

## EDUCATION VERSUS MARRIAGE: A STUDY OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN MANJU KAPUR'S DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS AND HOME.

MANJULA GOEL<sup>1</sup> & GUNJAN AGARWAL<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, English, Department. of Humanities and Social sciences,  
Maharishi Markandeshwar University Mullana, India

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences,  
Maharishi Markandeshwar University Mullana, India

### ABSTRACT

Women's rights are human rights. Violation of human rights is becoming an everyday event in our civilized societies. Women's rights are secured under the constitution of India mainly equality, dignity and freedom from discrimination. We are in decade on Human Rights. Education for empowerment launched in 1991 by the world Non Governmental Organization Coalition. Education is not only an aspect of development and thereby, an aim in itself but more significantly, it is a premier instrument for the achievements of another aspect of development-economic, social and political. It is the basic minimum requirement for creating awareness that it is vital for the accelerated and effective participation of women.

**KEYWORDS:** Human Rights, Education, Empowerment

### INTRODUCTION

To have education one needs to be developed, to have a share in development one needs to have an education. If national development and women's development have to be purposeful and relevant, women have to be full fledged participants. This is what Manju Kapur highlights the importance of education for women in her novels, Difficult Daughters and Home. Manju Kapur, Bapsi Sidhwa and Taslima Nasreen have resolved their narratives around the institution of marriage, which has received social recognition and approval in all cultures and at all times. The institution of marriage, which is treated as an ideal form of social existence is exalted in all civilized societies. The novels of Manju Kapur give an insight into the anticipation of Indian women. The novelist states that in India, contemporary liberated women have started to choose their personal lives and to decide for themselves. The present paper shows the contrast between education and marriage. Difficult Daughters highlights the time of freedom struggle, whereas Home is a remarkable presentation of post Independence feminism. At that time, many social evils like child marriage and sati Pratha were prevailing in the Indian society and education was not so important for women. In Difficult Daughters, Virmati shares a fact with Swarnlata that marriage is acceptable in her society but not education. Even Virmati's mother, Kasturi reminisces, her own revolt against child marriage when she was studying at convent school. But now she is fully accustomed to Indian tradition and becomes a symbol of female patriarch for Virmati. We cannot deny the institution of marriage in our society.

But, even today four out of ten women in India still have no say in their marriage, eight out of ten need permission to visit a doctor, six out of ten practices some form of head covering, and the average Indian household gives over

Rs. 30,000 in dowry. These are among the findings of a major new large-scale sample survey shared exclusively with *The Hindu*. The practice of marrying to a cousin or a relative – more common in the south than the north – is becoming less common, but over 20% in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka still marry relatives. However, women's autonomy remains severely constrained. 41% of women had no say in their marriage and just 18% knew their husbands before marriage, a statistic that has not improved. Women's say in marriage rose to their level of education, with income and with a level of urbanization and the southern states did better. Just 10% said that primary decision to buy larger items for the house, less than 20% had their names on the house's papers and 81% needed permission to visit a doctor. 60% of women – including 59% of forward caste Hindus and 83% of Muslim women – practiced some form of 'purdah' or 'ghunghat'.

(Many women have no say in marriage, *THE HINDU*, 3/4/12)

“57 million children worldwide, including 31 million girls, are out of school and two thirds of illiterate adults are women. In developing countries, adolescent girls are more likely to drop-out of secondary school than boys, particularly in rural areas”. (Women in India, Wikipedia) But here, we are discussing this issue in the context of Indian society. The female literacy rate in India is less than the male literacy rate. In urban India, girls are nearly on a par with boys in terms of education. However, in rural Indian girls continue to be less-well-educated than boys. According to the National Sample Survey data of 1997, only the states of Kerala and Mizoram have approached universal female literacy. According to scholars, the major factor behind improvements in the social and economic status of women in Kerala is literacy. The heroines *Virmati* in *Difficult daughters*, *Nisha* in *Home* corroborate their choice of their elective life. Society and culture about to which Manju Kapur's works relate are stereotyped and still persist in our surroundings. The novel *Difficult Daughters* describes the life of *Virmati* through her daughter *Ida* and her family members. It is a forceful expression of Indian feminism and presents it as the most suitable feminist position for the women's existence in traditional Indian society. *Virmati* has also been taught and made to believe in marriage. She becomes aware towards women's liberation when she observed “*Shakuntala* ride horses, smoke, play cards and badminton act without her mother's advice, buy anything she wanted.”(DD18) Above all she never seemed to question or doubt herself in anything. Her mother's marginalized existence and miserable plight make her protest against the system that does not allow women to think of the possibilities of being something use than wife only. “For the eleventh time it had started, the heaviness in her belly, morning and evening nausea, bile in her throat while eating, hair falling out in clumps, giddiness when she got up suddenly” (P-7). In spite of all this, *Kasturi* believes it is the duty of every girl to get married. On the other hand, *Virmati* has now started thinking differently and yearns to have a meaningful and independent selfhood. This leads her to prefer education to alter the education has awakened her real self. As a result of this she has started thinking into reality. She has started fighting against her own timid self as well as man's protectoral shell”(Bach 1995:130) Manju Kapur, Bapsi Sidhwa and Taslima Nasreen have revolved their narratives around the institution of marriage, which is treated as an ideal and a sacrosanct form of social existence is exalted in all civilized social organizations. All the three novelists have a common idea that they have signified marriage as a patriarchal attribute that decides the complete suppression and defeat of women's identity. As Beauvoir observes, “Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society.”(Beauvoir, 1997:444) The conditioning of patriarchy offers no substitute for marriage and condemns those who try to thwart. In Indian social structure, the legacy of tradition and cultural modes portray women as a token of veneration and is expected to comply with all that the mythological figures like *Sita*, *Gandhari*, *Savitri* and *Parvati* symbolize. Women's fictions too portray the traditional image of women in her institutionalized roles within the limits of the institution of marriage. *Ganga*

the professor's first wife is pictured in her traditional role which circles around her husband. "From washing clothes to polishing his shoes, to tidying his desk, dusting his precious books, filling his fountain pens with ink, putting his records back in his jackets, mending his clothes, stitching his shirts and kurtas, helming his dhotis, seeing that they were properly starched, Ganga did it all". (DD216) On the other hand, Harish does not value her wife's domestic roles and is totally indifferent to this. "She's a housewife; you know somebody has to do this."(DD216) Being an illiterate Ganga has to bear the big blow of her husband's second marriage with Virmati. Her economic dependent on her husband silence her repulsion in deep pain. "The tears Ganga was determined not to show anybody started pouring down her face. She buried her face between her raised knees, and wept as though her heart would break."(DD211) Kasturi, Virmati's mother conditions herself to self-denial in service of others. She is portrayed in her stereotype role as a wife within the confines of marriage. This also displays the feminine requirement for external self-validation, which will project her in the traditional image of an 'ideal wife'. "Kasturi could not remember a time when she was not tired when her feet and legs did not ache her teeth bled when she chewed her morning neem twigs, and she could feel some of it shaking. She had filled the house as her in-laws had wanted, but with another child there would be nothing left of her."(DD7). All this highlights the importance of Education. Education is a fundamental right for all people, women and men, of all ages throughout the world. Every person child, youth and adult shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions. In *Home* the family believes that it is Nisha, who is going to preserve the strong foundation and hold the tradition and culture in order to defend the family esteems. In the novel her cousin Vicky enchanted by the softness of her body. He touches her private parts while playing with her on the terrace. It leads to Nisha's mental agony. She needs conductive and protective environment. Kapur makes a matter of fact description of an incestuous incident in her novel. The family sent her to live with her aunt, Rupa where she stays for ten years. There she is sent to New Horizon Public School. At the age of ten, her mother asks her to fast for the future husband, but she proves to be rebellious girl. "She didn't want to spend the day without food or water". (*Home*93) As the story grows Nisha joins Durga Bai College. Nisha is against traditional family values and thinks that education makes a woman independent.

## SUMMING UP

However, due to literacy rate and education, the scenario has changed with regard to marriages. In India it is often believed that arranged marriages are the most effective. As an educated woman, Nisha believes in love marriage. Institution of Marriage cannot be ignored in Indian society. It is a sacred institution. An Indian woman is known for her sacred and chaste identity in the whole world, but in present scenario education is her first priority. Like Virmati and Nisha they should protest against old traditional values.

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