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Impact of Culture on Human Relations in Rama Mehata's Inside the Haveli

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Introduction:

Rama Mehata is an eminent sociologist and novelist. She was born in 1923 in Nainital. She is popularly known for her famous and award winning novel, Inside the Haveli (1977). She got modern education and was appointed to India's foreign services. She belonged to a modern educated family. She got married into an aristocratic family of the Oswal Community in the Mewar state, Rajasthan. Being the sociologist, she was well familiar with the Indian culture, traditions, Western culture and human tendencies. The present paper attempts to see the impact of culture on human relations with the special reference to the novel, Inside the Haveli by Rama Mehata.

Rama Mehata's novels undoubtedly explore the journey of individual through the Indian cultural milieu. Her novels present the complexity of culture and human relations. Indian culture is seen to be the way of living. Indian culture is the mixture of several cultures. It is greatly influenced by the Dharma or religion. Religion dominates and shapes the culture. Religion plays the very important role in life of the many people. It has affected the human relationships. Hindu culture is mainly influenced by Hindu religion which consists of code, conduct, rules, customs, traditions etc.

Human relationship is the bondage in between the human beings and it is based on the responsibilities, duties, expectations, love, passions, and emotions and so on. It is said to be the mental construct of a person with other people. The relationships help the person to gain the self-awareness and confidence. In the life of human beings feelings, care and concerns are very important and human relationship is output of these feelings. The most important ingredient we put into any relationship is not what we say or do, but what we are. Walt Disney (American Motion Pictures Producer) says, "There is great comfort and inspiration in the feeling of close human relationship and its bearing on our mutual fortunes- a powerful force, to overcome the "tough breaks" which are certain to come to most of us from time to time".

Modern life of man is mechanical and our society is becoming more and more complex. Today's society is becoming more complex and complicated in the context of psychology and sociology. Our beliefs, values and behavior affect the people around. In the patriarchic society, woman's position is bad. Women are considered to be secondary even after independence and strong constitution. Women have no ways to express her feelings, love and emotions in the patriarchic society. They are ill-treated. They are assumed and taken for granted.

The present novel, Inside the Haveli depicts the Indian psyche and Indian culture. The novel is set in the state of Rajasthan. Geeta is the protagonist of the novel. She is a modern and educated girl. She has spent her early life in metropolitan city, Bombay where she lived very free life. She gets married with the traditional Rajput family in Mewad city. She lives in the Haveli. There she is to follow the Haveli culture and tradition. 'Haveli' is a term which has deep roots in the tradition and

life of Rajasthan. The origin of the word is Persian and means “a surrounded or enclosed place”. Architecturally havelis were built according to a basic organization of residential rooms around open courtyards. More courtyards and rooms were added as a family grew in size or prospered economically. A typical haveli has separate courtyards for men, women and servants. As the domestic life was effectively concealed from public view in a haveli, architectural and social barriers screened the activities of the men’s and women’s quarters. Family members and relatives met each other according to various traditional codes of conduct and speech. The joys and sorrows and the beliefs and superstitions inside the havelis minutely portrayed. The life inside the haveli is presented very vividly. The novel presents the complex human relations such as man-woman relationship, parent-child relationship, husband-wife relationship, master-servant relationship etc.

About the Novel, Inside the Haveli:

Inside the Haveli (1977) won the Sahitya Academy Award in 1979 and was appreciated by established critics such as Srinivasalyengar: ‘*Inside the Haveli* is a sensitive piece of realistic fiction, even an authentic sociological study, and it is written with a naturalness and poise that are disarming and effective at once. The evocation of scene, character and especially of atmosphere is almost uncanny..... The balance between repose and movement is well sustained, there is tension but no cheap sex, there is tension but no violence, and there is a feeling for the values and varieties. (Iyengar 753). The novel is about the protagonist, Geeta, who is a girl born and brought up in Bombay. She had studied in co-educational college and had an exposure to metropolitan life. She gets married with Ajay Singh, a professor of science in the University of Udaipur. It is very difficult to girl like Geeta to adjust with the different haveli culture.

Man-woman relationship is vividly presented in the novel. The Haveli culture or Haveli life makes separate compartments for the men and women. Women wear purdah. They are not allowed to go into men apartment. They live their lives as per the rules, customs and taboos of the haveli. They have no right to take education, free mingling with men. They are not involved in decision making. They have to follow the orders of the men. It is mainly patriarchic family culture. The impact of Hindu culture is clearly seen in the man-woman relationship. The behaviour and the thought is controlled by the cultural aspect. Though Geeta finds Haveli life suffocating in the beginning, she gets familiar and willing follower of the haveli culture. She comes to know that women are not humiliated but respected. Indian culture keeps the bond of family intact. Joint-family relationship is glorified that strengthens the traditions and culture for the future generations.

Relationship between traditional woman and modern woman is clearly seen in the novel. Geeta stands for modernity. Her thoughts are progressive. Education has made her bold, aggressive and revolting. There is clash between the modern culture and traditional culture. Haveli life stands for traditionality and Bombay life stands for modernity. “In Bombay, Geeta enjoys full freedom but in Udaipur she has to abide by the form and the etiquette of the haveli” (29). Instead Geeta’s adaptability, compromise and forbearance help to resolve the conflict between tradition and modernity. The concern and care of her husband and his relatives also help her to acquire this amalgamation. With this adaptability and compromise, Geeta appreciates the life in the haveli, adjusts herself and become, finally, its mistress.

Parent-child relationship is exposed through BhagwatSinghji - Kanwarni Sa- Ajay. They are very strict followers of the Indian culture and traditions. They have the responsibility to pass on the traditions of the haveli culture to their only child, Ajay. He gives respect to them and is ready to

follow all orders of his father. He is well aware of his responsibilities as a child towards his parents. Care, concern and affection build the relationship strong. Even Geeta is serious to pass on the haveli culture to her children.

Master-servant relationship is also influenced by the haveli culture. The servants have separate rooms. Servants do all the house work. KanwarniSa controls all the servants. She gives orders to them. The senior maid servants been treated with due respect. Dhapu, Pari used to teach haveli manners to the newly arrived bride. Geeta started classes for children. She without discrimination between servant children and aristocratic children gives education. She tries to make the educated and economically independent.

However, the novel has very minutely presented the existential human relationship and Indian contemporary culture.

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