

## **Feminist Reading of Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli***

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Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli* (1977) is her only novel which won the Sahitya Academy Award in 1979 and was appreciated by other writers like Anita Desai:

“I remember the surprised delight with which I first came upon Rama Mehta's novel and encountered the freshness of her prose, the simplicity and tenderness of her evocation of an ancient and traditional way of life, and the understanding she brought to it” (quote by Anita Desai on cover page of *Inside the Haveli*)

The novel *Inside the Haveli* is the story of an educated and modern girl, Geeta, who marries into an extremely traditional Rajasthani household in Udaipur. She is born and brought up in Bombay but her marriage compels her to live according to the stifling notions of gendered and patriarchal structure. The story of Geeta spans over a period of 15 years and it delineates Geeta's persistent effort to accommodate herself to the ways of the haveli, her assimilation into the society of the women she initially thought malicious and void, and her growing recognition of the customs and tradition she hated initially. She sees the world from behind the muslin veil of purdah, and along with her physical movement her emotions are also strongly constrained. But Geeta's concern for her daughter's education and independence makes her to step forward outside the barriers of haveli. The novel shows Geeta's struggle in search for her true independent

identity or rather saving it while balancing the traditional values as a daughter-in-law. The sky-high difference in the life Geeta led and the life she enters after marriage were enough to drive her crazy but slowly she learns to tolerance everything. Her husband, Ajay is a Professor of science at Udaipur University. At first, Geeta is hopeful of living a free with her husband Ajay's transfer to the University of Delhi but soon her hopes wither away as Ajay has neither courage nor willingness to go against the wishes of his parents and traditions of the haveli. He could do nothing apart from supporting Geeta emotionally. Years pass by and Geeta comes to realize and accept her life within the boundaries of the Haveli. Her mother-in-law is also considerate towards her, though she was a perfectly molded traditional Indian woman ready to mold the next in line. Bhagwat Singhji, her father-in-law, though a distant figure for but as the distance decrease gradually she comes to admire his qualities. The novel focuses on Geeta's persistent efforts to carve out a literal and symbolic space for herself in the haveli. Along with self studying she also teaches many members of the attendant women and encourages their daughters to attend school instead of marrying them off at an early age. The paper discusses in the light of Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli* the issues of female servitude in the haveli. It brings out the patriarchal nature of an aristocratic society during a particular period of time.

The novel begins with Geeta's efforts to adjust into the indifferent ways of the haveli. Though initially she had complaints about its strict traditions, but she slowly comes to accept her life in the haveli. The novel's latter half shows Geeta's search for an independent identity which is seen by her constant efforts to bring a change in the lives of its people through the light of education. Through the sub-plot of Lakshmi, the author shows the effects of women's going

beyond their traditional specified spaces in such a society. It clearly discusses the male and female spaces in the novel and the huge difference between the two spaces.

The gender issues which are the root-cause of women marginalization are presented in the novel with vividness. The novel presents a host of gender issues which shows how Geeta and other women of the haveli are oppressed and being subjected to marginalization. Child marriage, treatment of female child as a burden, purdah system, ill-treatment of widow – almost all of the patriarchal notions and restrictions are projected very explicitly in the novel. The first of these issues is purdah culture which Geeta encountered after coming to Udaipur as a bride in her husband's haveli, Jeewan Niwas. Geeta, the protagonist is a girl who has come from a culture where there was free mingling of men and women and had attained co-educational college. She comes to Udaipur as the nineteen-year-old bride of Ajay Singh. It was an immense shock for an educated girl like her to adjust and learn to live in the constricted environment of the traditional haveli, wherein women maintain purdah. She is being criticized by the maids who had come to receive her at the railway station for not covering her face the very moment she lands at Udaipur as a new bride: "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?'" (Mehta 17)

Although her mother had advised her before marriage, "Keep your head covered; never argue with your elders; respect your mother-in-law and do as she tells you. Don't talk too much" (Mehta 16) But perhaps for her it was completely different to experience it in reality. She was not prepared for what was to follow. She noticed after landing at her husband's haveli that all the women always keep their heads covered, even when no man was around. Even in women's

gathering she was instructed not to speak much. She became part of a culture where women were expected to be like a living doll laden with jewelry and fancy sarees with their heads covered and voices mute. The purdah tradition which was strictly followed in havelis but it was not mandatory for the working class women. Geeta used to notice this while on her trips to another havelis. These little trips give her a view of the world outside the haveli.

Geeta feels lonely in the haveli. Even the maids try to mold her in the ways and traditions of the haveli. The most respected of all the maids was Pari. When Geeta, after her marriage came for the first time to the haveli, she was instructed by Pari with these words:

“It is in these families that you will have to make your reputation as a good devoted daughter-in-law. Don’t ever forget that your head must always remain covered.”

(Mehta 18)

Women of other havelis were uncertain regarding Geeta’s adjustment as she was educated. On the very first day the women had declared: “She will never adjust. She is not one of us” (Mehta, 29). Her mother-in-law was conscious of this fact and thus used to instruct her with these words: “Do not talk too much to your young cousins-in-law, it’s not becoming. You know, the women are critical because you are still clumsy. I want to show them that even an educated girl can be molded” (Mehta, 30). While her mother-in-law, on the other hand, wanted to adapt her into the ways of haveli, it was her mother-in-law’s gentle attitude towards her, and the love and affection of her husband that made her adjust to her new unfamiliar environment.

Gradually, she learns and comes to respect some of the traditions, yet her occasional outbursts clearly show that she is not prepared to surrender her individuality completely. Geeta got irritated when Dhapu said, “Kanwarani Sa told me to warn you not to lift the baby or show any concern for her in front of the others, not the way you lifted Vijay Bai Sa and kissed her the other day in the presence of your aunt-in-law” (Mehta 32). On being reminded by Dhapu, her personal maid, to restrain herself in showing affection towards her new born daughter Vijay publicly, she exclaimed in anger: "Stop lecturing me, I am fed up with all the pretence that goes on here' . . .I hate all this meaningless fuss! Don't tell me what I should do with my own child!" (Mehta 32)

In her parents' home she is neither discouraged to show her feelings nor speak her mind out. But at the haveli everyone conceal their emotions in an elaborate exchange of formal gestures and words. Her husband talked with his parents as if they were some dignitaries whom he cannot offend. She never liked such rules that restrict free expression of love and concern towards each other. She found such behavior outdated and it filled her with anger. It was against the values she was brought up with. She finds the life in Purdah in her husband, Ajay's ancestral haveli suffocating. Geeta finds relief in the belief that the life in Udaipur is only temporary as she knew her husband's plan to move to Delhi. But she ultimately had to accept her life in the haveli when she finds that Ajay was happy in Udaipur and didn't want to leave. Though she was dissatisfied there but could not do anything alone. This also indicates that a woman has no desire of her own; she has to follow her male counter-part. But here, it is not Geeta's fault but rather it is the outlook of the society which controls everyone's behaviour. However, Geeta gradually

starts to adapt herself into the great tradition provided by the haveli. The love, care and concern she experienced in the haveli makes her appreciate and accept the life in the tradition-bound haveli: “Geeta no longer felt trapped in the haveli... She had seen the value of kinship ties and wanted to preserve the ancestral dignity of the haveli” (Mehta 178). At last she accepts the warmth of tradition and the affection of the people in the haveli.

As if covering their heads was not enough to hide them from the world, separate sections existed for both men and women inside the haveli. The servants have their separate quarters. “The young maids were not allowed out of the courtyard till they were married” (Mehta 25). The upper class women always keep purdah and do not interact with the men of the haveli during the day unless it is required. The men conduct their business from their own section of the house and the etiquette which has been established through the years allowed only close male relatives to enter the women's apartment. Even then they never entered the courtyard without being properly announced. Women were allowed only in the zenana- the female section. On the other hand, men of the family and very close relatives were allowed both in the zenana and mardana- the male section. No such rules are there for the maids and servants. They can freely intermingle and do their jobs: “In their courtyard there is no dividing wall, the maids are free to talk to their husbands; they don't have to wait till the darkness of night settles over the haveli to share their thoughts with them” (Mehta 6).

Even after two years of her marriage, Geeta has neither seen her father-in-law nor her grandfather-in-law, yet their presence is felt everywhere in the haveli. It is around their needs and demands that all the activities of the haveli were done. Geeta finds herself suddenly enclosed

and engaged in a huge haveli where she is all the time surrounded by women. Marriage brought Geeta from the outer world of modernity to the enclosures of the traditional haveli.

Geeta from a nuclear and educated family comes to find a group of maids, their children and women from other havelis who keep visiting one another on the slightest pretext. She found that it was very difficult to adjust there. She could only share her feelings with her husband Ajay. Ajay tried to come sometimes with an excuse but it did not work for long because according to the rules of the haveli he was not supposed to do that. “The men, including her husband, seemed to disappear as soon as it was daylight. The whole day they were away in their offices or busy in their section of the house. They came into interior courtyards only at mealtimes” (Mehta 19).

The segregation was for both men and women, but it was women who were confined behind the big doors of haveli and a veil. That is how hegemony works. Yet, in the beginning of the book, we see Geeta reminiscing about entering the mardana, however, she can only roam there for a few minutes before being discovered by Pariji, who angrily asked to return to the place where she belongs: the zenana. The scene encapsulates the novel’s recurring theme of Geeta’s struggle to liberate her from the claustrophobic confines of the zenana to fully participate in the much bigger world beyond from the forces that inhibit her from doing so. Like Geeta, Jaya, the protagonist of *That Long Silences* by Shashi Deshpande, maintains silence throughout her life for the desires and expectations of her husband Mohan. Jaya is a career-oriented woman but is dominated and suppressed by the societal norms. This willful submission is also seen in Geeta’s story.

*Inside the Haveli* also presents the lives of certain other characters other than the life of Geeta. In order to project certain issues the novelist creates certain well chosen characters with meticulous care. Pari, Lakshmi, Manji, Nandu etc. are some of characters who are depicted with seriousness regarding women discrimination. While lives of Pari and Manji portray the unfortunate life of a widow; Lakshmi's life presents the tragic life of a married woman who becomes victim of patriarchal notions. Lakshmi, the maid servant is unfairly accused of adultery by her husband and she has to flee from the conservative haveli. This unfortunately makes her vulnerable to the harsh criticism of the society and thus she is being called as an ill-reputed woman. Lakshmi, the maid and her daughter, Sita play important role in the novel along with the protagonist, Geeta and her daughter, Vijay. The novel progresses with the lives and struggles of these two women. In the concluding section of the novel, their daughters, Vijay and Sita are once again become the center of discussion in the matters related to education and marriage.

In our society marriage is taken to be a sacrosanct relation but this novel shows how the institution of marriage becomes a tool for their marginalization. It is this institution of marriage that robbed off Geeta's freedom which she used to enjoy before her marriage and made to live in the constrained environment of the haveli. This is not only fate of Geeta but of all the women of the haveli. In case of maid servants of the haveli their marriage rather made them only subjects for their male-counterparts to dominate. It was taken for granted that a man has complete authority over the woman he marries. Lakshmi becomes apt example of this patriarchal tradition. Perhaps this is the tradition what stopped Lakshmi from reporting the Heeralal's unethical conduct of offering someone else's wife expensive gifts. Her fears are proved correct when one

day Gangaram comes raging with anger when he found out about this matter. He already decided that she must have been at fault without asking her. Realizing that once tainted nobody will respect her; she takes a bold decision to leave both her child and the haveli. But for this she was considered irrational. Pari persuade Lakshmi to return to the haveli with these words: “Every husband has a right to scold his wife, even beat her if necessary, but it does not mean a woman runs away from her husband” (Mehta 81). Usually any disobedience or protest was tagged as madness because according to the society a woman in her right mind is always submissive. Such an outlook of the society, where a woman is considered as a possession with no rights of her own. Hence the institution of marriage appears as an institution of systematic oppression. Sita, received some gifts from some woman in the school. Later it was discovered that it was her mother, Laxshmi. When Sita’s marriage was fixed, people in haveli feared that if the groom’s party comes to know about Lakshmi, Sita’s future may be jeopardized like her mother. A woman goes in exile, could not meet her daughter openly and tell her that she is her mother. In some way, it also accounts for women oppression and the suffering which she has to undergo for no fault of her own.

In case of Indian society, still a girl’s birth is not preferred. And this novel’s depiction of Rajputna Rajhasthani family’s preference for male-child depicts this issue. The novel opens on the day when Geeta and Lakshmi gave birth to Vijay and Sita respectively. In the very beginning of the book it became clear that how girls were discriminated. When Gangaram, Lakshmi’s husband was upset with the birth of his own daughter, Sita, he was consoled by Khayali with these words: “Girls are a burden, I admit,” said Khayali with sympathy, ‘but what one can do

once they are born?” (Mehta 8) Though birth of Vijay, Geeta’s first child was celebrated as if she were a boy, still not everyone in Geeta’s family was happy and it can be seen in Geeta’s grand mother-in-law’s annoyance with the expenditure incurred on Vijay’s birth celebration. She shared her views on the same with Pari with these words: “You deserve gold bangles, but why give them to Sarju and Dhapu? Why not wait till a son is born?” (Mehta46). Vijay’s birth was celebrated only because she was first grand-child of the haveli and not because she was a girl. Whereas in case of Sita, no celebration was done. One main reason for not wanting a girl-child is the custom of dowry. The moment a boy is born, there is happiness in the family, but when a girl is born, the first thought of her parents is dowry and the expenses which will be incurred on her marriage. And this may be the reason why Sita’s birth was not celebrated and Vijay’s birth was celebrated because Vijay’s parents, being rich did not have to worry for the dowry and expenses of her marriage while Sita’s parents were servants and thus they knew that they will have difficulties in arranging for her dowry. Thus this age old custom of dowry becomes a burden especially for the poor. Pari also sympathize with Lakshmi after Sita’s birth: “The poor girl must already be worrying about the dowry which will have to be given”(Mehta 9). In Indian society dowry is considered as a social evil. It is this evil which encourages other evils and one such evil is bride-burning. In Indian society, marriage means heavy expenditure which parents have to make to make the wedding celebration a grand affair. Although it is not said compulsion, but it is common practice which makes the parents comply. For rich parents they don’t have much issue regarding this but poor people get into heavy debt because of marriage celebrations. Thus, Gangaram wanted to make her daughter’s wedding satisfactory for himself and hence he has to

bear heavy debt for Sita's marriage celebrations because he couldn't afford so much. This pressure of fulfilling social demand and hypocrisy in form of elaborate celebrations and dowry becomes a major cause for not wanting a girl child.

Discrimination with the girl-child is not only limited to any haveli or Udaipur, but it is spread throughout the nation. And this has become the reason for the imbalance in the population ratio. Even in the blessings girls don't have any place and this is shown in the repeated blessings which Geeta receives from her relatives: "May you have eight sons" (Mehta 18). This proves they always wish for the birth of boy-child. It is indeed very sad that a woman who gives birth is herself unwanted for everyone.

Widowhood is also prominent cause for women to be marginalized except marriage, girl child-birth, and discrimination. In Indian society, widowhood restricts widows from every little joy that is usually looked up by the women in their lives. A widow was supposed to lead a life of sobriety and her presence is considered inauspicious. Pari reminisced her widowhood while talking to Geeta like this:

"Then once I became a widow, she would not let me put on coloured saris or bangles like the other girls. I don't know what colours a widow can put on in your part of India, but in Udaipur we can only wear grey or black" (Mehta 23).

Geeta tries to sympathize with her but finds that despite of being unhappy, she takes it as her fate. She never holds culture responsible for her sufferings. It is this culture that takes away the right of the widows to live their own lives as they desire. Also, "It was not considered proper for a widow to be gay and carefree" (Mehta 24). The customs and

traditions made sure that a widow never come out of her grief and her sense of loss. The child widows' condition was worst in this regard. Even before they could understand the concept of companionship and most importantly their own selves, they were devoid of every happiness available to womankind. Bhagwat Singhji's cousin Manji Bua Sa, niece Kanta and Pari, they all were child widows. They had to carry on their lives alone, along with numerous restrictions and obligations. In those days there seemed to be no prospect of remarriage for the widows in the society of Udaipur. They were supposed to accept social norms for widowhood as their destiny.

Women' suffering is contributed by two important factors: first, due to lack of education and second, deprivation from family property. The helplessness faced by women, especially by the widows was common. Bhagwat Singhji's neice Kanta shared the story of her unfortunate life with Geeta that how she and her mother live helplessly because they were not given the right to claim property. Due to this family wealth was first wasted by the father and then by her brother leaving both Kanta and her mother miserable. Geeta found a passive acceptance in Kanta's story. She wanted to tell her that it was criminal to accept everything as their destiny and that she should fight back to get her share of wealth. Since men control wealth and economics, women have been kept on a distance from education or any other skill which might be proved helpful for them to survive on their own. And due of this, Lakshmi was reported to live disrespectable profession when she left the haveli because she was devoid of education or any other skill. Education was the most important thing which differentiates Geeta from other women in the haveli. It is this

education which shapes her view and thus she finds regressive customs of the haveli suffocating, which other women accepted passively. She had seen outside world and thus she felt trapped in the haveli. It was only because of the affection she got in the haveli that she never tried to protest or complain. But then also she was not ready to forget her own self completely. Her desire to educate her maids' children proves this. When she put forward the idea of sending Sita, her maid Lakshmi's daughter to school, she has to deal with the harsh criticism of her family members. But there are also a few who appreciated her efforts and Manji Bua sa was one of them. She shares her views with Geeta regarding education when she was regretting interfering in Sita's usual flow of life: "If Sita can learn to read and write, she will never feel helpless... I know what it is to be illiterate, the days and nights have been long for me" (Mehta 116). May be this is the reason why girls are kept aloof from education. But after all the disapproval she got the support of her father-in-law and thus she has been successful in sending Sita to school.

This small initiative encouraged her to work in the same way and that's why she started classes in the morning to educate others who cannot go to schools. But this time she has to face direct disapproval of her mother-in-law for the classes by the working women. One of the working woman said, "Kanwarani Sa, my niece's husband is already fed up. Before going to work he has to eat cold rotis left for him because his wife comes here to listen to stories; is that what a woman should do?" (Mehta 162) This was not enough as Geeta's own relatives- Nandu, supported by Manji and Kanta, comes complaining about the classes: "There may be peace in your haveli, but there is confusion in ours... the young

maids are not to be seen in the morning at all... let me tell you that all the havelis are criticizing you” (Mehta 164). Geeta bursts into anger as she listened to these words and shouted in her mind, “How dare she say that classes were an excuse for the women to shirk work? And what if they were, why should the young girls help in the haveli just because their mothers were servants of the haveli” (Mehta 167). Her thinking is modern and progressive especially against the traditional background. The anger of her community was understandable as hegemonic proportions were being disturbed; but Geeta’s approach to bring changes in the haveli is to be appreciated.

There are two important factors which contribute to women’s marginal state: first, the projection of women in the society and second, the submissive acceptance and diligent maintenance of the patriarchal system. The reason behind this marginalization is gender biasness. The terminological distinction between biological sex and gender as a social role, which has been introduced by John Money in 1955, became popular when feminists used this term as a major argument against sex as biological identity and gender as a social construct. Thus gender as a cultural ideology is being created by the society to maintain the system of power proportions based on the system of ‘self’ and ‘other’. Hence, two binary identities are created in the name of ‘man’ and ‘woman’. While man is being represented as rational, positive and strong, woman is refer to irrational, negative and weak. The continuation of these things over time makes it appear as reality and through this gradual colonization of minds, of both men and the women is done. And that is why nobody questions these social notions and it becomes everyday reality. In this novel we clearly see submissive acceptance of this structure both by the men and women of the

haveli. The relationship between men and women in the haveli is that of dominance and submission and of inequality. Woman's entire life spans around man, whereas man lives the way he desires. Women in the haveli have no individual identity of their own but are only living to serve the men of the house. Except Lakshmi's bold decision to leave her husband for the sake of her self-respect, none of the female characters protest. The men of the haveli are cooperative and respectful towards Geeta and other women of the household. Ajay was a gentleman and understands Geeta and to an extent supported her. Her father-in-law, Bhagwat Singhji appreciated her efforts to educate women and was ready to extend any help required. Despite men being kind, women are oppressed. This is what makes it difficult to moot a case against male domination. None of the restrictions was forced on women instead it was accepted by them as their fate. It is only after the arrival of Geeta it becomes clear that it is not their nature but their habit, conditioned by gradual schooling of gender roles which allows them to go through their marginalization without being bothered.

Though the novel appears to be all women novel and centred on them, yet, in fact they are being marginalized by the man of the house. Woman's place in man's life-cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which she in turn relies. Women in *Inside the Haveli* are seemed to play the same roles. The women surrender their selves to the social structures that demand their willful submission and obedience. They have been trained from early childhood these behavioral tactics. This is seen in Geeta's mother-in-law's views when Geeta offers to give up the classes due to the harsh criticism that they had to face. Her mother-in-law says: "You will not do that. Once your father-in-law gives

his approval to something then I am not afraid of what the world says”(Mehta 173). This shows that the way women think and behave everything revolves around men only without being bothered about their individual selves. Even Geeta could not escape this system despite of being educated and conscious of this fact all the time. This concern with the voice has been raised by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay “Can a Subaltern Speak?” The relationship between man and woman is that of a colonizer and the colonized and Spivak sees the project of colonialism as characterized by what Foucault had called epistemic violence, the imposition of a given set of beliefs over another. This is what happened with Geeta. A set of beliefs was imposed on her and for slightest deviation she was reproached. Geeta proves herself progressive only by her thought. Neither had she raised her voice nor protested openly. And after several years she is not same, she became a part of the haveli. Her love and care for her husband and in-laws stopped her to protest. She only screamed in her mind. This moral obligation that women feel not to offend the ones she loves, never allows her to rebel. Even if she is marginalized her entire life, she will not raise her voice. This is what makes even Geeta a participant in that culture when put in similar environment. These systems and structures are internalized gradually. Therefore changes will also come gradually.

The novel also addresses the issue of child-marriage. The life after marriage at a tender age is very difficult. The childhood and teen years that should be spent playing carefree are burdened with responsibilities and restrictions. Early marriages also resulted in teen pregnancies deeply affecting their health. And this went on. For the continuity of the tradition, girls were married off in their childhood. It was convenient in many ways. Their marriage also ensures

willful submission. By the time they could understand, they were left with no alternative and finally accept it as their fate. This is what Pari tells Laxshmi: “We all have to accept fate. There is no escape from that” (Mehta12). Almost every female character in the novel whether it’s Bhagwat Singhji’s wife, Pari, Dhapu or Lakshmi, all of them had been married off in their childhood. In the case of servants of haveli, child marriage was used as a tool for keeping them inside the haveli. At an early age, the servant’s children in the haveli were married according to the wishes of mistress among their own slaves. This system ensures that the haveli never lost the generation of servants completely. This is what Bhagwat Singhji’s wife argues when Geeta proposes to send Sita to school. Her argument was that Sita will be a perfect maid for Geeta and that her marriage should be arranged with one of the servant’s children in the haveli.

Though Geeta succeeded in sending her to school, but she could not save Sita from child-marriage when she was only thirteen year old. The fixing up of her marriage, stopped her to continue going to school. Geeta was totally against of stopping Sita’s schooling. She argued there is no point in this as she will stay for the next two years in the haveli. But this time also she had to give in. But when the proposal for Vijay comes and everyone started giving it serious considerations, Geeta was greatly disturbed. Her daughter was only thirteen years old. Though none had forced Geeta but she could feel the pressure of giving consent from the people around. But her in-laws wished for her approval. Manji, Bhagwat singhji's cousin advices Geeta to give her consent for vijay's engagement by saying, “Binniji, it is because he is so ill that I urge you to tell him that you agree to Vijay’s engagement to Vir Singh” (Mehta 255). Here she talks about Bhagwat Singhji's deteriorating health condition and the amount of relief he will get if Geeta

agrees to her daughter's engagement. Daulat Singhji's father had a grudge against Sangram Singhji, father of Bhagwat Singhji. Since then there was an unsaid strain between the two havelis. Vijay's marriage was an opportunity for the patriarchal head of the family to cement their relationship with the seal of marriage. In other words, the bride functions as a relational term between groups of men; she does not have an identity, and neither does she exchange one identity for another. The women who do not have an identity of her own, are treated as mere objects rather than as individuals, whom patriarch of the house can exchange through the institution of marriage. Though nobody force Geeta to give consent but she felt emotional pressure as she knew what was in their hearts. This kind of social norms also hint at the way marriages were fixed. The marriage proposal is entirely dealt by them. They chose, gave their consent and conducted the elaborate affair of marriage. It is not considered necessary to ask for the opinion and consent of a girl whose marriage is being organized.

From here Geeta's struggles become the most acute; she greatly resists, refusing to subject her daughter to those regressive and restrictive laws that she ultimately could not escape from. The book nevertheless concludes on a somber, uncertain note, what with the passing away of Geeta's father-in-law (a figure who notably did support Geeta in her pursuits); the author hints that Geeta may eventually cave into tradition despite her patent unhappiness and frustration with the decision regarding Vijay's nuptials.

This novel is an artistic piece of work which depicts women marginalization in a traditional Rajasthani family. The novel deals with the question of 'margin' and 'marginalization' related to 'identity' and 'self'. The woman who has a subordinate identity

always feel marginal because they don't have any independent identity as their identity is determined by the 'centre'. Indian society also considers surrendering women their selves as ideal. But modern and educated woman like Geeta's love for freedom strives to curve her own individual identity. But when she fails she suffers marginalization. The novel through its main character Geeta show that how women oppression spells throughout years in the haveli. We also find that in the case of this novel there is neither visible violence on women nor the men of the house keep them marginalized but rather it is tradition and customs of years which forced women to be ultimately without any identity of their own. The traditional women in the haveli equally submit themselves to the patriarchal restrictions also. Geeta finds these restrictions suffocating. Geeta also undergoes a silent transformation and finds that traditions are not mere chains of restriction passed on by the past generations; but also afford strength, warmth and security. Geeta's modern thoughts and progressive views, for which she has struggled earlier, are still there. It is through this struggle that gradually small changes creep into the haveli. It is because of her progressive thinking that many girls and women of the retinue get the exposure to education. It is also because of her efforts that the conservative family of her husband seeks her approval for arranging the marriage of her daughter, a right which has been never given to any mother.

But these never prompt her to underestimate the traditions of the haveli. 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. After the death of Bhagwat Singhji, his son, Ajay becomes the master of the haveli and Geeta, the new mistress. Thus, Geeta's search for identity in the conservative haveli concludes on a positive and hopeful idea that she will preserve the good traditional concepts and accept modern values when it is required. The novel ends here with an indication that the new mistress will bring out a harmony between tradition and modernity.

We cannot expect any radical change in women's status over a short period of time. Education is the most important tool against women oppression because it generates curiosity and curiosity is followed by reason. Geeta proved this in the novel *Inside the Haveli* by bringing changes in the mindset of the people of the haveli through education.

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