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**OLD IS GOLD: A STUDY ON THE CULTURAL RESTRICTIONS AND HARDSHIPS OF  
MIDDLE CLASS NEW AND OLD WOMEN FROM MANJU KAPUR'S NOVEL A MARRIED  
WOMAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

Life is comprised of past, present and future. No one can alter the past but anyone with good wisdom and understanding can use the present to form a good future. In this paper, we are going to discuss ManjuKapur's *A Married Woman* in this above said perspective. Present women have seen a lot of change than the woman of the past. A Daughter is seeing a different world scenario that her mother might have not thought about it even. So there comes naturally a conflict between the old and the new women in their various dimensions of life. It is this we have taken for our study. ManjuKapur's Novel *A Married Woman* has a lot on this issue that is debatable and eligible for a final result.

**Keywords:** Old Women, New Women, Conflict, Modernity

If we take a statistics report among a thousand girl students we can see that most of them are not contented with their parents. They are not satisfied, comfortable and Compatible with their parents and their way of handling children's growth. They find their parents disgusting and hate them to the core. Why does this hatred exist between parents and their daughters? Is the parents are demonic or cruel really? Or do the daughters find their parents cruel?

Women can be divided in to two separating between the two ages of the present, Old and New. By the term Old and New I mean women of the 20<sup>th</sup> C and the Women of the 21<sup>st</sup> C. Twentieth century to Indian Women is as ancient with little technologies in their childhood. They would have seen cotton dresses as well as books, kerosene stove and nokia 1100 mobile phones. Twentieth Century is an Era in which women were confided in the Kitchen doing household activities. They were not allowed or exposed to the outer worlds. What they know was their husband, children and relatives nearby. Female Education was forbidden and at the end of the twentieth Century was at its birth only. Marriage was done in early childhood itself. There were traditions to be followed, Religion to be practiced and man to be obeyed and totally they lived a life in which fate allowed them to. Even the evil practices of Sati and Deva Dashi system were only been started to disintegrate.

But the twenty first Century is a completely changed society. Unlike the twentieth Century it showed a drastic change in the fields of new innovations, Engineering and other technologies. Mobile phones are given in all hands free of cost. Women are given complete education. They have choices to choose and no more

confided in the walls of the houses or in Kitchens as well. They are completely free. They work and earn. Women quotas are given. Likewise, male chauvinism is submerged by women empowerments.

It is good to see a change congenial for women in the present society though some problems still exist behind the scenes that we believe may soon exit. But notably women are thinking that their parents are too old from their era and are unaware of the social change that has took place and are still persisting their children in traditional values and religious growth though religion has in its back useful healthy things. Women don't like their parent's strict behavior saying don't go there and here likewise. Modern or New Women like to grow themselves without any guidance from their parents. If they were guided they feel like hell in heaven and hate their parents to the core. They want to be free birds without any restriction and like to act according their views and wishes keeping aside traditions, religion, habits and manners etc. Is this right on the part of new women? Is the old women lifestyle questionable? Is their strict guiding's towards their female daughters not appreciable? It is this conflict that is debated using the characters of the novel.

The same conflict is seen in the novel *A Married Woman*. Here the Characters Astha and Pipee stand for modern new women where as Astha's mother and pipee's mother stands for old women whose names are not mentioned in the novel though they play a vital part between the old and new women conflict.

Astha is not happy by the way their parents treat her and she often answers them reluctantly that shows her complete hatred towards her mother and father. Astha's mother insists her to follow the traditional values that were followed by her mother and all women of the past. To Astha's mother the burden of marrying her daughter was dovetailed with all the events of her and it was kept in the fore front of the family. Each and every step of the family moved around the marriage that was to happen in the near future. So Astha's mother knowing that she is a part of the reason of Astha seeing this planet Earth takes care of her daughter and protects her from all the ignorance of Astha. Her mother Knows Astha's age and the age's fearlessness and carelessness because of the fact that she is not still exposed to the real barbarian like world and its characters. Her mother was aware of the fact that her daughter need to learn a lot about the world to come out of her ignorance. So, inspite of her daughter's reluctantness, hatred and discontentment and resentment, she won't give up her inculcation of values. We have many instances for this in the novel.

As the novel opens, we see Astha's Parents particularly, mother of Astha is very Cautious about her daughter's activities.

"Astha was brought up properly, as befits a woman with large supplements of fear. One slip might find her alone, Vulnerable and Unprotected. The infinite ways in which she could be harmed were not specified." – (1)

Astha's mother was also highly religious. She was seen often in her prayer room. She knows and believes in Gods and their influence on human beings. So she is aware that in no way her family should be in trouble.

"Every day in her temple corner in the kitchen, she prayed for a good husband for her daughter. You Pray too, she insisted" – (1)

But Astha was not a type of girl who believes religion and tradition in a scientific world. She thinks all her parent's action as a mere fanatic and futile. After her marriage with Hemant Astha's mother felt happy and in a circumstance a legacy amount from Astha's mother and father was given to Hemant. Astha felt very sorry for this. She thought that her parents didn't believe in her. Thus anything her mother did was taken in a negative way by Astha. Astha was worried that her mother is doing wrong.

Pipee is another important character of the novel. Pipee's mother was also exactly a replica of Astha's mother. Like Astha, Pipee also thought that her mother is unnecessarily worrying about her. Pipee and her mother always argued on many things and pipee never accepted anything from her mother's experience nor she obeyed her. She loved a man named Aijaz and here the problem between mother and daughter increased. Pipee's mother focused on Inter religion marriage and its harmful effects as well as side effects. But the girl was not in a mood to pay attention to her mother. All she wants was to make her love a successful one. Pipee's mother cared for her daughter knowing the nature of human beings and the effects it would result in. But

Pipee in her youngest, thought of changing even the results that is natural. So he married Aijaz, a Muslim being a Hindu and started her life against the wishes of her mother.

Thus the two mother characters of the novel has to the best extent gave her daughters real protection. Amidst the hatred of their daughters they have tried to protect and make the life of their daughters successful. They have lived for many long years and they have a good experience over human beings in the form of relatives, Society groups etc. So they do not want their daughters commit any mistakes that may eventually lead to fatal crisis sometimes, in respect to the mistake they make aware or unaware of it. They know that their daughters may become a prey to inchoate longings and the desires of others. We may heard sayings like Young calf have no fear and gooseberries when eaten may sour but after will sweet. Knowing these and experienced above lines in their life they tried hard to be a better parents to their daughters. But it is acceptable that there is a limit to anything and everything. We can control ourselves but not others if can only to a certain extend.

Appreciating the hard ways the parents underwent to bring up their daughters by following traditions, values and being religious the daughters on their own, thought that it is a rubbish and nonsense in this scientific world. Astha and Pipee's Parents accepted the privilege of doing household activities being in the kitchen. They accepted the domination of man over woman. In morality they didn't cross the line and was naturally faithful to their husbands even after their husband's death. Both Pipee and Astha hated their parents along with these good qualities also. Because of these precious attitudes their life was a successful one.

To see the life of Astha and Pipee later in the novel was a pitiable one because they didn't accept their mother's reproaches as good will but as complete cruelty. Astha from her childhood didn't accept the strict behavior of her parents. So she exercised all her passion in a carefree manner. She had many love affairs but to her goodness one at a time only. She took a long time, almost the end of the novel to understand that accepting life as it is, is living the life and we can change what could be changed and we should not completely involve ourselves in changing those that cannot be. Astha was not able to adapt Hemant as like her mother adapted to her father. So, Astha was trying opportunities that would get all her she expected. So in the line came an affair but ended shortly was Aijaz. But it was continued by Pipee. Astha thought that she has succeeded in getting all her queries answered through Pipee. Later problems grew that Astha wanted to avoid Pipee though unwillingly because Pipee's real face was shown very often to Astha later onwards. Developing little misunderstandings between Pipee, Astha understood that nothing can be perfect in this world and accepted Hemant as he was and the lifestyle of her mother thinking, new life style when tried to live will bring harm than the old traditional one.

Pipee also suffered heavily because of her act of marriage against her mother's advice. To this she suffered heavily because of the death of Aijaz. Astha didn't suffer as like Pipee because her part of mistake was very little compared to Astha. Hemant was good enough as Astha's husband but Astha was not accepting things as they are. So she faced some Psychological troubles but later customized herself to the world of Natural living by using her doubts like painting and teaching.

Life should not be expected as like Shakespeare's measure for measure. It is filled with ups and downs. We should adjust to travel in without complaining and should think twice before we indulge in great task like marriage. So we can choose within the optimal options that we may fall in the better choice. It is sure that the modern women think that they are right in whatever they do. But like Astha and Pipee they are not. Old women with their traditional values are better than the new.

Women complaining men like Hemant is only Pathetic. Hemant was good with Astha and was little busy in his business and that too for the sake of his family. But Astha didn't able to understand this was often complaining. Pipee was also thinking that Aijaz would prove to be a good husband but she too was wrong in her decisions yet as far as Aijaz's death is considered Pipee was not to be blamed fully. Mostly men are not against women but if they are definitely they should change.

Understanding life and living it with sacrifice makes living life good but many divorces are seen in modern living because of misunderstandings and ego. Modernity can be followed in dress codes, Food Habits, Communications, Buildings, architecture etc. but it should never be followed in one's character, behavior,

thinking and understanding. Because the traditional are people with good qualities that we without negotiation can accept but not the modern. Modernity is not taking superiority or negative to women empowerment but it is a thing that should unite husband and wife and should lessen vices in societies and should on the whole bring a potential social change. Women think that they are handled cruelly by their strict parents but they are not. They care their life and are strict knowing that the future will be only then good. Caring husbands are also mistaken as like their parents by women. There are ways of living life. A woman can't live alone till her end so she has to accept the natural domination of men and man should also learn to love and respect their women as they like. Modernity may come in many shapes but old is always gold.

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