

Indian Woman Portrayed by Woman Novelists of the Second and the Third Generations: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

The second and third-generation Indian novelists writing in English have focused their attention on the search for identity and women's emancipation. They have changed the themes of their novels into more meaningful and useful ones. They highlight that women's equality with men is very essential for the welfare of the family as well as society. It is high time for all of us to consider protecting woman's rights and not discriminate against women in any aspect of human life, be it family matters, financial issues, business, and commerce, politics, etc. Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapur, Jaishree Misra, and Anita Nair are a few Indian novelists who represent the second and third generations of Indian women novelists writing in English. They take women's issues seriously. This paper focuses on how traditional conflicts and the element of patriarchy subjugate women to second-class citizen status, resulting in an identity crisis for women. The paper also studies women's search for identity and struggle for emancipation.

Keywords: Conflict between Tradition and modernity, Identity Crisis, Search for Identity, Patriarchy, Women's Emancipation

I. INTRODUCTION

The English-language novels produced by Indian women have earned respectable positions in both Indian and international English-language literature. It would be fascinating to research the development of Indian women's fiction in English. There are three generations of Indian women who wrote English-language books. First-generation novels' topics frequently mirror the injustices done to women in Indian culture. In the second generation of English-language novels written by women, the female characters respond and react directly to their issues and challenges. They communicate their inner psyche very efficiently and have a very clear understanding of their situation. The third-generation novelists not only depict the female protagonists' inner selves but also depict them as rebelling against traditional families and a male-dominated society to find their "selves," find self-identity, and gain freedom from a male-dominated society. Nayantara Sahgal's *The Day in Shadow* (1971), Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* (1988), Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* (1998), Jaishree Misra's *Ancient Promises* (2000), and Anita Nair's *Mistress: A Novel* (2005) have been taken for the study.

The themes for the study include traditional conflict, elements of patriarchy, identity crisis, search for identity, and women's emancipation. The five themes appear in the works by selected Indian women novelists who write in English, particularly those who were born and currently reside in India, not only as important subjects but also frequently. The study makes an effort to mimic women's suffering in their families and their struggle for freedom from the oppressive grip of traditional, patriarchal families and society through these five topics. It also concentrates on women's search for identity and their struggle for emancipation.

II. THE CONFLICT BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

The tradition-modernity encounter is a noticeable element in the novels of these five novelists. The conflict between mother and daughter, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, daughter-in-law, and in-law's family is very common in the traditional family. The elderly women represent the tradition and its customs and the younger women follow modern ways of living.

In these novels, the old women are almost traditional and the young women never seem to care for observing the customs, and traditions of Indian society. Though they are born and brought up in a traditional family where one is taught social rules, customs, traditions, and culture, modern women never tend to pay attention to social customs. "... the modern woman has raised her voice against the atrocity and injustice done to her. The new woman dares to pronounce her volitions and convictions" (Singh 12). Individuals, who have their faith deep in tradition, often baffle by the bold steps taken by the modern woman. They consider every action that has been taken in a modern way as a violation of tradition. Exploring the difficulties and problems of modern women in their novels, the three novelists display the inner worlds of their heroines and the stress they felt, feelings of isolation, awareness of otherness, sense of losing identity, and mental psyche.

It is clear that women have been denied the opportunity to express their feelings, anxieties, and discomfort as well as the right to exist as whole human beings with the same physical and mental capabilities as men. The human rights of women are restricted and regulated by traditional and cultural practices, especially in the family, which are supported by prevailing beliefs and maintained by social and governmental structures.

A well-known Indian English woman novelist is Nayantara Sahgal. The basis for her works' depictions of multicolored female characters, marital conflict, and household traumas is their understanding of both tradition and modernity. The twin themes of politics and tradition and modernization permeate Sahgal's narrative work. The issue of freedom for women to become aware of themselves as individuals, coupled with tradition and modernity, is presented in Nayantara Sahgal's fourth novel, *The Day in Shadow* (1971) (DS). The narrative in the novels revolves around Simrit, the woman protagonist.

The Day in Shadow deals with the tension between tradition and modernity. Simrit endures the harsh and unjust treatment of India's male-dominated society. The major characters of the book Som, Raj, Simrit, Sumer Singh, Brij, and Ram Krishna act like modern people yet struggle to totally separate themselves from the long-standing customs of their own nation.

Som was pressured to think that women had to submit to the will of men because of tradition in some cultures. He despises the uniqueness and freedom of women, feels that men should rule in a way that leaves little room for women to express themselves and views the imbalance in the partnership as the natural course of events. When it came to the husband-wife relationship, for instance, he was entirely traditional despite being modern in other ways. Simrit has no voice in his decisions, not even in routine ones.

Simrit files for divorce from Som because she desires independence and freedom and feels trapped in the husband-centered culture. She rebels against the traditional security of marriage because she wants to talk freely with her husband about things other than sex-related glandular sensations. She was a modern-day lady who was awakened in this regard; nonetheless, the tradition in her made her feel as though by getting a divorce she had offended something ancient and decreed. "A part of her would always be married to Som" (DS 220).

One of the most accomplished contemporary Indian women authors in English is Shashi Deshpande. She uses the post-modern technique in her works to demolish patriarchal culture and practices and show that they are artificial constructs. Human interactions are the weave and weft of Shashi Deshpande's works; the treatment of human relationships for a deeper investigation of the human heart reveals her genius. P. D. Nimsarkar writes about her,

"Deshpande is concerned with people, the women, and their relationship with others, like husbands, parents, children, and sons and daughters. She has faithfully tried to construct womanhood in the contemporary context, society, and the world" (Nimsarkar 114).

Shashi Deshpande's novel, *That Long Silence* (1988) (TLS), deals with the subject of gender distinction, the dominance of masculine categories, as well as the silence and submission that women experience in our culture. It presents an unusual picture of Jaya, a housewife from the middle class with a college degree, who is frequently seen as being in quest of her own identity.

She is unwilling to give up her name, either Jaya or Suhasini because she feels stifled and trapped in the typical Sita's role. However, she realizes that she cannot continue to insist and voluntarily accepts her new status as Suhasini, Mohan's wife. She ignores her own emotional needs in order to be the best wife and mother possible. She owes it to herself and to society to love her husband and to be content. It is the result of the constant teachings about how to be a humble and submissive wife by her grandmother to her father. "a husband is like a sheltering

tree” (TLS 137), and “the happiness of your husband and home depends entirely on you” (TLS 138) are pieces of advice by her grandmother. “When she leaves her home after getting married, her father advises her to be always good to Mohan and she tries her best to follow his advice meticulously” (Kumar 215).

Jaya has buried her own existential self after becoming a wife and mother and falling into the traditional role of a woman. Despite living in a happy home with her husband, two children, and financial luxuries, Rati and Rahul, she is frustrated by the routine and set pattern of her life. She comments on her present situation, “I had to admit the truth to myself that I had often found family life unendurable. Worse than anything else had been the boredom of the unchanging pattern and unending monotony” (TLS 4). She was tormented inside because her husband could not grasp her emotions. She feels estranged from her marriage and is not content with it.

Manju Kapur is one of the most prominent and creative novelists in contemporary Indian English Literature. She is very keen on presenting the problematic circumstances in the life of the educated woman in the present Indian society. She highlights one of the problems faced by educated middle-class women in the form of conflict with their traditional mothers and mothers-in-law. Having a clash between mother and daughter is a very common phenomenon in a traditional family and with the passage of time, the clash subdues as the daughter gains maturity in the matter of tradition and its values. The clash between mother and daughter is a continual process generation after generation. Elsaritilda, D puts it, “Manju Kapur is one of the leading figures of contemporary Indian English fiction writer, who has dedicated all her works which is related and discussed the women’s suffering and struggling in their personal and social identity” (Elsaritilda 63).

Virmati, the protagonist in Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters* (1998) (DD), is a difficult daughter to her mother Kasturi and Ida is the difficult daughter to Virmati as they disobey traditional customs of their family as well as society. It is a common practice in every family. Manju Kapur admits, “Conflict between daughter and mother is inevitable and I suppose I was a difficult daughter” (DD 107). The conflict between mother and daughter, daughter-in-law and mother-in-law, etc.

It is significant to notice that Kasturi is the result of her traditional bred self which is unable to accept the new order of things brought by her daughter Virmati. Rao states, “The authoritarian character of the traditional joint family entails decision-making powers concentrated, in the position of the eldest male members.” (Rao 162). This authoritarian character, in some families, can be a woman. In the case of Virmati, it is Virmati’s mother Kasturi who takes all the major decisions in the life of Virmati and is the responsible person for Virmati’s turning to be rebellious against the practices and norms of her family. Kasturi neglects and ignores the mental requirements and needs of Virmati since her childhood she never happens to enjoy the childhood tenderness and endearment of her parents, especially of her mother. Milhoutra puts it, “Kasturi’s relation with Virmati does not let her realize her daughter’s need for a separate identity, an independent existence. So Virmati has to rebel. She rejects the world of domesticity, marriage, and child-bearing all that her mother stands for and accepts ...” (Milhoutra 167).

It is her mother who comes across her way objecting and pulling her back from her trials to receive an education and making love with Professor Harish Chandra. As Virmati never gives up her longing for receiving higher education in Lahore, there rises a conflict between Virmati and her mother who bluntly objects to her wish to study saying, “At your age, I was already expecting you, not fighting with my mother” (DD 19). Virmati wants to continue her studies to avoid the burdens in her traditional family as well as in her future in-law’s house. When she reaches the marriageable age, Virmati gets engaged to an irrigation engineer Inderjeet, but Virmati insists on studying in Lahore. Her mother tries to convince her,

“You are the eldest, Viru, your duty is greater. You know how much the younger ones look up to you. Your grandfather and father both have confidence in you, otherwise, would they have given you so much freedom? They thought school and college would strengthen you, not change you. Now what will they feel when you want us to break our word and destroy our good name?” (DD 59).

In this context, Virmati uses studies as an excuse for escaping from her marriage with the engineer and continuing her love affair with the Professor.

It is not easy for a teenager to simply deny the engagement with a man in those days around 1950, when either “the girl or the boy in the family needs to preserve the dignity of the family whether they like it or not” (Thilagavathi and Manason 65). Virmati, who goes contrary to popular belief, deliberately challenges the age-old traditions of her Arya Samaj family to fulfill her heart’s desire, be it receiving an education or marrying the

already-married Professor. At times Virmati becomes very adamant to get what she wants. The traditional people cannot bear even the cancellation engagement. To save the honor of both families, the elders prepare one of her sisters Indu to marry Inderjeet.

One of the most prominent current Indian woman authors of English is Jaishree Misra. To paint a clear and accurate picture of society, she delves into the main problems and anxieties of the human brain. Her books include important subjects including conflict, turmoil, crises, the value of education, self-affirmation, and women's emancipation.

In her semi-autobiographical debut book *Ancient Promises* (2010) (AP), Misra tells the inspiring tale of Janaki, a strong-willed young lady who struggles to maintain a particular society's traditions while also making progress towards self-realization. The meaning of the word "survival" appears obvious.

Janu alias Janaki who was born and brought up in Delhi and is not much aware of traditional practices and customs worries about being married to Suresh of Maraar's family, in Kerala. Janaki felt out of place and could not follow the customs of Kerala she was criticized for her modern way of thinking and living by her in-laws. In the Maarar family, Janu was never acknowledged. She has always been an urban outsider who is untrained in Kerala customs. Janu's husband, Suresh, was constantly working on his business. As a result, Janu battles her in-laws alone. Her mother-in-law says, "Look, you're not in Delhi anymore. Like it or not, you now live in Kerala, so I suggest you drop all these fashionable pleases and Thank yous. Here we don't believe in unnecessary style" (AP 80). Sometimes Suresh was there when some of those insults were directed toward Janu, but he remains silent. Janu felt uprooted. Aruna Mary Thomas explained her condition,

"Janu's ideas of liberation even in a happy and lovely childhood, her unexpected love and arranged marriage, the dramatic experiences of Janu before and after marriage, her life in Maraar family which finally led Janu to break up all social and emotional ties..." (Thomas 141).

In her novels, Anita Nair explores all the nuances of the struggles and conundrums faced by educated middle-class Indian women. Women characters that have been inspired by contemporary ideas, economic independence, and career prospects dominate Nair's literary universe. They are confident, pragmatic, and brazen enough to think for themselves and treat even serious subjects like love, marriage, family, and sex with extreme casualness. Anita Nair's female characters deal with the numerous opposing forces in every woman's life that impact her actions and decision to choose between a conventional and modern outlook on life, as well as the opposing effect of conservatism. In all of her novels, Anita Nair genuinely depicts both traditional and contemporary women. In her novel *Mistress* (2005) (MS), she deals with the struggle of the lady protagonist, Radha.

As the stereotypically masculine Shyam attempts to control and humiliate Radha by giving her instructions on how to behave in accordance with his dreams and impulses, their marriage is not without its difficulties. Radha has been portrayed as an intelligent woman who challenges societal norms, particularly the unequal roles of husband and wife. In the process of trying to free herself from the obligations of being a responsible wife, Radha even becomes pregnant with Chris Stewart. Radha is not the typical individual who would readily accede to the ingrained customs and practices that bar women from enjoying the same rights as men in all contexts. Radha is a perfect example of a contemporary Indian woman. Despite coming from a traditional middle-class household, Radha quickly saw her potential while she was in school and in the years that followed. She loves to picture herself as an independent young woman who has the freedom to make her own decisions about her life while living far from home in a big city with a job and eventually, a partner. A. Fakrudeen Ali Ahamed and Dr. I. P. Remya comment,

"Radha is a self-assured and courageous personality that exemplifies the traits of fortitude. Unlike many Indigenous women, she does not trust in adhering to some ridiculous and pointless cultural practices that are claustrophobic for them. She defies the arbitrary societal obligations imposed on her and the privileges of her abusive marriage with Shyam, ..." (Ahamed and Remya 142).

III. IDENTITY CRISIS AND SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

There are numerous Indian female authors that highlight women's issues. They develop a variety of characters based on people who actually exist and incorporate their emotions, mood swings, identity crises, torments, and other psychological and emotional disorders. The present generation of Indian women novelists have departed from the conventional depictions of enduring, sacrificing women in favour of female characters engaged in conflicts and looking for their own identities. They are no longer only characterised and defined in terms of their victim status. The expansion of a feminist or women-centered perspective in contemporary Indian fiction is a contemporary phenomenon. Many Indian women novelists have examined female subjectivity in order to construct identity.

In Nayantara Sahgal's *The Day in Shadow*, Simrit is a trained freelance journalist, whereas Som is a businessman. Both have extremely distinct ways of thinking overall. Simrit is always completely under Som's control, and he doesn't give a damn about his educated wife's feelings. Simrit puts up with mental suffering for a very long time, but when she finally decides that enough is enough and the water has reached her head, she begins to challenge her husband's authority. When she realizes that Som's behavior hasn't changed and things are becoming worse, she finally makes the brave decision to divorce him in order to get freedom and lead a life of happiness, freedom, and dignity. M Banu Krishna, G Jegatheswari opine, "It was Simrit's longing for freedom and individuality that urges her to take divorce from her husband. Simrit does not want to be known as her husband's wife but as her self" (Krishna and Jegatheswari 42).

The novel's title, *That Long Silence*, alludes to the failure to express one's self and communicate with others. Jaya, the main character, is a homemaker and an unsuccessful author. The protagonist embarks on a voyage inward during her moment of solitude. She makes an effort to find her own identity, which she feels has been lost throughout the seventeen years of her marriage. She is never sure of who she is. She struggles with choosing between becoming Suhasini, the ideal wife, and Jaya. She struggles with juggling her identity as a writer with her identity as a wife and mother. She expresses her alienation in the following way, "I was Jaya. But I had been Suhasini as well – the Suhasini who was distinct from Jaya, a soft, smiling, placid motherly woman. A woman who coped" (TLS 16).

Jaya portrays the part of a stereotypical Indian wife who has lost touch with her own self. Mohan believes that her mother's silence is what gives her strength. But Jaya believes that the quiet is a sign of hopelessness. Both Mohan and Jaya are viewed in completely divergent ways. Between the husband and wife, there is a growing stillness. It separates them, causing a chasm. She chooses to stay with the family, but things have changed for her. She has exited the perplexing roles that the patriarchal culture had assigned to her. Dr. Arabati Pradeep Kumar comments,

"Shashi Deshpande occupies a coveted place in the annals of contemporary women novelists, who concern themselves with the problems of women and their quest for identity. Most of her women characters can transcend their identity crisis by analyzing their childhood and the process of upbringing. She explores the conflict between tradition and modernity concerning women in the middle-class society" (Kumar 214).

When the daughters start to dream, think about who they are, and assert their individuality, things get challenging. The emblem of the new woman is Virmati. She must go with the men inseparably. She won't let herself be used as clay by others. She affirms the necessity of women's liberty and education.

Virmati traveled to Lahore with the intention of expanding her horizons, but instead, she became embroiled in a questionable marriage, an unmarried pregnancy, and became a second wife. All of these led her to lose her identity. She married an already-married professor and lived her life at the mercy of her husband, his mother, and his first wife. Yashika Chandan observes, "She is the central character of the novel, rebels against tradition and is impelled by the inner need to feel loved as an individual rather than as a responsible daughter ... who tries to search her identity, ..." (Chandan 85).

Though Jaishree Misra's protagonist, Janu is a Keralite by birth and ethnicity, she is of Northern Indian culture at heart and mind and it is difficult for her to adapt herself to the core culture and customs of the traditional Keralite society and this is the result of her becoming a laughing stock at her in-law's house. The insults and humiliations at the hands of her mother-in-law leave Janu in a deep depression. Moreover, her mother-in-law suggests Janu leave her child under the care of their servants which idea makes her get irritated. For the rest of

the family, Riya is the most unwanted person. She cannot bear the pitiless and indifferent attitude of the Maraars towards her and her innocent daughter.

With the growth of the child, the worries of the mother grow and Janu well understands that her husband is an escapist as he very purposefully evades meeting Janu and shows the least concern for her pleas. Janu thinks of joining the mentally retarded child Riya in a special school in Arizona where such students are educated. She also contemplates doing a course to specialize herself in educating such children as her child. Thus, she applies for a course of M.A. in special education and for a scholarship to support her during the period of her study since her husband shows her his empty hand. She has been asked to attend an interview conducted in Delhi where she happens to meet her ex-lover Arjun at her friend Leena's house in Delhi.

In the present situation, Arjun shows interest in Janu and he is still unmarried he is willing to marry Janu if she is ready to marry her only after her obtaining a divorce from her husband. She feels happy to join him in her new marital life. When she returns from Delhi she tells her husband, "Suresh-I want a divorce. He looked at me with a kind of pretend surprise on his face. He wasn't shocked, ... We're not happy together. ... I suppose we are just different. We seem to need different things from life" (AP 217).

When Janu reveals to him about her love affair with Arjun and her present plans to join him at one of the resorts, her husband Suresh and the members of his family have created a lot of fuss and so many hurdles in her way from taking a divorce and going abroad. Suresh is clever enough not to reveal his inner happiness about Janu's going away from his life but he pretends to be a faithful husband by saying that he will surely forget her past and love story with Arjun. But, in the same breath, he insists Janu not to go to London for studying M.A. special education with the hope of avoiding the public humiliation of allowing one's wife to study and stay in a foreign land. 'No one in the Maraar family had gone through such kind of experience before' (Lenin 25). His ego is hurt by hearing that she is going to be with another person. One time Suresh takes Riya away from Janu who has never shown any sort of interest in her earlier. He behaves like that only to avoid the issue of divorce. The Maraars put Janu in an asylum at Trivandrum Medical College. Dr. Krishnan Menon and world-famous psychiatrist Dr. Sasi of Trivandrum Medical College 'had seen me and pronounced me manic and suffering from delusions' (AP 227). Only her mother comes to rescue her and brings her out of the hospital. She manages to leave for London to pursue M. A. in special education where she meets Arjun on weekends and it is Arjun who suggests her do M.A. in London rather than in the USA. They come to an understanding according to they can lead a happy life only after Janu can take a divorce from her husband.

Janu is not traditional stuff to simply yield to the man-favored social order and traditions like many other ordinary Indian women. On one hand, she wages war against the well-established customs. On the other hand, she fights against her husband in a court of law. Finally, Janu gains acceptance from her husband to get a divorce and take her daughter with her.

Radha, in Anita Nair's *Mistress*, yearns for Chris' close company as a result of her numerous conflicts with Shyam and the agony of being unable to exercise her freedom. Such an attempt to truly commit to a relationship with a man who understands her needs and gives her space can be seen in her affair with Chris. This is a second serious infraction of the guidelines that are meant to assist her in realizing herself in a relationship where she would be able to realize herself, just like the ladies she reads about or watches on television. However, the violation does not turn out to be effective in the sense that she is unable to discover the room for self-realization she seeks. However, it aids in redefining her self-image by highlighting who she is and, more importantly, what she is not seeking in life.

Radha's primary driving force behind breaking the laws that place restrictions on her life is her desire to achieve freedom and express her life exactly how she sees fit. The majority of personal infractions, meanwhile, are vain attempts to fulfill this objective. She is attempting to reclaim her true self after never really being able to find her place in society. She was initially a lover of a man who did not completely appreciate her before becoming a wife to a spouse she did not love. She finally manages to decide her destiny and musters the resolve to realize it only after problems and disagreements with her spouse and a liaison with a total stranger. Radha ultimately musters the courage to stage the biggest rebellion of her life, deserting her husband to pursue her own self-realization. When she eventually conceives a kid, she is regarded by tradition as an undercoated woman. She tells herself, "It is fear that makes me seek him, no regard for him. ... I cannot continue to play wife merely because it frees me of worries (MS 426).

IV. PATRIARCHY AND WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

Strong traditions in Indian writing in English have been developed by Indian women novelists. They have developed a unique approach to examining the issue faced by women. The advent of female English writers during this time made the novel a vehicle for self-realization, societal change, and rebirth. We learn about women who are traditional in their way of life yet modern in their attitude and have the ability to maintain their individuality through the novels written by women writers. Indian female novelists have written a lot about female subjectivity in an effort to forge an identity independent of patriarchal culture.

Although the legislation had changed, people's sentiments had not, and the terms of divorce settlement were harsh and involved a hefty tax burden on the Simrit. Simrit discovers that no one tries to examine divorce from her point of view, as a person seeking independence and fulfillment, and she feels uprooted and abandoned in the male-dominated environment. Even though Simrit has been completely wronged in the divorce settlement, both Moolchand and Shah saw nothing wrong with it. Consequently, in our society, the law does not treat women fairly. The majority of the population was male, and all laws were created by men for men. There was no denying that modern man had undergone a significant transformation, but he had yet to abandon the outdated traditional mentality that saw women as objects to be owned. After Som and Simrit's divorce, Ram Krishnan comments,

“The Hindu woman traditionally has no rights apart from what her father or her husband chooses to bestow on her. The law has changed some of that, but attitudes haven't changed much, which is clear from the husband's attitude in this case and the court's acceptance of such a document. A woman can apparently still be used as a convenience for tax purpose by her husband even after he has divorced her” (DS 168)”

Shashi Deshpande's Jaya quite voluntarily embraces her new role as Suhasini, Mohan's wife. She ignores her own emotional needs in order to be the best wife and mother possible. She owes it to herself and to society to love her husband and to be content. Jaya meekly complies with Mohan's orders as he dictates them. Jaya has buried her own existential self throughout the years as a result of finding herself in the traditional role of a woman as a wife and mother. She describes her current situation as “Worse than anything else had been the boredom of the unchanging pattern and unending monotony” (TLS 4). Unfortunately, her husband was unable to comprehend her emotions, which caused her torment. She feels estranged in her marriage and is not content with it. She now viewed their union as “a pair of bullocks yoked together ... A man and woman married for seventeen years (TLS 18).

Jaya is really upset to learn that even if her husband is at fault, she should not confront him. Jaya feels as though she lacks freedom of speech at her home since she is asked to follow in her mother's footsteps of her husband. She reevaluates her marital life and realizes she's not truly happy there. Their marital happiness is all a fantasy. She does not, in actuality, value her uniqueness. Between the husband and wife, there is a growing stillness. It separates them, causing a chasm. She makes the decision to end her lengthy silence of seventeen years and stop being Mohan's passive and quiet companion. She also makes the decision to stand up for herself. She chooses to stay with the family, but things have changed for her. She has exited the perplexing roles that the patriarchal culture had assigned to her.

Jaya makes the decision to abandon Sita as her role model. She no longer desires to be a silent, servile wife. She also chooses to stop writing the “Sita” column. She bids quiet, rage, and wrath farewell. She decides to leave up society's predetermined rules after realizing the value of her own self. She makes the decision to speak up and rejects following orders. She will now carry on as a writer of her own choosing and won't look to Mohan for the response he desires. She says in a frustrated tone that she feels like her life with Mohan is just an empty exercise in cohabitation, “We lived together but there had been emptiness between us (TLS 185).

The female protagonist of this novel, Jaya, who suffers from silence and a lack of contact with her husband, longs for self, identity, and self-dependence. This book is an ideal representation of the feminine quest for identity. Jaya aspires to personal liberation so she can honor her impulses and emotions. She is able to assess her life's expectations and realizes the emotional stress and suffering she has endured over the years by being silent and obedient. She develops into a woman with her own individuality after gaining a tonne of strength and self-assurance.

In Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, the influence and pressure of patriarchy are an inevitable aspect of the life of Virmati. It has begun in her parental home where she has been forced to marry the irrigation engineer without her consent. "It seemed to Virmati that her family could talk of nothing else but her wedding. Every word they said had so little relation to her inner life that she felt fraudulent even listening to them, passively, immorally silent" (DD 70).

The seeds of aspiration that were sown in Virmati enabled her to taste the freedom and independence of living independently while a college student. But she starts seeing a married professor, and they start dating. She resolves to stay away from the professor permanently after learning of his close relationship with his first wife. She makes a point of being unique and strives to become independent through education. However, she becomes pregnant as a result of the professor's inevitable visits, forcing her to marry him. She is treated poorly at his house and is excluded from everything. She thereby enters one patriarchal boundary while daring to enter another. "Virmati's self-expression and identity have been entangled with family relationships" (Sakthivel 674).

Even though Virmati struggles against patriarchal pressures and conventional views repeatedly, she nevertheless succumbs to the ills of the male-dominated culture. Despite her lifelong struggle with her family's conventional ideals, she consistently experiences both wins and losses. Vandita Mishra, who accurately summarises the moving tale of Virmati in *The Pioneer*, is the appropriate person to reference here,

"Kapur never permits Virmati any assertion of power or freedom. Because even as she breaks, free from old prisons, she is locked into newer ones. Her relationship with the Professor, for instance. While it does provide an escape from a loveless arranged marriage, it is itself furtive and claustrophobic, offering only a stolen togetherness behind curtained windows" (Mishra 187).

Virmati undergoes a steady transformation from a condition of innocence and victimization to one of self-actualization and empowerment. S. Sakthivel concludes, "Many generations of women is depicted in the novel. Virmati as a woman, who breaks many social norms to gain her selfhood. In all her novels traditions, transition and modernity are the stages through which the women are passing" (Sakthivel 677).

Though Janu, the protagonist of the novel *Ancient Promises*, enters the institution of marriage, without her personal interest, she has to accept the socio-cultural set up for the sake of her parents. Janu confesses in her letter to Arjun, her lover that she cannot fight her parents anymore and moreover, their love for her weighs more than Arjun's love. She explains to him that their worlds are different and they cannot meet. She has to be grateful to her parents and it is her duty as a daughter to make her parents happy. In the case of her love story, Janu has to face the pressure of patriarchy from two fronts: one is from her parents who are reluctant to heed her inner plea and wishes regarding her love and marriage with Arjun. Her father never believes the things of love and love marriage since he has unshakable faith in traditional beliefs. Both Janu and Arjun are too young to say or argue anything about their love affair and marriage and moreover, they are dependent on their parents. So, her parents take her to Kerala and they very callously treat her and forcefully prepare her to get married to an unknown person, Suresh of the Maraar family. It is in her words,

"I'm getting married in two weeks' time. To a businessman who lives in Kerala. I've met him once; he seems pleasant enough. I don't suppose you want to know much more about him, and there's little more I can add to that description anyway" (AP 63).

It shows the patriarchal domination of her father over Janu whom he very brutally forces to marry a stranger from Kerala though there is no intimacy between the bride and groom to describe each other. It seems more patriarchal attitude than a traditional bent. Arjun also proves a piece of the same block of patriarchal hegemony as he has left for London for receiving higher studies leaving Janu dejected and he never thinks that it is his responsibility to talk to and convince Janu's parents regarding their love and marriage. He leaves for London as if nothing had happened. It shows his male-domineering attitude. If the same thing were happened to Janu, his reactions would have been otherwise.

From the opinion of Janu, a critical reader can easily perceive the truth that Janu is not at all willing to marry Suresh. She confesses it in her own words,

“At the reception both Amma and I managed to fool all the Maraar friends and associates who’d turned up that a beautiful match had been made. And that there wasn’t the hint of unhappiness or displeasure in the air... It was a flawless performance on both sides (AP 93).

There are two things that strain a lot on the young mind of Janu after she gets married to Suresh. Janu is unhappy at the beginning of her married life because of the ambiguous nature of Suresh. It is only when she realizes that she is losing herself, she starts moving on towards self-attainment. Janu identifies her power within and discovers her ‘self.’ The realization of ‘self’ motivates individuals to aim at self-esteem. In the case of Janu, it happens when she sees her daughter being neglected by her husband and the other members of her family. She understands that their attitude is more patriarchal than traditional. Her husband’s negligence of his wife and daughter can be understood as a part of patriarchy. Janu feels jilted and a sense of alienation creeps into her mind. E. Lenin justifies the decision of Janu, “To protect herself and her daughter, she starts revolting against the snobbish conventions of the Hindu patriarchal society” (Lenin 25). Janu chooses to defend Riya and she felt immense unhappy for Riya,

“But a child-like Riya, left unloved, would simply wither and perish. Couldn’t they see that her kind of innocence could only understand love and not the lack of it? My own rights had not seemed worth fighting for, but Riya needed me to be her voice and a battle on her behalf would be far more satisfying. I was soon going to become the thorn in the Maraar side”. (AP 132-133).

With the help of her mother, Janu goes to London for her higher studies where she joins Arjun, her ex-boyfriend, and spends ninety-eight days with him happily. She comes back to Kerala to take a divorce from Suresh and receive her daughter from the Maraars family. Finally, Janu has been sanctioned a divorce by the court of law. Taking Riya with her, Janu goes to London for receiving special education. In London, she joins her lover Arjun and lives with him along with her daughter.

In her novels, Anita Nair realistically depicts both traditional and modern women, highlighting all the nuances of their pains and struggles as educated middle-class Indian women. Anita Nair’s portrayal of a fresh, powerful modern woman is continuously and purposefully at war with the patriarchal power structures and ideologies. Because nothing important in a woman’s life occurs without a struggle against patriarchy and biases, the novelist demonstrates that this conflict is unpleasant but unavoidable.

After their marital union, Shyam gradually took over Radha. He emerged from the action as a powerful, commanding force, while Radha changed into a disinterested onlooker. In the marriage’s incarceration, she is held captive. When she is with Shyam, she compares herself to a butterfly that has been captured and nailed to a frame. In Radha’s own words, “. . . I think that for Shyam, I am a possession. A much-cherished possession. That is my role in his life. He doesn’t want an equal; what he wants is a mistress. Someone to indulge and someone to indulge him with feminine wiles. . . . I think of the butterfly I caught and pinned to a board when it was still alive, its wings spread so as to display the markings, obvious that somewhere within, a little heartbeat, yearning to fly” (MS 53). After being married, Shyam’s attitude altered, which may be seen as patriarchal. Radha is expected to perform all of the responsibilities of a housewife. She is not permitted to operate a play-home school or to act as a teacher. She is not permitted to provide him business advice. She needs to ask him for his assistance or financial support even for the petty things.

Radha made progress over time and publicly repudiated her marriage. She fears that love could serve as a symbol of toxic masculinity and does not want love to serve as such a symbol of hegemonic masculinity. Although in her extramarital affair and her subsequent post-marital relationship with Christopher, Radha strives for the exact definition of love. Radha is battling to regain her identity and is acutely aware of it. She confesses how helpless she feels as her spouse holds her captive. She explains, “Shyam is asleep. His arms pin me to the bed. His bed. I think that for Shyam, I am a possession. A much-cherished possession. That is my role in his life. He doesn’t want an equal; what he wants is a mistress” (MS 53). The source of Radha’s identity dilemma is a remnant of patriarchy. A variety of viewpoints can be used to analyze Radha’s battle, including authoritarianism against women’s rights, slavery against freedom, stereotypical attachment against independence, etc.

Shyam is challenged by Radha, who asserts her independence and claims to be an entity. She turns into a symbol of contempt because she dislikes how being dependent on Shyam limits her ability to fulfill her role as a homemaker. Shyam’s claims that he has his wife under his control as a sexual commodity infuriate Radha and she proclaims, “Shyam might think he owned me, but he didn’t. I was never his. And I never will be” (MS 19).

After she conceived a kid with him, Chris left her, and Shyam stepped in to save her, promising that he would be the father of the child and that he would accept her as his wife. But Radha had a different opinion,

“All my life I have stumbled from one thing to another, persuading myself that this is how it should be. I have never behaved as if I have a mind of my own. I have never made a decision. I have let myself be swept along. Isn't it time I assumed some responsibility for my life?” (MS 401-402).

Finally, Radha separated from her spouse and began living alone. After severing ties with both men in her life, she made the decision to raise her urban child on her own. Radha is said to as “a new Indian woman” in this contemporary age.

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