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## Marital Relationship in Indian Context

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### **Abstract:**

*The Indian society has a high grade on marriage and marital life. From the beginning everyone says that marriage is an honest recognition of the native equality between man and woman. But later the concept of marriage is changed were women are dominated by their husbands and in laws of their house. In this marital life women are not able to find freedom and space in the so called marital life. In the Indian context marriage has two sides. One is the positive approach towards life. The second side as negative thoughts women are not able to change and face the troublesome situation. Their dream is failed in a short time. Sita is the example of positive and Devi is a negative notion on marital life.*

**Keywords:** Marriage, Positive concept, Gender Discrimination and Self Identity

### **1. Introduction**

Traditionally, in all societies, marriage and family are considered to be its most sacred institutions. They are the source of comfort and nurture the members living within it. As a wonderful bridge between nature and civilization biology and culture, sex and righteousness, private rivalry and public order, the institutions of marriage marks a unique development in the evolutionary history of humanity. A union of souls, marriage is an honest recognition of the native equality between man and woman. As an agreement to share between themselves the joys and responsibilities of the joint adventure, marriage is an equal necessity for both parents. It does not set up the one above the other. No other human relationship is an intensely bilateral and mutually enjoyable as the partnership between a man and a woman. The key to marriage is the ability to endure and go on. But there are many marriages where women are dominated by their husbands and do not find freedom and space in their marital life. In spite of the difficulties and obstacles that emerge in a patriarchal society, women endeavour to channelize their emotions in different ways because of their strong urge to survive marital life. Many women are subjected to rape in marriage and being supersensitive. Woman has a great repulsion for the so called 'Love' or sexual act where no love is involved. Such marriages are only physical and never a marriage of minds or hearts. Thus frustrated with the physicality of marital life, some women try to discover their true identity through other relationships.

Indian society is still very conventional in its approach to marriage and numerous customs and traditions help to keep a successful marriage. Husband and wife strive to maintain an outward show of balance and harmony even if they disagree on various issues of their relationships. In most cases, marriage cuts woman off from the main stream of life and prevents her from achieving her goals. A successful marriage is supposed to be one where the woman restricts herself to the household affairs. Beyond the threshold of her house, a woman finds life insecure and confusing due to her separation and social activities. Rose states "Marriage in many instanced proves to trap which is a hindrance to her growth as an individual" (45). According to the society woman is considered to be a slave or caretaker to her husband, to her children and to the whole family. She is depicted as a silent sufferer and is given a secondary position in the family and society. Indian manu states that woman is dependent on a man – her father, later her husband and finally her son.

### **2. Marital Life between Baba and Parvati**

Devi's father-in-law, Baba and Mahesh resent Parvati's absence in their huge house. Parvati is a real presence, a guardian angel and an unseen mother. Parvati's domestic exit to gain entry into heaven makes a powerful statement. Her spiritual choice is in a sense of escape from domestic duty and responsibility. It is a negation of wifhood and motherhood experiences. Mahesh sees nothing but rejection and treachery in her peculiar identity. According to Premila Paul, "a mother seeking space for herself outside home is so unimaginable and treacherous a deed the Parvati becomes a taboo for him" (109). It is shocking news for Baba when Parvati left his house without giving any information to her husband and a loveable son. Parvati once strongly suggest that "a man needs a wife to

help him with the business of living”(61). Baba always follows the theories and ideas of womanhood and brahminhood. He represents the benevolent and patronising aspects of patriarchy.

*All men ...are enjoined to cherish women, and look after them as their most precious wards...Fathers, brothers, husbands and brothers-in-law should honour brides, if they desire welfare. Where women are honoured, there the gods delight; where they are not honoured, there all acts become fruitless”. (28)*

Baba invests so much confidence in woman and thereby assigns a great deal of responsibility to her. All her stories attempt to canonize woman and put her on spiritual pedestal thereby depriving her of the right to be human mere castration by canonization. According to Baba, woman is instrumental in the initiation and spiritual progress of a man. “it takes the wife’s flame o dharma, to light within a man, the divine lamp that is rusting with neglect” (66). He says woman or wife should be “ the house wife should always be joyous, adept at domestic work, neat in her domestic wares, and restrained in expenses. Controlled in mind, word and body, she who does not transgress her lord, attains heaven even as her lord does”.(70-71) When wife is not happy in marital life. They always search for another source to engage themselves. Here Parvati is not an exception. She searched her root through spiritual entity. Baba had so many restrictions on wife and womanhood. Baba is baffled by Parvati’s quest beyond human relations. In herself absorbed spiritual pursuit she has stripped herself of the life allotted to her, that of a householder. Parvati is clever wife she has turned Baba’s theories upside down,” the path a woman must walk to reach heaven is a clear, well-lit one. The woman has no independent sacrifice to perform, no vow, no fasting; by serving her husband, she is honoured in the heavens”. (55) Instead of helping her husband achieve spiritual fulfilment, through these achievements she realises her independent identity. Premila Paul observes that, “Parvathi seeks independent salvation. Parvati affirms that spiritual search is not gender specific and leaving the house for that purpose is not the prerogative of the man as in the case of Siddhartha but could be that of a woman as well”.(110)

### 3. Positive Notion of Marital Life

Sita is a house wife, her husband Mahadevan is a successful business executive. He allows himself to be the raw material in Sita’s hand to be shaped into any form she wants because he finds it easier to yield than to assert. She smothers Aannapurna with her generosity, sends her out of home and emerges “dignified in triumph”. She would protect the institution of marriage at all costs even if it is empty of passionate love. Sita as a wonderful supporting wife she used to calculate thinks for success of a household desires. Mahadevan is a picture of reticence, his heart distant from mundane life, in dreams and folklore. When he dies, Sita burns his dream with all his unfinished papers even before his body is burnt. Driven to material success by Sita, he lives and dies alone, not sharing even his last struggle with her.

Sita’s characteristic can easily compared with Gandhari’s story in Mahabharata. Both are symbol of pride, self-denial, and even anger. The photo of Sita holding the veena like Saraswati that prompts the significance of Gandhari. She loves her husband and blind folded her eyes shares everything. She sacrifices everything for her husband. Like Gandhari, Sita also sacrificed her art of veena and supports her husband, Mahadevan. She mercilessly crushes Mahadevan’s passion for folklore and pressurizes him to become a successful family man, gentle father and respectful husband. It is the recognition of the latent importance of the seemingly powerless position that enables her to subvert the assigned role and emerge as the head of the family.

Sita creates a vicious cycle of dependency where she needs others to live her life vicariously. But others are dependent on her because she is a strong commanding presence in their lives and they have no sense of direction without her. It is ironic that Sita thinks of a “life devoted to being the ideal woman”. (107) as “soiled” and undesirable but is taking all efforts to make her life appear to be ideal and also make a similar like for her daughter. The dichotomy of action versus belief is at the root of Sita’s oppression. It is neither possible for her to act out her beliefs nor believe truly in her actions. Loss of inner harmony is the direct result and what follows suit is the attempt to put down the harmony in Mahadevan’s life. Mahadevan too is forced to live two lives-one internally and the other externally.

### 4. The Dream Fails in a Short Time

Devi, the protagonist of the novel, had a very good intension on marriage. But her life is ripe for disillusionment when she walks into an arranged marriage, at once alien and familiar. First impression is the best impression as the proverb says, Devi is highly impressed by Mahesh’s frankness when he talks about his expectations of marriage. Devi soon realizes the reality of life. A woman can be a daughter, wife, mother and mother-in-law not as a heroine in her marital life. The busy period and money minded man never thinks of Devi. The lonesome life of Devi remembered stories of the grandmother and Baba evoke mixed responses in life. Some of the stories are retard her progress, some envelope her in complacent comfort and stifle her with difficult role models. When Baba narrates his stories she slowly becomes a sceptical adult aware of the golden traps in marriage. She is also look back on her childhood stories with an adult awareness and consciousness of wife who does not graduate to motherhood.

Devi was under the care of Sita till her marriage. Even after Devi’s marriage with Mahesh, Sita explains the enjoyment of motherhood. But Devi did not care about the importance of marital life. In fact Sita’s words,

*All through the ages, my dear Devi, Amma wrote, women have sought the deep content that comes with motherhood. When I held you helpless in my protecting arms, when you first smiled at my face bent over years, when you lisped that precious word Amma, what vistas of joy opened up before me! Mahesh writes that you are tired, depressed. Would you like to take a holiday in Madras? Or we could go somewhere cool and fresh, just you and I, and talk about everything, your plans for the future, as wife and perhaps mother? (86)*

Even her grandmother through her mythical stories explains the importance of motherhood days in woman life. "Motherhood is more than the pretty picture you see of a tender woman bent over the baby she is feeding at her breast. A mother has to walk strange and tortuous paths". (88) Through the stories and words of her mother Devi comes to the different versions of motherhood stage.

Mahesh rudeness to have a child is a selfish attitude of a man. He is not ready to spend time with his wife. But as a year pass and month shows the next. He expects good news from Devi. She remains "all bones and flat stomach" (86) Mahesh is such an egoistic person. The fact that he is fine and Devi is the one to consult a gynecologist. Childlessness can leave a woman utterly powerless. Devi at last finds a route for rebellion when Mahesh, the giver, says "I want you to have my child". (74) Devi is an innocent but silent and strong. The sterilized instruments that would send her to make her whole the fertility course and the wonder working hormones will not make her "an efficient receptacle for motherhood". (89) The rejection of Mahesh's sperm is the unconscious but important step to the assertion of herself. Mahesh may possess her body but cannot direct and control the function of it. The unread story of Baba tells the anger of women. Here Devi shows her revenge. She thinks about Kritya, which means

*A ferocious woman who haunts and destroys the house in which women are insulted. She burns with anger, she spits fire. She sets the world ablaze like Kali shouting in hunger. Each age has its Kritya. In the age of Kali,... each household shelters a Kritya. (69-70)*

The kritya reaction as a possibility is what Baba tries to keep away from Devi as a lethal weapon kept away from children. However it is the unread Kritya story that appeals to Devi the most. Baba tries to pull out the stubborn weeds from the garden. But Devi decides to grow a garden of weeds that could survive against all odds.

Devi leaves the oppressive house on Jacaranda road. The huge house with its unfriendly empty rooms, dusty photographs of unremembered people, unused shelves sheltering cockroaches and lizards and a visiting husband has absolutely no promise of life. It can enshrine no true motherhood. It is a place from where people flee Parvati, Baba and Devi. It is the wild growth and the gulmohar flowers in the garden outside that allure and offer fresh air. The irresistible music of Gopal, rich in cowherd charm may be a symbolic call for confrontation of oneself. To start with, it is a romantic fascination for the unavailable, a longing for a union that defies social sanction. It promises escape from the institutional trap, an escape verging on fantasy. Devi is quite caught up in illusion of womanhood and knight Gopal serves as the deliverer. Gopal is a great performer as a lover too. He could provide all excitement, travel and importance that Mahesh cannot. Gopal refers to her as his inspiration and supports her through whispers and leers. But typical of Devi, once she has something or someone, she loses interest in the same. Gopal can fulfil only her temptations. She cannot do something that can match up with the mythical women. She leaves Gopal as she had earlier left Mahesh like a coward.

By stepping out of marriage Devi dismisses the voice of reason represented by both Mahesh and Sita. An identity achieved through relationships can never provide fulfilment. Baba's statement "Whatever is dependent on others is misery; whatever rests on oneself is happiness".(68) the statement correctly conveys the meaning for her. She realizes that her position as mistress is not very different from that of a wife. Neither of them offers enough space for her.

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