

SOCIAL INSTITUTION – MARRIAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI AND THILAGAVATHY

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Marriage is a Social Institution and is a license the society fixes upon man to do whatever he likes with his woman. The definition of marriage varies according to different cultures. But it is the only institution where interpersonal relationships, obviously intimate and sexual unity are acknowledged.

Marriage is an necessity for men and women, and it is considered as an agreement to share between themselves, the joys and the responsibilities of the joint adventure. The women writers of the Indian Diaspora belong not to the dominant culture but to a sub-culture, the minority Asian American, or to be more precise, Indian American, ethnic group.

Seeking a home in a new land, they find themselves without moorings. Products of two Cultures, they are unsure of their status in relation to the mainstream and also in relation to their minority group. Grappling with the problem of defining their identities, the self they depict is a confused one, Sometimes central and sometimes the marginalized other, although their effort is to move from margin to center. Such a move may lead to empowerment of themselves. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is one of renowned writer among the leading Diasporas writers. Marriage System is a typical product of the existing social structure and the traditions of the society.

A woman's response to marriage differs from that of a man in almost all respects. Physiological, Psychological, Social, economic, moral and spiritual. Marriage is a much more of a commitment to a woman then it is to a man. Once a woman becomes a wife, she has to give-up her personal freedom, ambition and comforts.

Patriarchy is a social and ideological construct which considers men superior to women. The nature of control and subjugation of woman varies from one society to the other as it differs due to the differences in class, caste, religion, ethnicity and the socio cultural practices.

Subordination of woman in developed countries is different from what it is in developing countries. While subordination of women may differ in terms of its nature, certain characteristics such as control over women's sexuality and her reproductive power cuts across class, caste, ethnicity, religion and regions and is common to all patriarchies.

The Indian woman has to survive in a complex area of socio-cultural, historical, political and economic realities. Many of our religious and social practices have steeped women in a morass of backwardness, illiteracy and ignorance, condemning them to the role of inferior, oppressed and exploited beings completely dominated and overawed by man.

Chitra Banerjee pictures and supports the Indian joint family system in her novels. She also tries to show, in all her write-ups, how the traditional women break their conventional practice in the modern scenario. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, belongs to the group of young

Indian writers who emerged on the literacy scene with a post colonial diasporic identity. Her position as a south Asian writer in English is distinct and well established. Whether describing the plight of a woman trapped in an abusive marriage in India or the quick adjustments required of an immigrant bride in California, She cracks open the inner lives of her characters, revealing the disappointments and dreams in a way that make them appear universal.

Both Chitra Banerjee and Thilagavathy draw the inner life of their female protagonists with true skill and love and their tales are worth reading for this alone. On all their novels, the two novelists have apparently shown only one type of Indian man-a heartless, emotionally distant male who, no matter his initial appearances views woman as property.

Marriage is discussed, as an important concept in the novel 'Sister of My Heart' by Chitra Banerjee. It is a known fact that all gives will marry. Divorce is looked down on and widows are pitied. The house the two girls Anju and Sudha grow up is very unusual in that it is run by three women named, Gowrimma, Nalini and Pishi. Joint Family system is explored, as it is traditional for women to join their husband's families.

Anju and Sudha are inseparable but marriage has driven Anju and Sudha apart on the night of their double wedding, Anju becomes aware of her husband's attraction to Sudha. Anju does not blame Sudha, but with some relief the two young women begin to live separate lives.

In the Second Phase of the novel, Sudha quickly learns the ways of her demanding and controlling mother-in-law. After five years Sudha is elated to learn that she is pregnant. Anju's life in the united states has not entirely turned out as she expected. After their marriage, their old intimacy is missing.

Sudha's mother-in-law finds out that Sudha's womb child is a girl. So, she orders Sudha to abort the baby, believing the first child should be a son. Sudha has nowhere to turn, leaving her husband would be grounds to talk to each other again as true sisters. Sudha and Anju have to contribute dowry to their groom's forcefully. Anju's mother, widow, Gowrimma has to struggle a lot to pay and settle the dowry of two girls do.

Traditionally a Social custom practised only among the upper caste is dowry. Most arranged marriages have today become a business transaction that involve crude negotiation on exchange of items such as furniture, clothes and kitchen implements needed to start a new home as well as gold and hard cash that the bride's family feels obliged to give to his family.

Eradication of dowry from the Indian society has always been a losing battle for social reformers. In the novel "The Sister of My Heart", the women's bond is shaken to the core when they must confront the deeply passionate feelings that Anju's husband has for Sudha. Mean while, the unlikely relationships they form with men and women in the world outside the immigrant India, profoundly transform them, forcing them to question the central assumptions of their lives. It is expressed as :

"That's how it is sometimes when we plunge into the depths of our lives, no one can accompany us, not even those who would give their hearts for our happiness"(P.25)

Thilagavathy does not show the traditional type of marriages and she tries to picture the home-centered women in her novels. She tries to bring a lot of changes and reformation in

the institution of marriage. Though marriage is legal and authorized in the tamil society, she makes her protagonists to follow the westernized ideas and philosophies. In few of her write ups, she tries to bring up her own autobiographical sketches and feelings, in feministic aspect.

In her novels, Thilagavathy sticks all the women characters, against the tradition and cultural sentiment. Her progonists are rebellious in nature. After marriage, women have to accept wounds, both physically and mentally. Many woman think that within the marriage their maximum life gets over. Only very few women strike hard to get rid of their hurdles.

In her novel “Nenjil Aasai” Thilagavathy’s protagonist shyamala is tortured by her husband after her separation from him. She faces many troubles. Her total peace of mind is destroyed by him.

Shymala is a school teacher, She does that profession as a service to the society. She loves the guy Murali and marries him. After her marriage, she comes to know the real face of Murali as :

“Shymala holds her tongue. Wife is the only object. She is the property of her husband. It is the duty of him to solve that. So, he has the right to doubt her. If a man murders his wife for adultery based on the evidence, the society will recognize that as correct”P.248).

Shymala tolerates all the difficulties given by her husband. But he crosses his limit. He makes the extra-marital relationship with the house maid. He also rapes one of the students of Shymala. On that situation, she leaves from him.

Women, from their birth onwards, are cased inside the circle of the family and they have been brought up. So marriage suppresses the women and their welfare. Marriage is treated as the final samskara of a living body. The Institution of marriage will be successful, in the society, if women are treated well.

References

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