

MODERN FEMINIST APPROACH TOWARD TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE WITH REFERENCE TO BHARATI MUKHERJEE AND CHITRA DIVAKARUNI SHORT STORIES.

Dr.Santosh Narayan Salunke,
Asst Prof-Dept of English,
Anantrao Thopte College, Bhore, Pune.

Indians give great importance to the religious traditional marriage. For instance Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian etc. follow their own traditional customs and rituals to conduct traditional marriage. A person born in any religion is expected to marry according to his religious tradition to lead a family life. To define marriage unites two souls and create a strong bond between two families. Many a times these marriages are arranged by family members through so called 'Social Institution' (marriage) to keep healthy relation between two different peoples. Nowadays many feminist are criticizing this social institution for imposing rigid moral codes of conduct upon women's. A woman is expected to sacrifice all desires to make the marriage successful. According to Bhopal [1999] traditional marriage are seen as agreement between two families rather than two souls and are based on a contract where both sides have to fulfil their obligations. This obligation makes unreasonable demands on the bride family or else bride is oppressed through domestic violence in the house. In traditional marriage brides education, ambition and desire are given less importance. She has to play secondary role of pleasing husband, serving in laws and giving birth to child. The feminist argues that 'patriarchy family structure' is important reason for women's secondary role and status in the house. In these family structure men is head of the family who takes major decisions and rest of the members have to follow without opposition. The men try to possess power upon women body to control and achieve whatever he desired. This patriarchal power leads case of domestic violence in the house. The second wave feminist was more concerned about this power to end male domination. Feminist Lynne Segal argues that *we wanted power to participate in the making of a new world which would be free from all domination [Segal, 1987:2]*. This argument is leading many modern females to end male domination by revolting against traditional marriages. There is need to eliminate male domination to bring equality amongst male and female. There is need to create new world of women where she is not suppressed or oppressed by males neither in house nor in society. There is need to restructure family and traditional marriage structure to give equal rights and status for women in the house. If this comes true then there would be prosperous future for women in traditional marriages. This sensitive issue of traditional marriage is dealt in Chitra Divakaruni and Bharati Mukherjee's short stories. Both writers come from traditional Hindu cultural family of India. Their experience regarding traditional marriage is depicted through these short stories. They reveal new women's psychological minds condition and attitude towards traditional marriage. This new women's are escaping from male domination by finding different ways like living in relationship, silently disappearing and remaining single by adopting child or by use of reproductive technology[IVF]. Many Indian writers like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande have raised their voice against traditional marriage through their works. Deshpande in 'The Binding Vine' says:

Tell me, is getting married so important to a women? One always hopes one's children will get more out of life than one has security. You're safe from other men. It usually gives them that guarantee of safety. It takes much greater courage to dispense with the man's protection (2001[1993]:87-88)

This question, is getting married so important to women is warning of negative attitude of women's towards traditional marriage. This attitude is not only arousing in the minds of bachelor girls but also in married women. The way women desire to escape from traditional marriage can be traced in both writers short stories.

Divakaruni in the story 'Disappearance' has depicted a silent rebellious traditional wife, who wants to escape from structure of patriarchy and traditional wife. She wants to free herself from rule and conditions imposed upon her through marriage institute. She feels all the dreams of becoming liberal female are shattered in piece due to traditional marriage. She being dedicated, loving wife, carrying mother and successful housewife wants to get rid from traditional married women. She thinks all the desire and wishes are neglected by husband for being secondary status in the house.

She feels all her identity, space and freedom is lost due to this arranged marriage. This freedom, space and own identity can be achieved only after freeing herself from the house. Wife handling both personal and official responsibility doesn't have time for own. Every day after dinner she would start on the most elaborate household projects, soaping down the floors, changing the liners in cabinets and never quarrelled with him. She never complains about it but thinks only way to get rid is to disappear from traditional marriage relations. This kind of silent revolting or disappearing is a symbol of getting freedom from traditional marriage. She wants to get freedom from restricted male society for women's. Henceforth Divakaruni has depicted new women, who could become a new role model for exploited women in world. Divakaruni in the story the Perfect Life depicts a mind-set of Meera, who is successful women and living in relationship with Richard. This is a new kind of trend to get rid from the traditional marriage that is adopted by many western countries. In the same manner Indian girl Meera assimilates into the western culture and adopts live-in relationship. Nowadays she finds more difficulties to live without marriage and children due to questions asked by her friends. She tells

Many of my women friends consider me strange. The Americans were more circumspect, but the Indian women came right it and asked don't you mind not being married? Don't you miss having a little one to scramble on top your lap when you come home at the end of the day? [Divakaruni, 1995:75].

This arouses feelings of motherhood and desire to have child without getting married. She tries to find her motherhood in orphan boy found under the staircase. She desire to become foster parent of the orphan boy by the legal way of adoption instead of having own.

Mukherjee in 'A Father' reveals the mind-set of engineer girl Babli, who desire to become mother without getting married. Her father is shocked when he discovers daughter's pregnancy. It is very strange to hear there is no romantic story and hero in her life. She is neither interested in love nor in getting married. When her father shouts at his wife to ask about child's father name that time Babli says

Who needs a man? The father of my baby is a bottle and a syringe. Men louse up your lives. I just want a baby. Oh, don't worry he's a certified and he made the easiest twenty-five dollars of his life. [Mukherjee, 1985:12].

Her feminist attitude rejects the idea of traditional marriage to get child. Here she thinks of modern reproductive technology [IVF] can give escape to her from traditional marriage. Feminist Firestone says "If is through such technological practices that women's ownership of their bodies will be achieved. [Qut by Pilcher and Whelman, 2004:141]. In this manner Babli wants to own her body through this reproductive technology. Mukherjee in 'The Lady From Lucknow' reveals Nafeesa's psychological condition of her mind towards traditional marriage in America. Her husband is good and successful employee of IBM Company living in Georgia, America. She happily spend most of her time with two children but still desire for adultery relationship after so many years of marriage. She confesses love towards James, who is sixty five years old white American man. She doesn't feel guilty but boldly accepts that guilt comes with desire not acted. Her illicit affair at this age is revolt to traditional Muslim marriages and their code of conduct in their religious context. Mukherjee depicts that a women is no longer a humble pretty creature and happy with what life has to offer [Dr.Patil, 2016:88]. She wants to get rid from traditional cultural marriage. Therefore she says

I want to beg him to take me away to Hilton Head in his new, retirement Winnebago. The golden light from the vista is to yellow. Yes, please let's run away, keep this new and simple. [Mukherjee, 1985: 34].

In true sense she wants to get free from strict cultural and religious code of traditional marriage. She wants to run away along with James to free herself from moral and ethical values that are oppressive in her life.

In traditional marriage men gains rights of access to women's bodies and to their labour as housewives and mothers. The new feminist is revolting and rebelling against this traditional marriage by living in relationship, single parental role, and use of modern reproductive technology to become single parents. In true sense marriage and its ritual are often restrictive and oppressive. There are no rules and moral codes for men but rules are only for women to save their marriage. In contemporary era traditional married status is symbol of violence and oppression in many parts of India.

Works cited.

Bhopal.K ,South Asian women and arranged marriage in east London[1999]

Deshpande Shashi, The Binding Vine, New York:Feminist Press2001[1993].

Divakaruni Chitra Banerjee Arranged Marriage, London: Black Swan. 1995.

Dr.Swati Mittal, “Bharati Mukherjee: A Diasporic Odyssey”, Authors Pride Publisher 2016.

Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelmen, Gender Studies, Sage Publications 2004,

Mukherjee Bharati: Darkness, Penguin Books (India) Ltd, New Delhi, 1985.

Nayar Pramod, An Introduction postcolonial Literature,2008.

Segal, L. Is the Future Female? Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism, London:Virago[1987]

