

Depiction of the Altering Faces of Women in Manju Kapur's Home

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Abstract

Indian women novelists are gaining grounds worldwide and winning critical review and international recognition. Now their work is no more considered as something critical, melodramatic or sub-stuff. The glaring cause of their success as novelist lies in the fact that they are born story-teller and they are endowed with the gift of delving deep into the workings of human mind and heart with sympathy, sensitivity and understanding. But there is also the common element of conflict of values and fighting between different ways of life. Among the prolific women novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Jhumpa Lahiri, Manju Kapur is also a distinguished figure in the world of novels. Manju Kapur's *Home* is her third novel. The novel deals with patriarchal family of Banwari Lal who believes in old Indian customs and traditions. Manju Kapur gave her magnificent magnanimous in the field of Indian English fiction writing. She depicted emancipation of new pretense of Indian woman in her novel. It is believed that Feminism is the movement which sustain woman to dissent against man inclination world. It was the movement for equal rights and privileges in the field such as social, political, and economical despotism of society. The present research examines a woman's struggle to balance tradition and modernity as she seeks to establish her own identity through economic independence, without relying on male support.

Key Words: Education, Emancipation, Love, Marriage, Old mind-set, Home

Introduction

Home is the story of orthodox Indian family and saga of three generations' women. Kapur represents new women who fight against patriarchal conventions and notions that are not hopeless, feeble and reliant. She accomplished woman who struggle for self-identity and self-dependent. Manju Kapur's *Home* represents of new woman who strives between tradition and modernity to ascertain her own identity by being economically independent without relies on male support. Manju Kapur is the Indian women novelist who characterizes the suffering and divergence of the modern educated women that fight between tradition and patriarchy on the one hand and individuality and independence on the other hand.

Women characters in her novels are conscious about the predicament and prefer to struggle and revolt against the traditional and culturally accepted norms and existence. They also countenance the duties and try to reshape themselves in the socio-cultural manners of the changed society. Manju Kapur in her novels describes the portrait of rebellious women who search for self-discovery, self-esteem; self-sufficiency and self-govern as they are caught between feudal principles and the hasty impending new life. At the same time, the women characters in Manju Kapur's *Home* are trying to sustain the stability between family and society. Her women characters are the embodiment of new women who effort between tradition and modernity. Manju Kapur's novels deal with lives and troubles of woman only. Her work keenly focused on the predicament of women and men are pushed towards periphery. *Home* provides a pinter to the catatonic position of women in the tradition-bound, male subjugated middle-class society of existing India, in which they are struggling to defeat the contracting predicaments of pre-fixed descriptions and pre-set rules, and thus endeavouring to redefine their position. *Home* explores struggle of the protagonist to delineate and achieve a self-hood, thus placing it in a constant and sharpen concrete to specify the changing dynamics of man-woman relationship.

With unswerving attention, Kapur follows the members of this traditional family into the uneasy world they come to inhabit. From the frenetic sensory overload of modern urban India, she constructs a story as intricate, quiet and dazzling as the fabric produced by the family. Told in a sustained colloquial voice, home is starting in its sweep and unerringly accurate in the bleakness and hope it presents. With penetrating and keen insight, the novelist webbed the story of her novel and hatched it with full size and shape and with much hammering on the anvil attuned to the family voices of Lala Banwari Lal, a patriarch of cloth business at Karol Bagh in New Delhi.

The central figure is a woman Nisha who is third generation woman in Banwarilal's family. The novel explores the portrayal of an Indian joint family of the Banwari Lals who runs their cloth shop in Delhi. The two sons of Banwari Lal, Yashopal and Pyare Lal - are well settled in business and are married, the former to Sona and the latter to Sushila. Banwari Lal's daughter Sunita married to Murli, an unemployed man having irritable nature believing in dowry and liable for the burning of Sunita at the age of 32, and leaving after her only son, Vicky, a slant and slender boy of timid temperament who undertake care by maternal uncles and their parents. Speaking about the Banwari Lal's family Kapur writes: "The Banwari Lal family belonged to a class whose

skills had been honed over generations to ensure prosperity in the market -place. Their marriages augmented, their habits conserved "(Home).

Lala Banwari Lal, the family head, had a deep belief in fate. Before partition, he had been one of the largest cloth shops in Anarkali, the famous commercial district of Lahore. However, the fate had been fit to teach him that in this world nothing is permanent. His shop had been one of the first to be destroyed, but amid slaughter that raged, his family survived, and grief for material loss assumed a less significant place in his scheme of life. With his seven-year-old son, two-year-old daughter, pregnant wife, and wife's jewellery, they crossed the border into Amritsar, then Delhi, to finally arrive in Karol Bagh. The jewellery was sold, a house bought, and a shop rented with walking distance on Ahmad Kahn Road, it was a good thing because Banwari Lal was not about to waste money on even a cycle in the early days. All his profit was poured back into the shop. The family never took holidays. their main entertainments were eating and an occasional trip to the local cinema. The clothes they wore had everything to do with shop leftovers and wholesale prices. Once settled in Karol Bagh, Lala Banwari Lal became a devotee of a holy man, a Baba, who lived near the house. His faith needed an anchor, and the holy man combined astrology, palmistry, spiritual guidance and reassuring predications about the future: "Pray to the Devi, everything will be all right, feed the cows, feed the Brahmins, everything will be all right" (6).

Home explores different views of each generation women. The first half part deals with Banwari Lal's family and Nisha's childhood to her college life. The latter part is exposures of Nisha's struggle for maintaining her relationship with Suresh, her broken relationship with Suresh, mangli issues which build hurled in her marriage, her patchy skin marks and her long success journey after so many difficulties and circumstances which resulted in her successful business of suit stitching. In this novel Kapur has described protagonist Nisha who caught in patriarchal threshold in her home and struggles against the traditions of the society to establish her identity. Nisha fights for her rights at some point of time she was disappointed but Kapur holds upon her protagonist. In Nisha's life journey her aunt Rupa always stands up with her to encourage her. Nisha emerges out lucratively all hurdles and circumstances of her life. With each difficulty of her life she grows more and stands affirm in life and her ability makes her thriving woman from ordinary girl to a successful business woman. The novels end happily with Nisha's marriage with Arvind and her two twins a baby girl and a baby boy. Kapur mentions in the novel: "Her duty was over. God had been kind; however hard it was to believe"

(335). Manju Kapur portrayed image of woman who caught in orthodox Indian family, but her female protagonist Nisha does not remain silent and mimic, she revolts and elevates her enunciation against patriarchal Indian society and established her own identity as a successful business woman and as a successful wife, daughter-in-law and as a mother.

Manju Kapur has depicted in her women characters like Nisha, Rupa and Pooja who stand for a new woman. Sona didn't want that her daughter will go for further studies in college. In her opinion for girl, marriage is end point of her life. So, she wants that Nisha learns household duties which help her after her marriage. Rupa takes stand for Nisha. Rupa mentions that in today's world the scenario has been changed, we don't know about girl's future, the studies make her individual and independent after Nisha's marriage. As Kapur states in the novel: If anything happens in the girl's later life, she is not completely dependent, interposes Rupa. She knows her views should be confined to her sister, who would recycle them as she thought fit. But she couldn't help herself. In this day and age there were still people wondering whether girls should get education. And this a girl whom her husband had slaved over for years. How could they let all that go to waste? It would be a shame to not educate her further, she continued in a careful, unemotional manner. (139-40)

There was a time when rule of men over women was accepted everywhere as just and even women made no complaint about it. But now everything is topsy-turvy. Many women now have understood their value and have started protesting against the harassment and abuses. Kapur has openly stated that 'new' women developed their skills and jumped into the battlefield of life fighting against all sort of social constraints, emotional ties, religious boundaries and cultural clutches. She is not only equal to men but one step ahead of them. As compared to suppressed women modern women has achieved a lot but in reality, they still have to go a long way. Although they faced lots of trials and tribulations they overcome those obstacles and started raising their voice for their space, share and identity openly against the patriarchal society. Today's women have realized their capabilities and have started to question the injustices done to them. They have also learnt to decide on their own without anyone's guidance. They want to have full control over their destiny. They simply do what they want to do and enjoy life to the fullest. For them nothing is important then their own self. Women have set a perfect example that they can achieve and reach their destination without crutches. Although the progress may be slow but it is definitely sustainable. Kapur in her fictions with vigour portrays 'New Women' which includes positive characters such as Rupa and Nisha. Nisha is a woman of many devices.

Nisha is very motivated girl could go to any scope to fulfil her dreams and desires. Nisha has joined DCB College near to her house. She has only one best friend Pratibha who is a determined girl. Pratibha wants to join NCC programme with the hope of that it will be helpful to her for getting Government job in the police. Kapur represents in her a new woman who wants to establish her own identity and a self-determining existence in the economic field. Meanwhile Nisha meets a boy named Suresh, on her way to college. Pratibha makes Nisha conscious about this boy and asked Nisha to know about his family background and caste and says: If you are going to be a modern girl you have to be thorough (146). Nisha just pretends and says: “You think girl and boy can’t be friends” (147). She is modern girl with modern views and does not deficient through biologically, they are equivalent creature beings.

Changes in ideas lead to friction between members in each generation. Nisha who wants to marry Suresh, stumbles on her family objecting because he was poor and of another caste. She thought, “if they didn’t approve, why couldn’t they just let her go, her life was her own. Suresh and she were educated, they could both work” (206). Sona, who alleged that affability, insisted that it be evaded as much as potential, anxiously tells her sister that “if something happens, God forbid, she (Nisha) has her family, her brothers, her aunt and uncle. What is the need to look for a job, as though you had no one to protect you? You might as well live in the streets” (124). Rupa in annoyances conjectures “God knows what use an education would be to a girl from a trader family, one who was only going to marry and produce children” (125). Manju Kapur detects the function of the family in creation significant decisions to advantage the whole family. The career of a person is considered and implemented by the family. Marital associations are completed through family associations; and family also gives stability between generations through inheritance and sequences. Satisfying diverse requirements of the family in the distance of three generations, the women in the novel come out as sturdy characters. The evolution of the women in the first-generation performing household duties to women in the third generation, who fulfil more convincing professional ones, is inclusive. Finally, Nisha anchored her own business called business woman of stitching the suits which went till her own children came in this world. She is the best example of the heroine who suffered a lot throughout her life but lastly the novelist seemed to prove that it never rains but it pours. That was why she got married and also blessed with two issues. The main protagonist of the novel-Nisha-the mangli, around whom the whole novel revolves-finally gets rid of the parental home and claustrophobia and takes have in a new home of her own dreams after getting married with

Arvind another mangli of the same cast-a home in which there is no chorus, no tension rather intention and too much care of the mother -in - law for her twins - boy and girl. The novelist shuts the curtain of the novel happily with these words: Ten months after Nisha's marriage, twins were born. One girl, one boy. Her duty was over - God had been kind, however hard it was to believe. Forty days later, during the naming ceremony, Nisha sat in front of the havan, and through the smoke gazed at her tiny babies. Their colour was the way hers had been before blemishes had appeared on hers. The mother - in -law sitting next to her held the fragile boy in her lap. Just like his grandfather, she murmured as she caressed his cheek, a statement she made every day, to the approval of all. The more robust girl lay balanced on her mother's knees, eyes shut, cradle cap stuck to her scalp. Her milk began to spurt and strain her blouse. She quickly adjusted her palla and looked up. Surrounding her were friends, relatives, husband, babies. All mine, she thought, all mime. (336-337) .

Manju Kapur's *Home* exhibits the interlinking of post modernism with feminism in an appropriate and restrained manner - the diversity of approaches that the female characters have accepted to avow themselves, the existence of the past in the shape of generational flounce, and the multifaceted atmosphere of joint family with all the characters having comparatively diverse occurrences, though trapped up in almost parallel circumstances. *Home* therefore undoubtedly falls in this sort of postmodern feminism. The covering recommendation of the novel stands a witnessed to it. Nisha refuses to reconcile with the patriarchal and male governed society and tries to establish her own individual identity. Since the establishment of the society, woman is stamped as the weaker sex, denied full justice, social security, economic liberation, and political awareness. In this context, Beauvoir comments, "humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being" (Second Sex 44).

However, Nisha's build up can be deduced in a further approach if seizes the emblematic analysis of 'Home' which is the title of the novel too. From her childhood, Nisha could not have an occurrence of a sweet home that gives protection and contentment to a person. Her own home was unable of given that her protection and she had to be shifted to Rupa masi's her aunt's home. Though she flourishes at Rupa's home and all her insecurities and intuitive chaos are place to reprieve but she persists to trundle betwixt Rupa's home and her own home. The stable sensitivity that this was not her real home and her own home couldn't hold her dispossesses her of a sense of rootedness. Finally, this search for home conclude when she gets happily married, having two twins' children and finds a home which she can describes her own in the true sagacity of

the sense. Feminism can be construed as a discussion of supremacy politics. But at one more stage, it is described by an escalating consciousness of the standard of 'difference' and a persistent rescheduling of connotations. It gives to assortments, plurality of female acquaintance. All the women characters in Home interpret the notion of selfhood in their own distinctive comportment. They espouse diverse approaches of self-affirmation too. Sona espoused disregard; Rupa absorbed her concentration to economic accomplishment. Pooja revolves to disobedience and revolt, while Nisha slithers towards optimistic and positive ways of self-contention. The agitated women in Kapur's *Home* can be taken as one in a pattern. The story of three generations of Banwari Lal family portrayed on great images provides a historical outline to the novel which is typical of post-modernism.

The novel *Home* is a portrayal of Nisha, as a new woman, a more assertive, self-assured; and confident one. By equally footing with men, she proclaims her womanhood in a bold manner. As a young college girl, she applies her power to work as a businesswoman. The woman is either silent about her sexuality as in *Home* or defiant as in *Difficult Daughters* or rebel as in *A Married Woman*. For a woman, sexuality is a domain of restriction, danger and repression. It can also be argued that sexuality becomes of a site woman 's oppression grounded. Hence, Manju Kapur comments: "This is the life of a woman to look after her home, her husband, her children and give them food she has cooked with her own hands" (127).

Conclusion:

Manju Kapur is primarily a feminist writer of our times. She largely deals with the essential anxiety of womankind, such apprehensions as love and marriage, women's worries and expectations, their wishes and pining, their familial errands, their education and training foremost to financial autonomy and freeing from societal taboos and patriarchal hierarchy, the ills of dowry demolishing many of them, the annoyance of infertility, the stratification of caste-system distressing the itinerary of their lives, and even lesbian relationship. Manju Kapur has successfully depicted the divergence of convention and modernity in her characters. The sphere is that her women characters are only implicated in collide against male-dominated conventional world but they have also endured this variance in the form of generation gap. Kapur's treatment of such a multiplicity of subjects revealed the enthusiasm of her mind and the extensive assortment of her comprehensions. Manju Kapur records her apprehension for Indian women in this novel. She dwells on assortments of feminist issues in this novel like female education and their empowerment, economic

autonomy, annihilation of mangli nuances and marriage, etc. She recites significant issues of class and nationhood and appended them to the rising sagacity of women identity in post-colonial India.

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