

Gender Awareness – III
Detoxification of the Home: Return to Family Love

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Abstract

The modern times have witnessed the break-up of the family, under the pressure of modernization and the new culture of individualism that has swept the globe. Home has been a casualty of progress in the west already, but this 'progress' has affected the value system of our country in a big way now. India is a country with a continental visage, but it is a strange paradox, that we people think that in going western lies our redemption, while the westerners are turning to India for spiritual bliss. However, as times are changing, for better or worse, Indian mindscape is being westernized and it is also losing its spiritual charisma which it used to hold for the westerners. We took a friend from Italy to a Mall in Gurgaon, and when she wanted to purchase some nail polish and lipsticks, we offered to take her to an international branded shop. But she said, this shop is just in front of my house in Italy. I want something ethnic. Then, we had to hunt for an ethnic corner. This is how India stands now, externally changed, and changing internally at a bit slower pace. And the most affected part of our life in this internal change is the home. The external transformation has caused a lot of toxicity in the family life also. This article aims at studying the impact of this toxicity, and the need for a reversal to stable family values if we want to have a happy living.

Keywords: family, happiness, toxic, gender, home, family love

Introducing the Modern Myth

In my book *Geet: The Unsung Song of Eternity*, which is a sequel to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, there is a scene in which Dr. Faustus and Mephistopheles are shown discussing the terms of

their contract. In Christopher Marlowe's drama: 'The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus', the terms of the contract are that Faustus will never utter the name of Christ during the twenty-four years of contract, and during this period, the devil will be at his beck and call. But after 24 years, his soul will be taken to Hell for eternal damnation. In *Geet*, however, the terms of the contract change. The devil says: We have no objection if you visit shrines, or even take the name of Christ. We already have our sway over these places.

'Only, Faustus, thou shalt not love. But, thou shalt marry'

Even Christ had told his followers "to multiply". But here was a different dimension of that old issue. Devil further says that the greatest threat to the Empire of Evil comes, not from religious shrines, but from Love. It was Love which was the cementing force between Adam and Eve. And it was because of their Love that they fell. And, now, says the Devil, we want Love to be subtracted from the lives of sons and daughters of Adam. Instead of love, they shall marry. And, marriage has to be a union of unknown, undesired, unloved people, so that we have a whole host of bastards from these unions. In this way, he wanted the bastardization of the entire human race so that there is marriage, but no love between the spouses.

No doubt, it seems too much a figment of imagination, and a travesty of that great contract, but an in-depth appraisal of the institution of marriage and its fall out confirms how this world is being run with a vengeance. And how love has taken wing, and how family, the cradle of civilization, has been bastardized. Everything falls in the realm of the myth. Let it be the modern myth, not about the origin of humanity, but about the conduct of human life, thereafter.

Home and the Second Sex

If we look back, during the last 10000 years of human existence, world has been continuously getting into a highly organized form, and people have been living in closely knit groups, the most original of which, has been the family. If we look back a century over our family system, it is not difficult to discover that the home had a great role in the formation of human life. The role of the mother, the father, sisters, brothers, sons and daughters, - all together, formed a formidable unit, held together with mutual love, respect, and fear of the head of the family in addition to the myths in which we as a unit, and as a society, believed. These were the times when women were mostly illiterate, and the dominant philosophy was male chauvinistic. Male was the head, and woman, not his partner, but his sex slave at home, meant only for producing children. Five six, eight, ten, twelve, most of whom died, and three or four survived. Girl child was unwelcome. They wanted boys because the girl went away along with dowry, while boy brought the both in, the dowry and the bride which helped in the process of procreation and continuation of the family line.

In this arrangement, the woman remained subdued. She had no will of her own. She was forced into slavery at home. She was cursed by the in-law's family. But, economic considerations of being dependent on man for living, forced her to stay in the home, even if her dignity was at stake. In fact, they were forced into marriage, so that she has a claim over the man, who was found transgressing the marital bond, and have physical relations here or there, unchallenged of course. It was a man's world. Woman was a mere shadow, confined to the four walls. These were the times of utter exploitation of the female gender. They had no voice before their fathers and brothers, and then, in front of their husbands and parents-in-law. They had a suppressed personality, pushed to the brink. They took pride in being subservient to men, in upholding the customs which denied them their freedom, joy, and their voice too. Our family system, which has now broken, was a system which provided stability to the family, and an environment in which men were assured of good servicing at home. The elderly people were taken care of. Widows were taken care of. Overall, it was not a bad system of holistic care, except that it treated woman as the second gender. She had no rights. Even after the govt promulgated laws of equality, women still do not enjoy equality with their brothers. As of today, our society is still male dominated. People still want boys. People still kill girls. Girls go for higher education. But there too, they remain under threat of rapists. No woman can freely walk at night even in highly advanced cities. *Courtesy Nirbhaya.*

The Modular Kitchen

So much has changed. Yet, so much remains the same. From home, we have slipped into flats. From dung cakes, we have shifted to gas. From cylinders, we have shifted to non-stop gas supply line. We have no verandahs, in which birds would come and chirp. We don't have grains to scatter, nor any vases to put some water for pigeons. We have a modular kitchen and a rich gas stove. But we do not cook anything. We have servants for impersonal cooking, and we eat the food thus cooked with minds absorbed either in office politics, or in the fire sprouting news channels. By the time we have eaten, there are no loud acknowledgements from our stomach. Because, digestion is a big casualty. We carry along undigested matter, which goes on piling up. We go out for a walk in our car, we have health systems inside our houses. Still, we suffer from obesity. Indigestion. Heart trouble. BP. Physical disorders leading to mental disorders. We are actually a race disturbed in body as well as in mind.

This toxic atmosphere of the house has a very dangerous dimension also. It is the loss of values at home. What are homely values? We begin with Trust. Loyalty. Frailty, thy name is Helen. Where is Love? Have we ever allowed people who love to marry and live happily ever after? Look into the stony eyes of brothers who have killed their sisters for honour. This society has killed girls in the womb. And tortured brides for dowry. How many have been set on fire? How many are rotting with their parents? What a system we have developed? Home, where we need love, and

nothing but love, is used like an animal farm, to bring people like cattle, purchased from a fair (read www.matrimony.com).

Can we live our life with just anyone who resembles a man or a woman? Is procreation the only function of man and woman coming together? Even then, are they concerned only with numbers, not with their quality? The children in broken families have a harrowing experience while growing up. The U.S Center for Marriage and family released a study in November 2005 that shows broken family structures consistently lead to education difficulties for children. “When it comes to educational achievement, children living with their own married parents do significantly better than other children.” (www.tldm.com).

These are shocking details which we have to find out while discussing a marriage. A home cannot have aliens. A home cannot have people who do not love. A home cannot tolerate people who doubt. A home has to be an abode of trust and love. If we think we can build a home without love, we are inhuman. At the most, we can have a travesty of a man. And the procreation too is a distorted vision of reality. This world has brutalized home, and all the holy assumptions that went into its conception. Four walls make a prison for the woman, not a home for a loving heart.

The Ultimate Purpose

The people of this world think that marriage or no marriage, love or no love, home or no home, kitchen or no kitchen, we can work it out with fast food. Sex too is considered as fast food available on wayside shops. Heart has been dumped into the dust-bin, and men and women count their gains in relationships. Home, dear home is breaking apart, in the absence of love. Understanding is no substitute for love. Still, there are people who think in the traditional system, marriages were enduring. But it is a fallacy. Traditional marriage is a loveless arranged marriage, based on grave compromises by the woman. She has to lead a life in which she has no choice, and with unwanted undesired partners, with the result that the offspring that she has from such a partner is too shorn of the milk of human kindness. This is what we lack in our present world. Milk of Human Kindness. Empathy. Love. Compassion. Forgiveness. Charity. All these virtues are found abundantly in scriptures, which remain unread, and scarcely acted upon.

Detoxifying the Home

How can home be detoxified? First of all, we have to detoxify our minds. They have to be taken out of the gears into a neutral position. What to aspire for? This the most important existential question for mankind. If our aspirations are for worldly possessions, we are damned. If our passions are for spiritual bliss, even then, we are misfits into this life. What and how much? This is important. When alive, nobody can relinquish his body. And body, in order to remain alive, needs food. Of all kinds. Deny it, and you are damned. While living on this earth, you are imprisoned in this body. And, we must listen to its music. If it needs water, here it is. If it needs

tea, here it is. It needs sleep, we can't deny. Nor can we deny it its urges. Our philosophies of morality, and immortality, often overlay our souls with the dust of unnatural perceptions. We start denying certain physical truths. And, this messes up our body, and then our mind. And when this happens on a massive scale, we have a society, which is messed up inside out.

So, the first condition to detoxify the mind is to know what to aspire for. Worldly success is not the ultimate for man to desire. And to achieve your aims, it is easy to employ short cuts. Pay bribes. And get the positions at any cost. Everybody wants to be a doctor. Ask them is it because a doctor's is a noble profession? And, they can serve society. Never. It is for the sake of wealth. People enter politics. Is it a noble profession? Is it a service centre? No. It is entirely self-service. Join any job. The purpose is: to earn money. And if the bucks are easy, it is a prized profession. These ideas toxify our mind. We grow up with a false sense of reality. We aspire for things which actually do not matter. Wealth is good only to an extent. When we gather it so that our sons and daughters enjoy good life, we end up destroying our next generation. Our aspirations. Our thoughts. Our wishes. Our means. Our sense of right and wrong. And, finally, what we want out of this life. These are most important things which determine what type of a family, home, offspring, and parents we going to be.

Fast families, fast food, fast living, ... These are the fast [albeit false] truths of our emerging life style. In the pomp and show of our life, and the glittering reality that strikes us, we have no time to look back. We are not leading our lives; we are just living. We have no time for ourselves. We have no time to have kids. We have no time to rear them up. We have no time for our ageing parents who need our attention. What type of men we are? Are we leaves who do not belong to any branch, nor to any tree? This is what is toxifying our family systems. We need a return to familial love, family responsibilities, and boys and girls, while growing up, has to be taught in their academic syllabus what is home, how to set up a home, how to belong to the earth, how to produce kids, why to produce them, and how to rear them up.

Today, young girls who aspire for rising career options, are never nourished on any moral diet. What they learn from parents, is success. Success. Success. Success is a bitch goddess. Once it rises to the head, all else goes dead. They have no idea that, if they want to marry someone, marriage means a home, and a home means love, and love means kitchen, and food served with joy. If these things do not interest you, better remain single. Do not produce children. Have lovers, but no family. Home is a far cry from such mental paradigms.

A few words on what constitutes a home. Home is composed of an eagerness to live with a partner, have sex, and children, and bring them up. It looks very simple. But things get complicated when we go after finding partners. The most essential component of a family, or even a home, is mutual love. I wonder if we can find from matrimonial columns, people who love. What

we get in this bargain is people who tolerate each other. And how long? Very soon they find out the incompatibilities and apply for divorce. Which again, in India, is a Hobson's choice. Life during the marriage, and after the marriage is derailed if the couple has got a child too.

My honest contention here is that those who do not love, need not marry, and must not set up homes, and they should forget about having kids. Because, children from copulation in which love is absent, and scheming and hatred are the active participants, have a criminal bent of mind. Since this practice is in vogue for centuries, our world too is topsy-turvy. We cannot stand the idea of love. We arrange marriages, and religious rite are considered to be the binding force. We yoke unwilling partners together, who have no scope of personal rapprochement. They live in eternal contradictions. So is our life today. A paradox. A contradiction.

So, we need love to form couples. Only then, we can detoxify this relationship. Girls often think that they work like men and must not be forced into kitchens. It has to be agreed that they are working in offices and come home broken. Love will rebuild their passion in having a good kitchen, serving the family with love. This is the healthiest tradition which must be followed. Men can definitely help. If they love, they will never lag behind.

A home means copulation. Whatever work pressure, couples must not starve themselves of sex. Sex neutralizes the toxicity of the body and the mind and brings both the partners in a balanced neutrality. They can thereafter concentrate on higher aspirations of their life. But if their sex life is disturbed, they will start looking out of the windows. And, they may jump out too. Modern life is full of such instances where moral transgression has claimed millions of lives. A woman must not feel threatened in the family of her husband. It can never happen unless both of them are lovebirds. And we adopt certain norms which we have never thought of.

It needs a great courage to suggest to a traditional society that love among young people needs to be encouraged with parental care. Lovers must not be subjected to torture by the families, if they register with the authorities their will to marry. If we want a happy society, we need to detoxify our family, and immunize our home from artificial aids, like property, wealth, education, status etc. We have to come clean, be natural, and remember that home is the most fundamental unit of social progression, and it needs love to nurture best souls for the wellness of our society.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it can be safely concluded that if home is the centre of modern living, and man woman relationship still holds the balance, it is essential to recreate the modern living paradigms in such a way that family life revolves around love. Forced or organized marriages must become a thing of the past. There are two ways to respond to the present dilemma: one, if we find it difficult to go back, or bring about the old family system, in which woman was

at the receiving end, and man, the master of all ceremonies, we must bring in changes commensurate with living patterns of today. We don't like women to work in the kitchen. We don't want old parents in the home. We have already provided for pick-up of infants by day care centres. In the same way, we have to re-think why we force outdated family models on modern living. For example, in a modern marriage, you will find women, who generally wear jeans and tops, get into a huge *lehanga*. Our heroines too, when getting into marital bond, wear costly traditional costumes. Tradition, in this way, is only a fake show of love for the past. Actually, they are thoroughly westernized. And, once the day of marriage is over, these *lehngas* and *churidaars* are never worn again by the couple. This is the formal side of living. We should be true to ourselves. If we have changed, the change must be visible in the way we behave. We have no respect for the rites by fire. Then, why we go after it. We have no respect for the husband and his parents. Why show it off? Men and women must leave off the show, or the façade of being good to old practices. Best, they come out of it, and live their lives in the new environment, based on their own mental set up. The other way is to develop a new ethos. What was institutionalized five hundred or thousands of years back, how does it hold good today? Why we think every girl grows up to marry? Why every boy thinks, he must marry? Is marriage such a necessity? If career is everything, where is the need for marriage? Live-in relationship is the best. And, there is another option. Live single. And copulate wherever you like. Live from day to day. No need for kids. Let joy be unlimited.

The final answer lies in the final question: what we want from life? If we want success, everything that we are doing is in place. But if we want happiness, and beyond this, if our aspiration is for redemption, we have to redesign our priorities. We shall have to return to home. And, build it up with love.



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