

Social Stigma in V. S. Naipaul's novel A House for Mr. Biswas

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Abstract : In Indian social life, families are mostly patriarchy. If anyone projects learning Indian social system would certainly emphasize to get to know the foremost system. Also, he will go through social appearances first in order to comprehend cultures. Most of the people visualize about the religion, caste, marriage, and joint families. Patriarchy family system exists and followed in Hindu society. On the other hand, India has matriarchy family system too, that is headed by female. In spite of both the family system, some social evils in Indian society such as sati, dowry, child marriage, caste, untouchability, gender inequality, and poverty also had been lingering. There is another social stigma called Gharjamai. It is still in practice in the twenty first century. This is contrasting to the male dominant society and seems to be awkward. Traditionally some of these have been going on from very early period. Dependency of a married man on others, seems inappropriate, since Indian culture emphasis on Karma (duty) by man in the Indian society. Here culturally man is always an accountable and earning to run the family and woman has been a house wife for long. This paper is an attempt to explore an untouched aspect of Indian social life i.e. a social stigma. As per the Hindu religious faith, objectives of human are- 'dharma', 'artha', 'kama', and 'moksha' (religion, wealth, sex and salvation). The Vedas teach to each and every man in this world to perform his or her duties throughout the life. Thus, their duties had been determined with priority by forefathers in ancient time.

Keywords- Gharjamai, marriage, matriarchy, patriarchy, social stigma, unemployed.

INTRODUCTION

created confusion not only among Indian itself but outside observers too. Life of people among themselves are distinguished. There are two types of family systems prevailing- Patriarchal and Matriarchal. In fact, ancient societies were matriarchal one, headed by woman. Hindu goddesses are personified of mother power and honour. But patriarchal society habitually inherited sons for their properties instead of giving authority to their daughters. It is an amazing bond of several cultures, which have been surviving together. The different regions can be easily known for their unique cultures, languages, and costumes. Explorers have described different cultures and social stigmas but were not frank with this matriarchy system in the Indian society as Naipaul's characters play their role representing an aspect of Indian social life in reality. Mr. Biswas and all other sons-in-law in the Hanuman House are the best example of this very system. They live in the house of their mother-in-law Tulsi, who was the head of the family. All her sons-in-law are engaged in their family business and earn bread and butter for their wives and children. Tulsi's family is the same joint family set in Trinidad and Tobago the Caribbean island which is like Indian joint family in patriarchy. Naipaul has portrayed the psychological aspect of man, who becomes a part of the matriarchy family system faces some certain problem in the manner of a woman in patriarchy society. They adjust in some contrasting situations created by society. Man had been man always but is adjustable in typical circumstances as well.

PATRIARCHY

Male dominance has been observed in the world. Male was considered as powerful and for safekeeping purposes man was believed to be the head of the family as well as society. This was encouraged and fully supported by women along with men since man passed the age of savage life. Every woman wanted to have a son as sons were being considered to run the next generation. Still son is measured to be of father's not mother's generation. And to continue the generation of his father and forefathers in the patriarchy, son is must. In the novel A house for Mr Biswas the author has described Hanuman house, where Tulsi family has seven daughters that is the consequence of inclination for sons and later might face the problem of social evil alike dowry. The caste system prevailed and good match-making was difficult to get to them. Earlier people thought of bringing up as much as children they can and caused problems for the family. Even polygamy had been started to fulfill the prerequisite of offspring. That ideology represented as man power since expected. V. S. Naipaul was the supporter of patriarchy and disliked man to be under woman control or woman-controlled run house as Hanuman house of the novel. His criticism to woman during an interview clarifies that woman is sentimental in nature and cannot run the family as compared to man. In The Guardian Amy Fallon quoted Naipaul's comment regarding women writers that none of them were literary match to him:

I read a piece of writing and within a paragraph or two I know whether it is by a woman or not. I think [it is] unequal to me.

Naipaul himself was male dominant of the Indian society. He was influenced by the traditions that a man always headed the family and run it without being sentimental. Naipaul showed the superiority of man comparing women for being much emotional and also he had prejudice on women empowerment in the society.

MATRIARCHY

In the male dominating society women have been emerged as dominating in their houses. The other aspect of Indian family system matriarchy also exists. Sometimes people might disagree with its Hindu family system, and they might say that the patriarchy was followed since ancient time. Of course, it is, but for what India is interconnected in herself is Indian culture; where there are many ethnic groups among which matriarchy happened to be followed among the aboriginals specially. North Eastern state Meghalaya has been mounting for centuries, carrying out this system as veneration to women in the society. As women are headed in the matriarchy Mrs. Tulsi too run her whole family business like man. It seems odd but in the twenty first century women have been multi-tasking characters. They have equal shares to their family business along with her husband's entrepreneurship. She may be playing a crucial role managing family-run business. Mrs. Tulsi managed her store and the family. She managed to engaged her

sons-in law in her store. They worked in the Tulsi store. After the death of Pandit Tulsi the patriarch of Indian family changed into matriarchy because his wife began to run the whole family business in the town of Arwacas. Mr. Biswas had worked in that store. He lived in Hanuman house with his wife Sama, but did not get any respect neither from her nor other family members. He fought with members of that joint family. He felt female dominance there and men were treated as servants. And there was completely a matriarchy situation, when Mr. Biswas used to live in Hanuman house. He had experienced man's pathetic condition as a woman usually faces. He had to go to live in the house of female counterparts just as women live to their husbands' house after getting married in the male-controlled society. This very system is considered as a stigma in the male-controlled society. Though he has to play the crucial role of man in all kind of business the society had already set and determined. While females were supposed to look after the children, cooking, serving meal to family members. Female is always caring in every home and every land.

GJARJAMAI

Gharjamai is a Hindi term used for the man, one who lives in the house of his wife. It is a social stigma in the Indian society, acceptable but inappropriate in the male-controlled society. Since man had been considered to be powerful and held in charge for running his family. This is a pathetic condition of a man, who struggles to establish good position in the society and enthusiastic to maintain higher social status. The main character of V. S. Naipaul's novel *A House for Mr. Biswas* was unemployed and had got married with Sama one of the daughters of Tulsi's family. He had been a dependent character, lived in the joint family in Hanuman House. There were seven daughters and two sons in the family. Sons-in-law used to live there and they all had become the part of the family. They were engaged in the family's business in order to fulfill their daily needs and look after their own wives and children. This family is absolutely Indian, follows all the rituals and rites of Hinduism in the overseas Trinidad and Tobago a Caribbean country. There is a distinct and just contrasting to male authority. Here the man seems to be poor, helpless and thus social stigma in the Indian society takes place.

Three types of social stigmas have been mentioned in the book one is discrimination and second one is prejudice and the third one is stereotype. Mr. Biswas faced all those circumstances from birth onwards and was pushed into social stigma. His childhood days were discrediting in a particular way that he was born with. He was thought of eating his parents, when his father had died searching for him and the calf in the pond. Already there was humor spread with his birth that he had six fingers in both the hands. Although he was brought up with care but suspension among the people of neighborhood was continued. In the society he was accepted normally but pandit's prediction had made him to be rejected since his abnormal birth and six fingers conditions. This was prejudice that had been spread by the pandit as a rumor. In later life he was sent to work in the shop of Hanuman house. He was thought to be good and equivalent to that high caste family. This was a nice chance for Mrs. Tulsi to get her one of the daughters named Sama to be married with. Coincidentally he got married with Sama but had to live as 'gharjamai' in Hanuman house. He had to adjust in the big joint family, where already other sons-in-law had been living since their marriage. In the same manner he had to live in a room allotted to him and his wife. Psychologically he was not adjustable with the joint family and looked for his own house. He felt slavery and discrimination throughout his stay there. He was expected to remain there and work for that family. In the beginning he had hope to get some dowry but nothing other than a room allotted to live with his wife Sama. He had to live his life according to the joint family norms. In the common dining hall everybody was supposed to take meal sitting along with other members. He felt inferiority complex as he had to sit in the corner. His position in that family was as low as a servant. When he got delayed for the meal his wife used to take meal in the bedroom for him. He felt hostage and could not get proper respect in that family. Disagreement had arisen and his attitude was not up to the joint family norms. So, he made plan to quit it and have his own house. He projected reputation among people. Staying in Hanuman house was against his social status and disgrace to his self-respect. He quarreled in the family and left the house. He went back to his aunt's house and stayed there. He was employed in the rum shop owned by Bhandat. He is brother of Tara's husband Ajodha. But Bhandat was very much afraid of Tara because she kept a close eye on shop and the business. Mr. Biswas was beaten up by Bhandat for stealing money from his shop. Actually, Bhandat himself used to steal money daily and blamed Biswas. He was thought of a spy for Tara in that shop. Biswas felt humiliated in his life everywhere even his uncle Ajodha also mocked at him for his stupid decision of getting married Sama without dowry. Here the man's mindset for dowry in the society has been revealed. He then went to work in the farm house of Tulsi family again. He kept struggling for years and ultimately bought a house. Anyhow after long struggle his dream of own house was fulfilled. Thus, he faced disapproval, rejection in life. He lacked cultural identity, social status and personal assets which could make him stand in his own that is self-dependent person of the contemporary Indian society.

CONCLUSION

Social stigma was brought into light and discussed frankly in the novel *A House for Mr. Biswas* by Naipaul. His characters were well chosen to represent social stigmas such as stereotype, prejudice and discrimination. The protagonist of his novel Mr. Biswas had experienced all the typical situations in the society. His tolerance was tested throughout his life. He succeeded in achieving his goal of having his own house before death. The protagonist felt happiness buying a house for his own family. The practice of sati is not heard in the modern society but it was practiced. Still many burning issues as unemployment, dowry, caste, and gender inequality had been painted by the novelist. In urban and rural areas socially, people are still attached to the male-controlled society while many patriarchal families trail patriarchal way by getting their daughters married and keeping sons-in-law at home only. Man has not yet learnt to adjust in the society where a woman run the family. Instead of adjusting in other's family he feels trapped and struggles for identity and his own abode. V. S. Naipaul has epitomized social evils in Indian society in abroad also among Indian people extensively. His literary works are witnessing the traditions among the Indian, across the world. Many Indian people had moved to different British colonies in the 19th century expecting better job and life. In spite of being away from mother land, they have maintained their rituals, perform religious rites, even they maintained their identity through their way of life in foreign land.

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