

Study of New Woman in Rama Mehta`s Inside the Haveli

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Abstract: Indian women have always sacrificed their lives for their families. They are epitome of sacrifice and devotion but this has made them alienated also and now they feel a deep desire to be something on their own. They want to walk on the path of success, they want to achieve their goals and that is why the term New Woman has become quite popular. This paper is an attempt to analyze Geeta`s character from *Inside the Haveli* in terms of New Woman. An effort is also made to depict the dilemma and struggle of woman .

Keywords: New Woman, identity, struggle, confident, dilemma, sacrifice.

The term 'New Woman' has become quite popular because of its powerful projection of woman who were earlier confined to homes and kitchens. Women have always sacrificed to extreme level to meet the expectations of family but they were never rewarded for this sacrifice and were reminded of their real condition in the family. This behavior gave them strength and courage to break away with the stereotypes and do something to come out of miserable condition. They have tried hard to do away with old and orthodox norms and they are now shining like gold and diamond everywhere.

They have started challenging their limits and can be seen all time ready for all tasks and women can be seen as warriors on frontline. They are trying to establish their own identities, they are earning for their family and children and they are educated enough to take care of themselves and their children.

The term 'New Woman' was coined by Sarah Grand who is a British writer and her real name is France Elizabeth Clark. She coined this term in 1894 and it was popularized by Henry James .To quote Friedan :

It was the need for a new identity that started woman a century ago on that passionate journey, that vilified, misinterpreted journey from home. That was an act of rebellion, a violent denial of the identity of women and it was then defined. It was the need for a new identity that led those passionate feminists to forge new trials for women.(80)

The term New Woman can be best felt by reading Ibsen's *A Doll's House* where Nora is the seminal example of new woman and when she walks out of the house, she walks in the world of freedom. In England, it was quite difficult for women to come out of Victorian image but in India, new women's quest for identity is portrayed well in novels. To quote Bhatt, "A person who is neither subjugated nor deified but a human person desirous of living in society as a responsible member with equal rights and freedom to pursue her own goals." (33) This is best description of new woman. Indian women are trying to work shoulder to shoulder with men. They want to reach the pinnacles of success and they struggle hard to establish their identity. Sudhir Kakar has best defined this:

An individual's sense of identity is neither completely conscious nor unconscious, although, at times, it appears to be exclusively the one or the other. At some place identity is referred to as a conscious sense of individual uniqueness, at others, to an unconsciousness striving for continuity of experience, and yet other places as a sense of solidarity with a group's ideal. (16)

Indian women don't have their own identity as an individual because they are associated with the unit called family and a wife is regarded only as a wife of a husband and her identity is related to her husband's identity. The rise of Indian English Literature in nineteenth century was an important step in Indian renaissance. This gave them a chance to educate themselves and educated women became the true reflection of new woman as Meena Shirwadkar opines:

As women received education they began to feel an increasing urge to voice their feelings. The awareness of individuality, the sense of incompatibility with their tradition-bound surroundings, resentment of male-dominated ideas of morality and behavior, problems at home and the place of work or in society — all came up in a welter for projection. (201)

Education played a vital role in the formation of New Woman as Rama Mehta's novel *Inside the Haveli* is the prominent example to quote here. Geeta is the female protagonist who is married to Ajay and she is forced to live in a surrounding which is totally opposite to her past surroundings as she is a city-bred girl and hails from Bombay. She is well educated and has studied in a co-ed school but when she enters into a new journey, she is warned in this way:

The moment Geeta landed in the platform of Udaipur she was immediately encircled by women singing but their faces were covered. One of them came forward, pulled her sari over her face and exclaimed in horror, 'where do you come from that you show your face to the world?' Geeta, bewildered, frightened managed to get into the car without talking to the women who followed her, singing as loud as they could." (17)

Geeta feels lonely and unhappy and at times, it becomes tough for her to survive in the Haveli where she cannot pass her time in any fruitful creation as she is never left alone. She confesses at a

place ,”Even after seven years I am a stranger to those that are mine, and I will always remain a stranger.” (103) Kamal Bhasin opines:

Geeta’s journey from Bombay to Udaipur is a journey from an open society to a cloistered one. It is a story of her own acculturation and assimilation into a more traditional society, where she embarks on yet another journey to throw open the gates of the haveli to things hitherto forbidden. (116)

Geeta is the best example of 'New Woman' as she rebels silently against the orthodox norms and she is firm for the education of Sita who further gets married to a good man and her decision is appreciated by all the *Haveli* members. She starts educating others and this way she enters into a new path of life which is clear reflection of new woman. R.K. Asthana comments:

She is filled with a sense of rebellion against the rigid customs of her society which do not permit the females the right to be their natural selves, who must live uneducated and unenlightened like dumb-driven cattle. (195)

Geeta is a perfect blend of modernity and moral values. She is educated and she brings changes in the Haveli silently and her immaculate efforts do not hurt the male ego of Haveli members. Rawat and Uppal think :“Geeta has to make a Herculean effort to adjust to the traditional values in the Haveli though she ushers changes in the Haveli itself.” (41)

To sum up, one can say that Geeta , a modern and well-educated girl finds herself stuck up in the orthodox norms of the Haveli of Udaipur but due to her continuous efforts and broad view , she finds a way for herself and a way to change the condition for not only herself but also for the ages to come.

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