



The Entangled Life Of Other Woman: A Study Of Human Relationships In Shashi Deshpande's *In The Country Of Deceit*

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Abstract: Human Relationships are complex and complicated bond that are shared by people in the society. The webs of relationships are intertwined with each other. With the progress of society and civilization, human relationships have become a complex phenomenon. Ethics being the guarding principles of the society, human relationships are watched closely. And in such a situation the concept of the "other woman" in society has long been a subject of intrigue, stigma, and complex emotions. The other woman is depicted as seductress and this portrayal reflect societal anxieties about fidelity, marriage, and the sanctity of the family unit.

Shashi Deshpande's *In the Country of Deceit* (2008) is taken for studying the complexities in human relationships along with the concept of 'other woman'. The entangled life of 'other woman' and family dynamics will be dealt in the paper.

Key Words: Human Relationships, Society, Family, Marriage, Other woman.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human Relationships delves in multifaceted roles and emotional landscape that is influenced by nuances of the society. The concept of 'other woman' is enchained with the moral tidings where an 'other woman' is termed as homewrecker which is laced in the fabric of traditional family structure. The paper aims to study the positioning of 'other woman' in the society and the role played by the personal desire, societal judgement and cultural narratives.

Shashi Deshpande's *In the Country of Deceit* narrates the perspective of 'other woman' and her individual choice that tangles with the ethics of society. The complexity of relationships that evolves with the introduction of 'other woman' will be dealt in the paper.

1.1 The Entangled Life of Other Woman

Multiple factors contribute to the functioning of human society. Moral and ethics are the guiding principles of the society. Societal ethics have been an unwritten law from time immemorial and it has played important role in shaping human society. Human relationships are guided by this unsaid code that is followed in every society without failure. There are various norms that are laid down for the progress of society and often they are unquestioned. These norms of the society are responsible for shaping human relationships. Social ethics are considered as necessity to uphold the moral of society and keep society in check.

Society comprises of people who shares different relationships among each other. Human society is a network of relationships shared among human being in different spheres. And these relationships among human being determine the fate of the society. Development of society is based on the relationship that people share among each other. Mutual understanding and respect among each other in the society is important aspect of human society for in this understanding prosperity of society lies.

There are various rules and regulation in society in order to maintain good relationships among people. Ethics and moral of society guide people and restrict them from creating chaos in society. Many societies across the world are based on the moral norms rather than the written rule. In the name of religion and culture, there are certain rules in the society that people are expected to follow without failure. And this rule often proves to be fruitful as they guide people in being better human being. For the betterment of society and for the betterment of human kind such societal norms are set. And most people follow this norm considering religious duty and cultural obligation. Social ethics and moral plays important role in shaping human relationships.

Human Relationships are determined by all the factors that are included in the society. While studying human relationship the perspective of an individual and situation should also be taken into consideration. There are various factors that come to play while determining human relationships. Moral aspect of society and individual perception often creates a rift and it is necessary to keep these things in mind while studying human relationships. The bond that human being share with each other and the bond that keeps human being attached to the society is rather complicated and is in continuous change. And this constantly changing aspect of relationships plays important role in society and in determining the fate of the society.

Societal norms is important when it comes to human relationships because of the fact that human relationships are vast networks of connection among people and it is rather complex. While studying human relationships it is important to keep in mind the social ethics and the validation of some relationships in the society according to the standard of the society. The conflict between socially sanctioned relationships and unethical relationships arise often in the society. It is not new concept in the society to have the unethical relationships that society condemns. And these sorts of relationships often create debate in society that challenges the individuality of a person and societal ethics as well.

The choice of an individual in the new age of development along with the advancement of science and technology has made great impact in society. Development in marketing and urbanization comes in conflict with ethics. It is well known fact that the human being in the recent year has grown detached from the society and the concept of individualization and personal space has created more distance between a person and society. Though it is people that make society but people in recent year are more obsessed about their personal space. The overall development in all the fields has created different aspect of society where people have started questioning the working of society in their own ways. With the advancement of technology and various cultural exchanges, world is viewed differently by different people. There are various instances where society has undergone drastic changes because of these factors. And in this process of transition Human Relationships has also witnessed new forms and concept encroaching. The new form of development does not always follow the older notion of perceiving society and human relationships. It is often being noticed that many people in the society have changed their point of view with the time and they are challenging the same ideas that they were following. With the increase in marketing and commercial activity, materialization has increased. Benefit or profit has become main motto of the age as everyone wants to benefit them with one way or other. The world has become as such that personal achievement is considered more important than development of society as whole. Society and human relationships has also witness greater change in the way of perceiving and studying.

In such age of confusion and chaos, societal norms and ethics are not given much importance by people. In the competition of being always ahead of time, people often forget about their obligation towards society. This detachment from society often created conflict in human mind and human ideology which further divided human being according to the belief system that they follow. Various ideology and conflict in ideas and belief system often created gap in society. Society with different perspective gave rise to the multiple choices and ways of choosing lifestyle.

The concept of other in the society is not a new concept since this is well known fact that has existed in society from time immemorial. The other has often got negative connotation in society and is considered as unwanted and bad. In the society with multiple perspective and various ideas the concept of good and bad is also blurred as it would be a flaw to judge anything with only one way of looking at it. The situation and circumstances also makes difference along with the different idea. However, most of the society is based on the older ideas even with the younger generation modifying it; there exist some ideology which is ancient and based on culture and custom of the particular region. And what does not meet the standard of the society or the set norm of the society is considered as bad or unwanted. Ira Trivedi in her book *India and Love: Marriage and Sexuality in the 21st Century* (2014) writes:

Since time immemorial, cross cultures and continents, a woman's virginity has been prized, treasured and conserved. Indian tradition too has always propagated a patriarchal culture through its extremes, almost obsessive, paranoia about the virtues of female chastity. (40)

These social ethics often clash with the choice of an individual in the contemporary time as the people of the new age of development and advancement do not consider it important to fall in the box as they believe in thinking outside the box. Even the concept of other is normalized in the society for they believe in individual choice and are lenient about the choices even if it defies social norms and ethics. The clash between ethics and individual choice has also created distance in human relationships and also has made people detach from society which has resulted in disturbance and conflict among the different generation.

Other in human relationships are often looked down or considered less important and when societal rules come in play, it becomes intolerable and deceitful concept which is often considered as corruption of the society. And when the other is the other woman in the marital relationships it becomes scandal and is not entertained in the society. Marital relationship in a society is considered as pious for it is mentioned in different religion to be the pure bond among man and a woman and it is not to be tempered by anyone else. The extra-marital affair is considered as corruption of this bond and corruption of society as well. But extra-marital affair has been there since time immemorial and in the contemporary time it is increasing more. Society has turned out to be as such that people believe in their individual freedom and give importance to their individual choice rather than societal obligation. Society views this other man and woman as the evil and are often condemned.

Other in a relationship is not entertained in the society as they are often viewed as corruption and are often looked down. Human relationships are complex and complicated and while studying other in a relationship it becomes important to understand the concept and working as well. Society often condemns other and is not allowed to jeopardize the bond between husband and a wife. Society believes in fixing the bond of husband and wife rather than allowing other to come in between. Other is considered as undesirable and unwanted in the society and is often ridiculed. It is well known fact that marriage is a bond that has religious and social sanctioned and it is considered to be holy and whoever tempers it are punished in one way or the other. The moral and ethics of society that has guided people for so long also make people to correct themselves in the time of need. And it is the ethics that is naturalized by people in such extent that they are often guilt ridden when they work against the working of this morals and ethics. Often societal norms come with personal choice and it becomes problematic.

Other is viewed as problem in a relationship and is not given any space by society. Relationship between husband and wife is always guarded by society. The meddling of other person in marital relationship is not entertained and allowed, it is unwritten rule that this type of people who meddle in between husband and wife is condemned by society.

Marriage is considered as most important aspect of the society and the relationship between husband and wife is considered as one of the pious relationship in the country such as India. Many societies in India still practice the older concept of marriage where it is considered as "do must" and often parents handle this responsibility to get their children married when they are at right age. It is often considered as undesirable if

someone stays unmarried. Though with the arrival of new age these customs are getting slowly eradicated and with the individualization, personal choice is getting its way but there still exist many society where the culture and custom are not tempered and are strictly followed. And in such society marriage is given utmost importance and it becomes necessary for a person to get married despite of their own personal choice. Choice of an individual and the freedom that they enjoy comes in conflict with the social and family pressure where person is constantly asked to get married. It becomes well noted that fact that one has to find partner for themselves or their parents or relatives start hunting partner for them. And when it comes for marriage of a daughter than it becomes most inevitable task for the parents and relatives as well for finding good groom for her and get her married on time before it becomes too late. Girls in such societies are not given much choice of living life on their own terms and they are to get married according to the will of their parents. This concept of marriage that is followed in many societies sometimes lead to different aspect of relationship and it takes different turn which not only affect life of an individual but it also affect human relationships and society at large.

Other woman is always an unwanted and is considered as corruption. Though the existence of other woman in a relationships is not new concept but the extra marital affairs has increased in the recent century and it has raised question of different sort while studying human relationships. As the new age of advancement is lenient and believes in understanding individual perspective. And it has become important to understand the reason behind the extra-marital affairs. As already said, many societies make people marry the partner of the parents' choice which often result in unhappy marriage with lots of compromise. This unhappy marriage along with the individualization result in seeking happiness elsewhere keeping in mind that one is free to do what one wants. This detachment from society often leads to people making choice of their own and disregarding social norms.

The changes in the society that came with the influences of different culture are also one of the reasons for the extra-marital affairs. The native culture and custom which often the younger generation find it strict tends to search for alternative and ends defying the vary norm of the society. And this is often viewed as cultural corruption which society does not entertain and therefore, this sort of unethical relationship is often condemned by the society.

2. A Study of Human Relationships in Shashi Deshpande's *In the Country of Deceit*

The novel *In the Country of Deceit* (2008) by Sashi Deshpande deals with woman and her difficulty as other woman in the society. It is the account with the perspective of an 'other woman'. The importance of marriage for woman and family pressure in marrying her off shows the functioning of society. "And when are you getting married?" (15) The constant question of her marriage shadows her individual choice as her family and relatives do not acknowledge her independent lifestyle rather they believe that woman is not to live alone and woman has to get married in order to enjoy life and bodily pleasure. Physical intimacy outside marriage is considered as undesirable and should not be practiced. "...you are still young; your natural desires will be with you for many more years. Our country does not allow women to fulfill these desires without marriage." (42-43) She is made to understand this by her aunt and she is also told that woman is complete only when she is married. The concept of man completing woman still exist in the society. Woman is considered an incomplete creation and she needs man to complete herself even when she is capable living by herself. Capability of woman is often questioned as the concept of man as provider still exists.

With woman being questioned at every nooks and corner; it becomes essential to understand the mindset of society. Religious and cultural tiding that binds society often clashes with woman empowerment. According to various religious and cultural texts, women is often considered as the secondary being and they are not allowed to compete with men or even come out in the society and have their say. This belief has changed in the recent century but there are some people who still have put restriction in the every move of women paralyzing women empowerment. "I know marriage is not the final solution, or even the best. But at least once you're married you know you are not alone." (26) Her choice of not marrying often raised debate in the family and blamed her independent nature as hindrance for her marriage. Her choice of not relying on man made her look rather inappropriate in a society where woman is to live under the protection of man.

Devayani's rejection of the concept of woman in the society and also her choice of lifestyle often comes in conflict with the ethics of the society. She was a strong woman who believed in living life on her own terms but this was not appreciated by her family and her relatives for they believe that she must get married and start a family of her own. Her relatives, mostly her aunt, was reluctant in finding a good man for her and getting her married after the demise of her parents for she believed that it was her duty to get Devayani married.

The rejection of marriage became more problematic when they found out Devayani's affair with a married man, Ashok Chinnapa. This relationship, which was already considered as undesirable in the society, became more scandalous when her family and relatives came to know about it. She was continuously questioned about her choice as they considered this as the most horrible thing that she has done and they want her to mend it. This hostility towards her by her own relatives shows the position of other women in the society. Her physical intimacy was not accepted even by her own sister and she wanted to fix this by making Ashok divorce his wife and marrying Devayani. The importance of marriage is always brought up by her relatives. "I cannot tell her that this time I am not frightened, not of the man, but of myself, of my desire to run, not away from him, but in his arms." (94)

The question was always raised on Devayani on her choice of lifestyle and she was constantly made to feel guilty about her choice of loving someone else's husband. The way she herself experienced the prick of her conscience that had internalized the social norms made her feel guilty all the time when she was alone. The 'other' in the society and the way 'other' is treated made her question her choice.

Relationship? What relationship? Mistress? The other woman? The kept woman? I pushed the words away; I thought instead of love, of the endearments he had muttered as we made love, words I had never heard spoken, words I had only read in books, words which had now become real. (142)

Though it was her conscious decision falling in love with a married man, but it was also questionable for her as well. Even after being an independent woman, she was made to feel that she was not self-sufficient and was constantly asked to get married and complete herself with a husband as her companion. Her relationship with Ashok was unethical in the society and she was reminded every time either by her relatives or by society. Her visit to KN's mother made her feel terrible about her relationship with Ashok as she came to know about the feeling of the woman whose husband has been stolen by the 'other woman'. "She had forgotten nothing – neither her pain, nor her suffering, nor her hatred of the other woman. Her hatred frightened me." (162)

Despite of the ethics and social norms, it was only a woman who was blamed for stealing someone's husband, not the husband who was unfaithful towards his wife. "I turned my face from side to side and wondered, do I look like an adulteress? Adulteress. What an ugly word it was." (148) It was Devayani who was always questioned about her relationship and was made to feel that it was wrong of her to love a married man.

Devayani's relationship with Ashok is not entertained in the society and is considered unethical. The concept of extra-marital affair is condemned in society and is considered as corruption. The 'other woman' is considered as evil and is often ostracized by society. Though Devayani's affair was not publicized, but the fear of damnation was always there. The way her sister and her aunt were horrified after knowing her affair with Ashok made it clear that her relationship was not acknowledged even by her own kin. Women who considered marriage as something that is inevitable for a woman were taken aback when they came to know about this affair and also feared that the person was using Devayani only for physical pleasure and will be discarded once he is done with her.

Woman as an object for fulfilling the desire of a man has prevailed for long, the courtesan culture and also various brothels is the suggestion that a woman's body is materialized. Devayani's love was not considered as pure and ethical because of the fact that she was in love with someone else's husband.

I now realized that adultery remains adultery, whoever the couple maybe. That is always riddled with guilt and fear, constantly swinging between euphoria and despair. I knew this too, that the main preoccupation of the adulterous couples is: how do we meet? And where? (149)

Though Ashok loved Devayani despite of having a wife, their love was not acknowledge. Since Devayani became the other woman, their love was also seen as materialized love where their physical intimacy and relationship that they have was condemned by society and was always looked down as something unwanted and scandalous.

This disregard for relationship between Devayani and Ashok suggest the working of ethics of society that has guided human from time immemorial. The way society condemned the extra-marital affair and branded it as unethical shows the functioning of society and the way of determining good and bad in the society.

What future do you have with this man? You have two alternatives: you go on this way, continue to have a clandestine affair, and remain – what? A mistress? The other woman? Or you have the ‘respectable’ option – he can divorce his wife and marry you. But that means destroying a marriage, a family (I believe there is a child). (197)

Individual choice is not given more important when the choice clashes with the moral and ethics of society. The way ‘other woman’ is treated shows, that despite of advancement and development some things in society cannot be taken lightly. And this was lesson for Devayani when she realized that love was not enough in life of an individual and for society at large.

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