelists are against such environment but they do have high opinion of Indian traditional practice. They are just against the misjudgment of the traditional practice followed by the society in the name of conventional values. The women characters are not only knowledgeable and cultured but also have the courage to live against such traditional values. But in the name of respect these characters break their chains due to their hidden pressure which had been prevailing from their childhood. Manju Kapur and Anita Nair have created such characters with the traditional benefits which have been played an important role in the society in attaining a friendly association with their environment.

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