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Family, Kinship And Marriage: A Study Of Sudha Murthy And Chetan Bhagat's Novels

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Abstract

In the past few decades industrialization, urbanization, modernization, globalization and the rapid growth of information technology have produced myriad challenges. They have made a powerful impact on different segments of societies everywhere. It has been argued that any development resulting from globalization should be seen not merely as economic development, but also in terms of how it influences the relationships within the family as well as all other social and cultural aspects of life in a society. The problem posed to global society today ranges from survival to sustainable development and peace. This paper aims to study the impact of globalization on Indian family. It can be viewed in two ways. One may argue that in the era of economic restructuring through World Bank, WTO and IMF led policies of liberalization, privatization and globalization the family is emerging as a much stronger institution than ever before. The alternative point of view is that as a result of globalization, the institution of family is becoming progressively weaker as individualism grows. The rapid increase in the mobility of younger generation as they search for new employment and educational opportunities weakens the family structure. Functionally, distance renders it impractical for the members of a unit to come together as often as earlier. This affects the earlier idealized notion of the 'family' as the caring and the nurturing unit for children, the sick and elderly. The growing costs of education and health services and the new job opportunities opened up for the women outside the house once again brought the role of 'family' into question. In India, men, women and children, irrespective of caste, creed, religion and class, look to the family for assistance during troubled times, when they are sick or need some rest. Under the economic conditions fostered by liberalized markets, the socio-cultural relationships within the family are also undergoing a dramatic change.

Introduction

India is currently one of the world's rapidly changing societies. As adoption and adaptation of globalization is taking place in urban and educated India. The country appears to be one of the first societies to follow and adopt the western styles of family life. The personal attributes of individualism and independence among the urban and educated youths and their easy mobility within India and to western and other developed parts of the world is accelerating the rate of change. As a result metamorphosis in the Indian society with regard to family, kinship and marriage is notable. The socioeconomic progression comes as from traditional to modern.

Sudha Murthy and Chetan Bhagat's novels are deeply rooted in Indian culture. The settings in their novel vividly describe the Indian society from twentieth to the twenty first century. Traditional Indian society is characterized by the bind of patriarchy. The status of women characters speaks clearly about the reality of the time. The challenges before the men characters during the changing phase is vividly described. The gradual change in society can be observed by reading Sudha Murthy and Chetan Bhagat's novels in this perspective.

Sudha Murthy's depiction of family, kinship and marriage

Family values and relationships occupy the key positions in the framework of Sudha Murthy's narratives which has attracted the attention of critics. The family is the immediate context in which Sudha Murthy's sensibility operates. Her novels are remarkable for the subtlety, conviction and faith which family relationships are treated as that of husband and wife in Mahasweta, Gently falls the bakula or The house of cards, the mother son relationship in ,The mother I never knew, mother daughter relationship in Gently falls the bakula.

Love, devotion and commitment are the core family values of Indian society. They closely knit the families in bonds of relationships. Love for children even in adverse circumstances sustains the relationship between Bhagirathi and Shankar. It is also mother's love for the child that Nirmala, on becoming an unwed mother deserts him for his good. Rupinder's love for the adopted child finds him a loving family likes of Mr. Rao and Sumati. JMR's mother, Champakka had become a widow at an early age of twenty. From that day on she had lived only on account for love towards her son. He had become the center of her life. Anupama's love for her father finds him being financially supported by her, as she starts earning. Girija and Venkatesh relationship is an example of a daughter understands of her father.

Whereas Father-son relationship of Venkatesh and Ravi, Mother-son relationship of Mridula and Shishir are relationships affected by generation gap syndrome. Both Ravi and Shishir consider their father and mother to be idealist respectively. They consider them to be misfits in the modern world.

The mother daughter relationship of Radhakka and Girija, Gouramma and Surbhi are a type of relationship in which the mother spoils the child due to her overindulging nature. On the other hand, Kamala and Shrimati, Ratnamma and Lakshmi are a relationship wherein a perfect understanding between mother and daughter is developed. Kamala candidly discusses the pros and cons of marrying Shrikant with Shrimati. She

too reciprocates her mother's opinion. Ratnamma is a domineering type of person. Her daughter Lakshmi accepts her the way she is, so no discord is seen in their relationship.

Sudha Murthy's novels include men and women who seek to control the behavior of others. This tendency to control the acts of others to appease oneself is psychologically interpreted as a disorder. The bloated ego is gratified. In the novel, *The Mother I Never Knew*, Nirmala's father Mr Chaudhary Charan Singh was a big zamindar and the most powerful man in his village. He behaves ruthlessly as he comes to know about his daughter's pregnancy. Nirmala still in adolescence is subject to sanctions. She is driven away from home to a far off place, until she delivers, so that she is away from the prying eyes of people in the village. Radhakka's **due** to her flaunting demeanor ill treated Anupama. She had expected fat dowry from her daughter in law. However, since Anupama was her son's choice without her consent, she left no opportunity to harass her. Ratnamma is money minded. She runs a small money lending business. She controls the behavior of her highly educated son Sanjay. Her daughter-in-law, Mridula is pained at the indifference shown towards her by Ratnamma. Vinuta is a simple, hard working person. Her mother in law, Gouramma is simply fascinated by the lure of dollars earned by children working abroad. She exercises control over her family members. Girish and Vinuta suffer from her authoritarian ways.

The husband-wife relationship of Venkatesh and Shanta, Shamanna and Gouramma are affected by the tendency of dominance of partner. Shanta and Gouramma believe in controlling others. Venkatesh and Shamanna thus maintain a distance from their partners. The bind of patriarchy in marriage is observed in the husband-wife relationship of Shrikant-Shrimati and Sanjay-Mridula. Shrikant and Sanjay although highly educated and having equally talented life partners, whom they have chosen out of love for them, however spoil their relationship due to falling prey to their male ego. The patriarchy unconsciously rules their thinking and it results in indifference towards their partners. Devotion and commitment are the virtues that were upheld by Shrimati and Mridula. Although they were suffering the bind of patriarchy in marriage, they pulled on for the sake of love for their partners. It was only on realization that they were being taken too much for granted did they dare to sever the ties. In case of Girish and Vinuta, the husband is controlled by his mother. Therefore Girish maintains a low profile in family matters. Vinuta thus has to suffer the domination of her mother in law. She is however supported by her father in law, Shamanna. She decides to move away to her place away from her in laws. The institution of family has seen drastic changes in the relationships, from the twentieth to twenty first century with advent of globalization.

In her fictional world, Sudha Murthy captures the essence of Indian culture. She depicts the marriage structure in Indian culture in her work, *Mahashweta*. Marriage is an unbreakable relationship in Indian culture. Murthy depicts the utmost truth of interpersonal relationships in Indian society in her works. A girl is not accepted as a member of either her own or her in-laws' households in traditional Indian culture. People's thoughts are dualistic. Both men and women experience it differently. Indian culture still adheres to its traditional values and traditions. The culture is an amalgam of thousands of distinct civilizations that are

thriving in the western breezes while holding to their fundamental Indian roots. This gives a serious and thorough presentation of Mahashweta's reflection on Indian consciousness. Additionally, it concentrates on the superstitious notions that in the novel's protagonist's marriage, they prove fatal. It also demonstrates the evil effects superstitious beliefs on the life of young people in Indian society. Despite their education, many are still trapped in superstitious ideas. Despite playing significant roles in the protagonist's life as doctors by profession, Dr. Anand and Dr. Desai prove themselves in significant when Anupama actually needs their support.

Whether it is Anupama, or Shrimati, or Mridula they have had a hard time balancing emotion and logic. It occurred because of the disparity in their inherited traits, upbringings and surroundings during their early years. They suffered at the hands of their husbands because of the ideals instilled in them, the various cultures and the disparate economic circumstances of their families. People become more self-centered as their wealth increases, which has a negative impact on their relationships with those closest to them and leads to adultery. A marriage is destroyed by heartless reasoning, deceit and power, and the house built insubstantially gets dreadfully collapsed.

Chetan Bhagat's depiction of family, kinship and marriage

Chetan Bhagat writes about Indian society that has just awakened at the dawn of globalization. He writes about each aspect of India like its culture, its problems, its language and depicts the life of the young generation. The traditional Indian society is in a state of metamorphosis. The old practices and customs have not given way to new and hence creates conflict in the life of the characters. The most sensitive value of marital fidelity has just a passing reference with regard to Govind Patel's father who had left his mom and him over ten years ago, for they had found out that he had a second wife across town. (*The 3 mistakes of my life*). Vroom's dad was a businessman who has separated from his wife two years ago. He preferred banging his secretary to being with his family, so Vroom and his mother now lived without him. (*One Night at the Call Center*). Krish said about his father that someone even said he had a mistress somewhere, though I doubt another woman could survive him. (*2 States*). Fidelity thus has resulted in estrangement of relationship unlike in Murthy's novels in case of Alex and Anita, it is just a cause of marital stress.

Radhika –Anuj relationship is a perfect example of a husband wife relationship in a patriarchal society. Radhika is a devoted, loving and a caring wife. Not only attending to the needs of her husband but also striving to keep her ever whining mother in law happy as a part of her duty. Whereas Anuj is an ideal husband demanding all commitment from his wife with no obligation for his wife. Radhika has left her rich parents for the sake of marriage with Anuj. She has accepted the traditional ways of her husband's family and works hard to make both ends meet. Marriage with Anuj has made unreasonable demands on her and almost offered nothing in turn as in spite of her love, Anuj has fallen in love with Payal, a modern type of girl.

Krish's father and mother relationship falls under the stereotype of sociopathic husband-histrionic wife type. Kavita, Krish's mother is subjected to mental torture and physical abuse by his father, however she sustains all for the good of her son. His father had a poor work history, was self centered, impulsive and irresponsible with low frustration tolerance. His mother is emotional, excitable and unstable. Both husband and wife are manipulative, having little concern for each other but seeing their mate as someone through whom to accomplish their own desires. Chronically rejected and misunderstood they both feel that they have trouble satisfying. His father 'had a mistress somewhere', whereas his mother was doting her son.

Military Uncle – son relationship, Priyanka-mother relationship are typical examples of cultural gap. Military Uncle at fifty plus is described to be the oldest person in the call center. Shyam helped him send pictures he took at the zoo to his grandson. However as Shyam took a round he found Military Uncle in a disturbed mood. The cause was an email from his son. "Dad....You have cluttered my life enough, now stop cluttering my mailbox. I do not know what came over me that I allowed communication between you and my son. I don't want your shadow on him. Please stay away and do not send him any more emails. For literally or otherwise, we don't want your attachments." The cause of the rift in their relationship is revealed while making a commitment for change before God. We come to know that Military Uncle lived two years with his son but he criticized his daughter-in-law for going out for parties and for going to work. He wished she should stay at home. He judged them by his outdated values. The other relationship that falls into the same lines is that of Priyanka-mother relationship. Priyanka shares the typical conflictual mother-daughter relationship. Priyanka's mother is emotionally unstable, self-conflictual, apprehensive, tense and over indulgent. She is dominating and is gender biased. This is the reason why Priyanka has differences with her on many issues. Priyanka ignored her mother all through college and did what she desired. In fact, this whole don't care phase was born out of the feeling of rejection and hatred. However at one level she felt so guilty that she tried to connect with her after college. But her mother's fault finding had intensified. She started having problem with everything – her thinking, her friends and also her boy friend. She was opposed to Priyanka's relationship with Shyam because of his meager income at the call center. She insisted that Priyanka should go in for somebody else who is financially settled. She had married her father who was just a government employee only because he seemed like a decent human being. But her sisters waited to marry better qualified boys and they are richer. Priyanka's mother wished to see her daughter settled modestly much unlike her. She was impatient with her daughter. She couldn't even give a sympathetic listening to her daughter's words.

Gopal-father relationship suffers from the generation gap syndrome. Gopal's father is a widower working as a teacher. He performs the domestic work, while bringing up Gopal. He expects Gopal to study sincerely and study in a prestigious institution. Gopal studies for exams but does not score up to his expectation. Father's ailing health is deteriorated due to disappointment culminating into depression. Gopal too loses self confidence and turns a looser at studies. Father's anxiety and the son's lack of concentration at studies mar the father-son relationship.

Sex is no longer a taboo in the modern Indian society. In keeping with the trend of the post modern era, Chetan Bhagat's novel also have a bold and rather unconventional description of love and sex. The sexual relationship between Hari and Neha in *Five point someone*, Shyam and Priyanka in *One Night At The Call Center*, Govind and Vidya in *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*, Krish and Ananya in *2States*, Gopal and Aarti in *Revolution 2020* are vividly described.

As Hindu society in India is divided into castes and subcastes, moreover marriages are often arranged within the caste. The proposal of an inter caste marriage between Krish and Ananya in the novel *2States* is therefore a matter of friction within their families. Ananya is from Chennai, and Krish is from Delhi. Apart from reservations about caste Indians are blind followers of traditions. Since status of man in society is very much linked up with his financial position so the evil of dowry system is nursed by the Indian society. So Ananya with conservative parents who want her to marry a 'well-settled' Tamil boy. Krish has a boisterous Punjabi mother who is hell bent on him getting married to a well-to-do 'fair' Punjabi girl. The twosome have to face tough trials to convince their parents about their marriage proposal. Priyanka's mother too insists on a settled boy as a suitable boy for matrimonial alliance. (*One Night At Call Center*).

Discussion

The family has witnessed a great deal of structural and functional transformation in recent times. The institution of family is undergoing dramatic change in India. In our six metropolitan cities and other major urban centers, globalization is influencing the institution of family greatly. A young girl from a middle and upper middle class background makes her own decisions about her future. Personal matters are becoming more and more individualistic and the decisions on these are taken by the individuals themselves. Emotional and conjugal relationships often take a back seat in these types of families. Consumerism, conspicuous consumption and the desire for more and more material wealth are becoming part and parcel of youth culture. Relationships within the family, between its members both elders and siblings are adapted as per the situation and need. These adjustments in relationships are in many cases compulsive in nature. The elderly parents have no option but to accept the new arrangement in the overall interest of the family.

Singh observes that the traits of the western culture are making their way into our cultural life but the extent to which they have a potential to alter the systematic cultural world-view remains a matter of surmise (2000:113) the communication revolution, modern democratic and political processes and electronic media exposure have influenced the value systems of youth throughout the country. As a result, "The family institutions that provide normative stability to the youth, are under great structural and functional stress; both in the cities and the village." (ibid 2000:120)

Today, one does come across a few divorces and single living and single parent families in Urban India. The trend is towards more independent, democratic relationships within these families supplanting the traditional authoritarian and subordinate relationships. The forces of modern culture mediated by the process of

globalization are forcing the individuals to make adjustments in their community and in some cases inter-religious marriages are becoming commonplace in these circles. The traditional authority of religious texts and rigid cultural practices are slowly giving away to the modern democratic values and norms. Decision making within the families is also undergoing change. Every individual member's view and preference are taken into consideration before taking any important decision in families.

However, even today in a large majority of cases, Indian men are being confronted with the conflict of traditional orthodox and conservative forces on the one hand and contemporary progressive and revolutionary forces on the other. They want new and increasing opportunities in the new globalization age, but they also want old securities of joint family, caste and village communities. Therefore many seem to live in two worlds simultaneously

: the traditional static, religion oriented, caste based, family centered world; and the new western, globalised rationalistic world of dynamic individualism and social progress. that whether or not the traditional values of socialism and individualism are accepted or rejected is dependent on the existential realities experienced by each of these family types.

Conclusion

Patriarchy, respect for elders, tolerance are the values that have been upheld in Indian society since generations. But with ever changing scenario of modern life, this rich tapestry of traditional social values is observed to be waning. Globalisation has brought forth transformations that have challenged these long standing values. Sudha Murthy emphasizes how the Indian families' shifting value systems are causing tension in their ties to one another. Whereas Chetan Bhagat has recorded the impact of globalization on young impressionable minds. The generational gap has become wider. Only those in the middle-aged generation of our society who embrace change and make an effort to fit in with the encroaching western lifestyle live happily; those who continue to uphold their old traditions and values are seen as social outcasts, especially by the youth, and suffer the mental torment of being unable to walk hand in hand with their children or grandchildren or of being an outsider in today's society. This disparity within families is what weakens and eventually kills family relationships over time. Politics, greed, kinship, and utilitarianism have replaced the old family values. although one notices changes in the Indian family, both in its traditional structure and functions, this change is yet to reach the extent that had occurred in the western families. This study concludes that the institution of family in India is threatened in the rapid social transformation due to the advent of globalization. It can sustain only on the basis of value system.

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