

THE EVOLUTION OF NEW WOMAN IN MANJU KAPUR'S NOVEL "HOME"

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Abstract: *Literature is a powerful tool in the hands of a writer to change the society and Manju Kapur is one such writer, who through her most absorbing and appealing work **Home** tries to change the mindset and outlook of society and particularly to elevate the position of women from the sufferings and hardships of society and to give her a status equal to men. She deals with this theme seriously and always tried to highlight the problems of women in a male dominated society. In this novel she represents both female and male characters to present the actual face of a patriarchal society. Manju Kapur has joined the growing number of women writers like Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Shoba De, Anita Nair, Bharati Mukherjee who have questioned the male authority through their writings and gave expression to the issue of how women are exploited in their novels. The New Woman is 'new' in actions and statements differ from the existing norms and historical traditions. This New Woman in the Indian context is different from Western context, though undoubtedly influenced by them. Women writers writing in English in India or abroad present the dilemmas in the lives of women from different point of view.*

Keywords: *New Woman, Patriarchal Society, Female Identity, Self-discovery, Self-Identity, Emancipation*

Manju Kapur is the most talked about and appreciated second generation Indian novelist, born on 25th October 1948 in Amritsar, India. She is a remarkable painter of her characters. She insists that the world she portrays analytically in her novels stems from the intellectual experience of her academic life. Her basic approach is to liberate women from the oppressive measures of patriarchy. The protagonists in her works therefore, endure physical, emotional and psychological suffering, but finally are able to attain their long cherished freedom to a great extent. The concept of new woman is the result of reaction to all stereotypes of the individual. She challenges all kinds of exploitation of women in the patriarchal society. She desires to live as an independent and self-reliant human being, not as a subjugated and oppressed woman. She presented things as they are not as something they should be. Female identity is her main concern not in her one work only but almost in all works. She fought for the female cause and tried to take them from the traditional norm of society.

The novel *Home* is a multi-generation family saga, by Manju Kapur which deals with the search for a home i.e. search for a place of shelter and security. Unfortunately, in India for women, home is not a place of comfort and relaxation, so

it does not ensure them any emotional security. Sometimes, it does not provide them any physical security. The inequality between men and women is not a new issue but its source is from the later Vedic period. And this gap is widening more and more at an alarming pace. This evil of inequality and insecurity of women had become the subject of many writers especially women writers. When Nisha in her own home is sexually abused by her own cousin, Vicky. Thus, the pious bond of brother and sister is collapsed. It certainly affects Nisha psychologically and mentally. Home, the place of relaxation and comfort, turns out the most insecure place for her and she begins to have nightmares. The novel *Home* is rather more domestic, the generation conflicts that bothers the sub-continent which provide the back drop of Kapur's other novels. Manju Kapur has tried to put a lot of issues in this book which are commonly encountered in a joint family and are usually kept under the carpet to protect the family honor and name. The author has tried to bring some of those issues to the fore and due to this, *Home* does not remain a simple story of a Karol Bagh sari seller, but gets a more universal color and makes an invitatory family saga. Kapur presents Nisha, the protagonist, as bold, educated and balanced and ofcourse, both modern and Indian.

In *Home* with two different portraits of women with Rupa and Nisha on the one side and Sona on the other, Kapur projects the seemingly opposite personality traits, yet striking in refinement and polished. While carrying a melancholic vacuum of heart, Nisha and Rupa fulfill their social obligations like Sona, but unlike Sona they strive to seek a definite valuation of their personality and performance. Their professions are an expression of this image and a shadow of their creative vision. Their endeavor looks beyond their sense of emptiness. Their self-preservation enables them to preserve their individuality in a pre-fixed norms and behavior. The journey of both Nisha and Rupa is from non-entity to entity, whereas Sona remains a non-entity. Rupa and Nisha make a conscious attempt to represent the suppressed urge of women to assert their quest for independence in a concrete manner.

Literature especially South-Asian and Indian novels are replete of woman characters who escape from the atrocities of their in-laws by leaving homes appropriately houses, only to return nostalgically. But this re-emergence is symbolic of the phoenix like re-birth. And in this story also where the author does not give readers much time to think, and reflect over its hasty eventful ending. Her withdrawal must not be misunderstood as the failure to get 'woman question' but it is the rising of a phoenix Nisha, from ashes of the old traditions and subjugations.

Her 'esoteric quest' which is something 'weird and grotesque on the part of an Indian woman' is devalued and negated by the silent resentments of her in-laws and even husband and finally, negated by their non-cooperation (Swain, 1999: 136). But she takes this decision without being stifled by the emotional compulsions and didn't even think that she is being victimized. In this she rises above and answers the woman

question by very well understanding that retaliation is not always revolution and the acceptance also leads to slow and steady transformation.

The woman who has been the mother and maker of mankind had, ironically to fight for her rights; not only rights but her basic sense of being had to be fought for over generations. And whom she was fighting with: her Victorian father, her obsessive and on-guard mother and her possessive brothers; her husband who thought he had wedded a slave whom he can take to bed, bear his children and the same body can be victimized uncomplainingly to beatings when he is drunkard.

The woman had to rise and understand her state of being and go against the grain: politics, household, society, economics nothing acknowledged and gave her space. She could produce children, rear them in the absence of their soldier husbands but the law did not give her custody of the kids. The Woman has been fighting and she had to make sacrifices over decades and generations to gain right to vote, economic equality and free herself from social suppression.

And she is still fighting to Voice her presence and her importance and her place in society and even at home. Women writers have made powerful contributions in their writings. The feminists have worked for getting voiced in the works of literature and getting the works acknowledged. This is no out-of-the-world plot and this is where it comes closer in finding answers to the woman's questions.

Sona, Nisha's mother, wanted her daughter to be "groomed in the traditions of Banwari Lal household" (*Home* 91). Nisha however protested that all these fasts and observation were irrational..."why should I? That's for older women. She didn't want to spend the day without food or water" (*Home* 92). Nisha was frightened to discover that "her mother's idea of a daughter was one who helped her every time anybody ate" (*Home* 125). To Sona 'cooking' and 'marriage' are more important than "education for a woman". After being admitted into a college, Nisha loved Suresh, a boy of lower caste understanding fully the idea of a modern marriage:

Nisha tossed her head "I am not a fool" she announced as she thought of the love that had driven her own parents to marry, of all the films she had seen, with, myriad combinations of unequal background between boy and girl: rich-poor, Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Christian, high class- low class, educated-uneducated. Love was the bridge over the great divide. Personal worth was all. The pure mind and the feelings of the heart. (*Home* 148)

Nisha's understanding of "personal worth", "pure mind" and "feelings of the heart" in connection with marriage is against the traditional, patriarchal values. In contrast her family does not approve all these. Nisha in *Home* is a new woman, more assertive, self-assured and a confident person. Having equal footing with men, she proclaims her womanhood in a bold manner and as a young college girl, she wants to apply her brain and power to work as a businesswoman. Kapur wants to represent the

woman of the new millennium in its real sense. Hence, Nisha's quest for identity and freedom as a human being significantly expresses Kapur's feministic approach.

Jawahar Lal Nehru has rightly said, 'Education has mainly two aspects, the cultural aspect which makes a person to grow, and the productive aspect which makes a person to do things. Both are essential.' (*The World of Inspiring Quotations* 75) It is through education, sense, intelligence and reason that Nisha emerges as a new woman in Rupa's home for the first time in her life and enjoys the pleasure of being equal in power of even more than the other boys in her family. Manju Kapur depicts through the character of Nisha that it is very difficult for a woman to choose the profession of her own choice. In order to do so, she has to face a lot of struggle in her life. Working in a shop is not considered a good profession for Nisha. This reveals her inner quest for independent existence and self-identity. In the portrayal of Nisha, Manju Kapur is convinced that the new, educated Indian woman has the capacity to determine her priorities for self-discovery.

Manju Kapur's feminist sensibility has been suppressed to a great extent by patriarchy. Although, Nisha undergoes a series of traumas, she finally succeeds to live a free woman without resorting to any extreme step as in the case of Astha. She asserts her womanhood boldly because she is iconoclastic and modern in her approach to life. Kapur portrays the picture of Nisha as a new woman. Manju Kapur's novels enable us to get an idea of the feminist struggle against biases. While reading the novel *Home* one gets the impression that a woman's life is like the life of a nation which is passing through various trials and tribulations. Kapur highlights those issues of feminism that are endemic to the situation in India in order to help us understand how difficult it is for women here to arrive at an evolved state of mind being trapped within the matrix of religion and tradition. Her novels manifest women's struggle for emancipation from economic, political and social bondages. She has tried to evolve her own stream of emergence of new women grounded in reality. Kapur's novels significantly add to the growing tradition of Indian women's literature in English.

It would be worthy to mention here how William Golding, British novelist, playwright and poet understands women...I think women are foolish to pretend they are equal to men. They are far superior and always have been. Whatever you give a woman, she will make greater. If you give her sperm, she will give you a baby. If you give her a house, she will give you a home. If you give her groceries, she will give you a meal. If you give her a smile, she will give you her heart. She multiplies and enlarges what is given to her. So, if you give her any crap, be ready to receive a ton of shit!

Thus, whether it is the unusual angle on the involvement of women in Gandhi's Swaraj agitation as in her first novel, *Difficult Daughters*, or exploring the positioning of women in the context of sexual orientation as in *A Married Woman*, and further, the saga of traditional Indian business family in *Home*, Manju Kapur

displays a mature understanding of the female psyche. Striking a balance between a natural coexistence and unfettered freedom and space on the other, Kapur's eloquent narration of women's issues is nevertheless, both Indian and universal.

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Sir William Golding's Words of Wisdom about Women-Authorship Confirmed!



ABSTRACT Manju Kapur is the prominent women writer in the field of Indian literature. She is considered to be the brightest star of Indian women writer of English. She is the growing figure in the field of literature, who has significantly contributed her work in Indian fiction. One can see the emergence of new women in Kapur's heroines, who do not want to be a rubber puppet in the hands of men. Impact Factor (JCC): 3.7985 - This article can be downloaded from www.impactjournals.us 2144 K. Kavitha & M. Shobana. As a feminist writer, Manju Kapur's novels deal with the strong protest of the male-dominated society. All her novel voices against the male domination towards women and also it presents the new Indian women voice against the male chauvinism. See what Manju Kapoor (manjukapoor161) has discovered on Pinterest, the world's biggest collection of ideas. The Eco Floating Home's ethos is to construct healthy, ethical homes that enhance the countryside and deliver maximum comfort with minimum energy bills and a small carbon footprint. These homes utilize energy efficiently by harnessing natural light, incorporate solar heating, photo galvanic cladding, waste and water treatment, and passive energy control systems like green roofs. The Home and the World is emblematic of the struggle, which was taking place within the middle class households. These reformers challenged the practices of sati, purdah, and child marriage. During this era, Raja Rammohan Roy* and Mahadev Govind Ranade* are few renowned names, who were an important part of this reform. 11 During the 1930s, a significant progress was made of the status. It was in 1937, when the Hindu Woman's Right to Property Act was passed for the widows. Tagore's Home and The World was first published in 1915. Its contents magnify on a single woman, Bimala, who seeks to become independent, after being educated on her husband, Nikhil's insistence, and steps out of the domestic sphere. Tender and funny, Manju Kapur's third novel is an engrossing story of family life, across three generations of Delhi shopkeepers. When their traditional business - selling saris - is increasingly sidelined by the new fashion for jeans and stitched salwar kameez, the Banwari Lal family must adapt. But, instead of branching out, the sons remain apprenticed to the struggling Tender and funny, Manju Kapur's third novel is an engrossing story of family life, across three generations of Delhi shopkeepers. When their traditional business - selling saris - is increasingly sidelined by the new fashion Manju Kapur is the author of four novels. Her first, Difficult Daughters, received tremendous international acclaim, won the Commonwealth Prize for First Novels (Eurasia Section), and was a number one bestseller in India. Her most recent novel, The Immigrant, was called 'intensely readable' in the Daily Mail and 'admirable and enjoyable' by the Guardian, and has been longlisted for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. She lives in New Delhi.