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The Character of Faibain Seven Steps in the Sky: The Extremity of Dominance

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Abstract: Kundanika Kapadiya is a renowned Gujarati female writer. The novel *Seven Steps in the Sky* got the prestigious Gyanpith Award. Kundanika Kapadiya when published this novel, she was threatened by some people. Who were strongly believed that Kapadiya is breaking the rules set by the society from millions of years. But on the other hand, she revealed that one lady wrote a letter to her by saying that when I read this novel, I thought I have met somewhere the lady like Vasudha. But after a deep thinking I became sure that I am that character. This was the huge impact of this novel. Here, the character of Faiba herself prove that **WOMAN IS THE ENEMY WOMAN**. Faiba portray the major role in the life of Vasudha. Faiba is that character who has sacrificed her whole life after Vyomesh, her nephew. She was a widow. Through this article we can find that one should have some limitation of torturing others. You can't mould anyone's life according to your thoughts convenience.

Keywords: renowned, threatened, revealed, sacrifice, submissive, protagonist,

I. INTRODUCTION

The protagonist of the novel Vasudha's husband Vyomesh Mehta's parents died in a very young age. Vyomesh was brought up by his father's sister. After the death of her husband she came back to her parents' house. In Gujarat the word FAIBA means father's real sister. Vyomesh was brought up under her roof. She knew each and every minute thing about Vyomesh. About his likes, dislikes, interests, his favorite food, his hobbies etc. Faiba's life runs around Vyomesh's life. She doesn't have her own choices, likes and dislikes. She has devoted her whole life after Vyomesh. For an example she likes bitter guard too much. But as Vyomesh doesn't like it. She never prepare this vegetable for her. Her day begins with Vyomesh and end with him. Through the novel the reader comes to know that she and Vyomesh are having very little conversation. But apart from this, she can understand each other's feelings very well. Vasudha does not receive any good response from Faiba. For Faiba, Vasudha was only a daughter-in-law and a workhouse wife. She always thinks that Vasudha should work all day without arguing or complaining. It is true that Faiba has suffered at the hands of many, but all their oppressive feelings were stored in her mind waiting for an outlet and Vasudha is the best person to pour on it. But through her life,

Faiba never tries to understand what lies in Vasudha's heart. As Vasudha laments

"Faiba doesn't know what is my heart. But she knows what is in my womb." (1)

Faiba's negative attitude toward Vasudha makes her more and more frustrated and miserable and gives a painful feeling. She does not get any support from Faiba. Because she is also nothing more than a work horse. Faiba lives for Vyomesh only. She finds satisfaction in renunciation.

Faiba is a minor character in the novel. But her impact in Vasudha's life is very crucial. Faiba has devoted her whole life for Vyomesh. She forgets even of her own existence. With tremendous hardship she brought up Vyomesh as her own son. Vyomesh once said to Vasudha "When my mother died I was very young, and if Faiba hadn't looked after me, where would I be today? Don't I know that? By this conversation anybody can easily be impressed with the way Faiba has sacrificed her life.

But the same Faiba, who is so loving and caring turned into a harsh lady for Vasudha. Even

Vasudha's own mother had said, "Now you don't have a mother or father in law. You only have Faiba- all of you have to do is to please her and Vyomesh, then there won't be any problem.

Faiba didn't let her rest, even for a moment. Faiba was an old woman and she has sense about the house work. She was accurate about every work.

"Vasudha! This bedspread is dirty, get it washed... don't forget to wash the vegetables, look out for the weevils in the peas... Bhindi must be fried with fenugreek, dudhi must have gravy in it, the clothes should be folded in this way...

"Unpack the groceries straight away; sock the clothes for washing before starting the rotis; this afternoon clean the glassware with hot soap water"...

According to Faiba, once a woman becomes a daughter-in-law, she never gets tired. In the matter of religious practices too, she said “YOUR FAMILY MAY WORSHIP HINDU GODS; HERE YOU MUST GO TO THE JAIN TEMPLE”(1)

From her childhood, Vasudha likes reading a lot at home—Kanaiyalal Munshi, Dhumketu and

R.V. Desai, translations of Sharad Babu and Tagore, of Shakespeare and Ibsen. She has tried to understand the poems of Shelley and Matthew Arnold. She has read whatever she could lay her hands on. Her father was very proud of his daughter's interest in books. Our Vasudha gets so absorbed in reading that she forgets even to eat.

But that matter of pride was certainly a disqualification with Faiba. She used to say ‘Isn't there anything to do that you sit around reading? Once she saw Vasudha with a book. “It's a bad habit to read in every spare moment”. “It's not good for a woman to read so much. According to her, if a woman gets too much education, she will surely go for work. And once if she will put her legs outside the home, she will destroy her married life. She told Vasudha that

‘I don't approve of giving them too much education. And now they even go out to work! What's wrong with staying home? Just look at the number of divorces! In our days we married one person for all time and put up with whatever situation was encountered. What happens to us is God's will’.

One morning, while she was tidying up, she saw an article about astronomy in a magazine. She had always been interested in this subject, and forgetting everything, she began reading it. Faiba saw her reading. ‘Vasudha! Her voice was so stern that Vasudha dropped the magazine in fright. ‘Haven't you got more sense than to read at this time of day?’ Vasudha quickly put the magazine away and went to the kitchen, through the sitting room. Vyomesh was reading the morning paper. This was his routine. He would have two leisurely cups of tea while reading the paper for nearly an hour.

Through centuries, women like Faiba being a woman too exploits another woman. In a country like India, this is very common. Once a woman becomes mother-in-law, she thinks that it is her basic right to dominate or rule over her daughter-in-law. Being a mother-in-law, she automatically retires from all the household work.(2) Though physically she is capable enough. We have also seen that if a husband is working, he will put all his attention in the job. Even he will not do small help to his wife or mother. The reader can see the character of Lalita. She is a working woman. In the morning, she completes all the household work. Then she goes for the job for 8 to 10 hours. After returning from the job, again she has to prepare for the dinner.

Sunday is the holiday for all. But for a working lady, she is having doubled duty. In the northern states of India, till now, the situation has not changed at all. Mother-in-law is the supreme of the family. For her to enter in the kitchen is strictly restricted or we can say prohibited.

Vasudha gave birth to three children. But neither Vyomesh nor Faiba have changed their routine schedule. Instead of helping Vasudha, Faiba used to go to the temple every morning. Here, the question arises, what is more important? To worship or to help a lady who really needs help.

When all the three kids got married, Faiba went to the village, thinking she might not adjust with the new generation daughter-in-laws.

Faiba cares so much of Vyomesh. But when Vyomesh received a letter of the sad demise of Faiba, there was a party at his home. Vyomesh read the letter and behaved as if nothing happened and continued his party. Faiba has given her whole life after him. Vasudha felt very bad for Vyomesh's practical behavior. Throughout her life, Vyomesh was in the centre. Faiba is nonetheless than a commender, ordering her constantly. She is considered a storehouse of endless energy. Conservative Faiba is also a woman, but can't understand her.

Here, the writer Kundanika Kapadiya wants to say that, wherever you go around the globe, you will find gender discrimination. The situation is the same for all the women.

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