

Portrayal of ‘Woman Identity’ and ‘Indian Traditions’ in the Novels of Manju Kapur

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ABSTRACT

Manju Kapur, a well-renowned feminist in the contemporary literary domain, is preoccupied with depicting the pitiable plight of Indian women owing to recovery of fostering sustainability which leads to the emergence of new women. She artistically elaborates on her feminist concerns about Indian women to create an identity of their own. Kapur's first novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998) received huge international acclaim. It was awarded the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the best first book. The key theme of *Difficult Daughters* is the search for control over one's destiny. The novel is the story of three generations of women – Kasturi, Virmati, and Ida. Her second novel *A Married Woman* was published (2002). It carried the feministic movement a few steps ahead of Manju Kapur's previous novel. It won comparable commercial success both in India and abroad-becoming a surprise library hit in Britain. Her third novel *Home* (2006) was short-listed for the Hutch Crossword Book Award in 2006. This novel is dedicated to her children- Amba, Maya, Katyayani, and Agatsya. It is a multi-generation family saga. This is a fast-moving story of a middle-class family's life in Delhi. This paper focuses on the women characters of Manju Kapur, and their suffering during the struggle for survival in the male-dominated society. But at the same time, they are resilient to the patriarchal age-old dominance. It sketches how the novelist interprets the struggle of women for liberation. This paper also explores the qualities of rebound, resilience, repercussion, and recovering spirit of women who emerge as self-conceit. Their sufferings have made them strong and they are struggling to set themselves free from the shackles of tradition and various prejudices.

Keywords: feminism, intellectual, identity, miserable, ideology, obstacles, independent.

INTRODUCTION

Women writers and their contribution The seeds of women's writing in India can be traced back to the last quarter of the 20th century. The periphery of their creative imagination was confined to romances, fantasy, and fairy tales. Though female writers like Raj Laxmi Debi, Swarn Kumari Debi, Shanta Chatterjee, and Sita Chatterjee are the earlier models of Indian women novelists. The next era of English Fiction in India was inaugurated with the advent of Ruth Praver Jabwala, Kamala Markandya, Attia Hosain, Nayantara Sehgal, Santha Rama Rao, and Anita Desai. It is the first phase of women novelists in India covering thirty years, stretching from 1950 to 1980, and can be defined as the phase of social representation and reawakening. Also, the feminist vision is interpreted in the novels of the contemporary Indian women novelists like Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Gita Hariharan, Uma Vasudeva, Anita Rau Badami, Kiran Desai, Bharati Mukerjee, Chitra Banerjee, Namita Gokhle, Shobha De, Jumpa Lahiri, Kamala Das, Nargis Dalal, Dina Mehta, Indira Goswami, Malati Chendur, Gauri Deshpande, Anita Nair, Sudha Murthy, Gita Mehta, Bapsi Sidhwa, Kamala Samsie, Sauna Singh Baldwin, Manju Kapur. The portraiture of women is reflected in various literary forms of the literature. The women writers in their voice proclaim and assert that they are women of substance, not merely sex objects or sacrificing persons in the family. Cultural practices have always played a pivotal role in the subordination of women, as there are implications of power and control mechanisms embedded in culture, which reinforces gender inequality. The woman was never considered an independent human being.

The condition of women has not changed much. Even in the twenty-first century suffering and subjugation still forced her to lead a circumscribed life with the advent of feminism, every female-oriented subject has become an issue of contemporary literary debate. In psychology, it stands for the mind functioning as the core of thought, emotion, and behavior and consciously or unconsciously adjusting or mediating the body's responses to the social and physical environment. To define Feminist Psyche is the most controversial aspect of feminist literature. Psyche contains different modes. A common trend runs through a feminist group that male undermines women's psyche by projecting patriarchal notions.

Manju Kapur is also a distinguished and well-established writer in the world of novels. She is one of the groups of Indian women writers in English who lived and wrote in India itself. She was born in 1948 in Amritsar, a city familiar

with sectarian conflict. Manju Kapur has lived through turbulent times in India. She is the daughter of a bureaucrat and married her right-across-the-road neighbour Gun Nidhi Dalmia who draws on her father's bureaucratic days to create the same conditions as her father. She has four children Amba, Maya, Katyayani, and Agastya. She did her graduation from Miranda House University College for Women and went for an M.A. at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, and an M.Phil. from Delhi University. She teaches English Literature at Miranda, Delhi University. She projects a new vision of Indian women in her fiction. She is the author of five novels. They are *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2009), and *Custody* (2011). Literary Contribution of Manju Kapur's first novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998) received huge international acclaim. It was awarded the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the best first book (Eurasia) and was India's number one bestseller book. It earned her substantial commercial and critical success in India and the world of literature.

Feminism is an intellectual and social movement. It mainly focuses on women's struggle for identity and existence. It beholds women's rights on the one hand and self-empowerment on the other. Their miserable condition was stimulated some women writers like Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, Bharati Mukherjee and so on to expose the male ideology by tracing the construction of masculinity and femininity. Later on many writers' concentrates on these problems one among the woman writer is Manju Kapur who was born in 1948 in Amritsar. Her five critically celebrated novels to her credit are *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, *Home*, *The Immigrant* and *Custody*, she has emerged as significant and eminent novelist on the contemporary literary scene. Kapur mainly speaks for the middle-class woman's quest for freedom and how they overcame with all those obstacles to attain their own position in this modern era. In her first novel *Difficult Daughters* Virmati, Shakuntala, Ida, Shagun and Ishita all are middle class educated urban Indian women fraught to establish themselves with their own independent identities.

In *Difficult Daughters*, the story is partially based on the love story of Kapur's own mother, Virmati. Manju Kapur was so moved by the love story of her parents set in partition times. She has tried to reintroduce it bit by bit before it evaporates from her memory. It describes about two types of women. First are traditional types of women who firmly stick to the age old values and traditions and others are modern in their own perspective. Manju Kapur starts her novel with Ida, who is searching for her mother past. Ida, an educated woman, divorced and childless, apparently leads a freer life than her mother. She comes to know about her mother through her relatives. Virmati is a strong character in the novel, nevertheless society dictates the choices. Virmati tries to break the tradition of silence. There is real pathos in Virmati's words when she tells her daughter: "I want my body donated. My eyes, my heart, my kidneys any organ that can be of use. That way someone, will value me after I have gone," (*Difficult Daughters*, p.1). The novel deals with how she is torn between her family duties, the desire for education and elicits love. Virmati is the protagonist of the novel. She is born into a strict and high minded household in Amritsar. She is the eldest child in her Family. She becomes the second mother of her ten other siblings. She devotes herself fully in taking care of her younger siblings. She is a liberal minded girl who works very hard for her family and she never finds time for her own. The love and care which she expected from her family and especially her mother, is never allotted to her. Because of her family problems she could not concentrate on her studies. Virmathi is not allowed to follow her study properly. Her mother taught her that there are many things to do in life than education. Virmati's model is her cousin Shakuntala. She is doing M.Sc. in Chemistry. The first seed of getting education and freedom comes to Virmati's mind after meeting her at her home. Shakuntala shares activities she does - experiments in laboratory, participation in seminar, read each other's work etc.

Virmati clangs her when she leaves for Lahore and says: Maybe I will also one day come to Lahore, Pehnji,' she wept. 'I wish I too could do things. But I am not clever.' (*Difficult Daughters*, 18) In this point Manju Kapur focuses that feminist movement starts with an inspiration by other woman activities. Though it hides, at one particular time it comes out to live their independent life. Manju Kapur depicts a 'new woman' in Virmati, who wants to assert her right to study and get married. According to Manju Kapur, freedom is most essential in women life. Virmati is the embodiment of freedom. After her failure in FA her mother presses her to get married but she wants to have her own space, her own identity, and wants to taste the sweetness of the freedom like her cousin Shakuntala. Virmati wants to give practice to her English, while Kasturi feels it is insignificant for a girl child to give importance for her education. Virmati doesn't get success in convincing her mother and get herself engaged with a canal engineer Inderjeet. She meets an oxford return Professor, Harish Chandar. He is a lecturer in English. She likes her personality.

Harish is a married man and lives in Virmati's house as tenant. For Virmati, professor's love was more valuable for her than Inderjeet. She compares Inderjeet with Harish. Then she rejects Inderjeet and suggests her mother to let Indumati marry him. Virmati feels suffocated when she learns about Ganga's pregnancy. Then she feels to continue her studies and moved to Lahore. She decides to close her chapter with Harish and burn his letters. She starts a meaningful life in Lahore. Harish comes to meet her. He succeeds in convincing his love for Virmati. Harish married her and in his family Ganga and Harish's mother compels her to lead a suffocating life under the four walls. She becomes pregnant and gets miscarriage. The happiest and most attractive period in Virmati's life is beyond doubt. Virmati's life is a constant struggle from one front to another. Then she gave a birth to a girl child. Virmati wants her to name 'Bharati' but as Harish rejects it, Ida name is given to her. She didn't gets a chance to keep a name to her daughter this is a situation of a woman reveals in those period. She lives her life with dullness and loneliness which makes her feel sad about herself.

Manju Kapur is the Jane Austen of Modern Anglo Indian Literature. Her books are linked with women freedom and its crash on her heroes. "Difficult Daughters" is the number one novel of Manju kapur, dispensed in 1998 and furthermore it received the Winner of the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Best First Book. The articulations feminism has its induction from the Latin phrase femina which indicates 'ladies'. In this manner, it alludes to the development of girls proper which makes girls need to have similar social, monetary, strict, instructive, herbal and political rights like as guys. The phrase have emerge as general within the mid-20th century displaying battles for purchasing female's experiencing in the western worldwide locations. Manju Kapur says that "Woman's rights is little unrests, regular". Manju Kapur's novel depends on the theory that ladies demand freedom Manju Kapur's novel depends on the speculation that ladies demand freedom from Patriarchal social development and insightful. They intensely challenge each ruthlessness submitted on them by any reasonable name of religion or ethical quality. They intensely request basic liberties and pride for ladies who remained dump and accommodating for quite a long time in the male overwhelmed world. Her books are ceaselessly searching for independence from social and good imperatives and cast a look on ladies' mission for having their personality.

In India male controlled society is best one of the orders which preserve females down, abused by the conventional framework. Organized relationships are constantly liked and love relationships are seen as a social sin and are respected with disgrace. Numerous Indians conflict that masterminded relationships are extra fruitful than relationships in the West, where stunning separation quotes are the standard. Unwed moms, isolated, unmarried or faithless girls are considered as pariahs.

Living with none father present with an companion continues to be basically wonderful. An unmarried little female visible as an antique maid even in her late twenties-brings disgrace upon her oldsters, and is a weight. In any case, when hitched, she is considered as the property of her dad and mom in law. The marriage of the female and man of the hour calls for the woman's dad to pay endowments to the groom. In India, as there is the custom and In tradition of joint family, a lady of the hour needs to confront her oppressive mother and father in law, and commonplace Hindu society sincerely dismisses divorced human beings. In monetary issues, despite the reality that ladies are allowed to paintings outside the home, their freedoms on any own family matters have continually been denied. A female wishes to anticipate obligation for the kitchen, irrespective of whether or not she is a blue collar character from the own family and holds a project outside of the home. Legitimately, albeit the courtroom perceives that kids and girls have equivalent freedoms with reference to male centric assets, the ones privileges are not often labored out; today as in preceding eras, proprietorship modified fingers from father to spouse to infant and the privileges of a girl or a lady in-regulation are denied.

Since the situation of ladies in India may be very hopeless and an top notch association must be carried out for his or her sake, it's miles giant that Indian ladies's activists realize the Indian putting absolutely. The need of this hour is to transcend the restrictions and to deconstruct guy centric designs through character questionings. Just via this direction of reevaluation and cross exam new pix can be made and new accounts composed. To collect huge assist for the "girls' motivation", Indian ladies's activists want to expression and aspect their analysis, their contentions and their requests remembering the delicate troubles and feelings identified with the Indian tradition. Hence our wishes ought to be to "increase" the ladies' problems and old equilibrium within the economic and political state of affairs of India. To end separations plus push in advance with goals of a advanced each day recurring where all varieties of people will revel in as freed people.

Quest for Identity:

Everybody recommends Sona to turn into her nephew's mom. However, no one attempts to comprehend the sensations of a childless lady. Her mother by marriage forces everything on her Kismat, "Beti now you are his mom. God has remunerated your commitment. In some cases our desires are satisfied in weird ways". (27) After couple of months God gives her great endowments and she brings forth a lovely young lady. Her life changes and she gets love and turns into the focal point of consideration. Inside a year Sona conveys a Son and she feels that he is a breath of her life. Furthermore, contrasts in her demeanor towards male and female issues show up. She never gives Nisha, that sort of nurturing consideration and love, which is needed for her amicable turn of events. All things being equal, she gives herself completely to Raju.

The plot then, at that point, turns around these subsequent age individuals. Because of absence of consideration from Sona's side Vicky concentrates on Nisha. Vicky's lead towards Nisha is messy and remorseless. One day on the patio when Nisha needs him to play chess with her, he ends up contacting her delicate thighs. Encharmed by the non-abrasiveness of her body he contacts her genitals. Be that as it may, she doesn't reveal this mystery to anybody. The youngster's mind is severely swollen. The possibility of this episode hangs substantial like a foreboding shadow over her brain. She becomes quiet and surrenders food. She started to shout around evening time. No one attempts to discover the truth and she was shipped live with her auntie (Rupa Maus) to change her climate. Her auntie's adoration and her uncle's consideration and abstract taste are the molding effect on her. In the new climate she sprouts like a bloom.

In the later piece of the novel, the issues of Nisha a school – going young lady, are examined exhaustively – her abrupt gathering with designing kid called Suresh Kumar in a transport and their ensuing relationships, the kid's destitution and standing coming as an obstacle in the satisfaction of this adoration, the torturing dermatitis of Nisha, her instructing in a nursery school as a hobby, her setting up of Nisha's manifestations, and her possible marriage with Arvind, a single man of 34 having an engine parts shop of his own. This load of issues are considered in the original versus Nisha's marriage and settlement in her home. Until she is offered and tracks down her very own home, she isn't dealt with as expected by her mom.

“Once you are hitched, and in your own home, you can do what your parents in law think fit”(228). Nisha's mom imagines that a little girl in-law needs to work in her wedded home. Furthermore, her dad thinks that the showing task ought to be acknowledged as she doesn't have her own home to involve herself with. Afterward, the dad revises himself by saying to her: ”

This is your home, for what reason are you talking like you are vagrant?” (p283).

Presently, we go to 'the Woman Question', to a portion of the worries of the female world. One of its seething concerns is the evil of share influencing the Indian culture altogether. This reality is referenced on numerous occasions in the surface of the book. It is brought up the voracious idea of Murli who consistently presses the Banwari Lals to repay the little endowment given to Sunita. That Murli is a cash disapproved, avaricious man can't be disputed. He was consistently watching out for cash.

Also, that was the genuine justification behind Sunita's demise. Such men see young ladies as a saleable product. Indeed, even the Banwari Lals have an eye on settlement. Vijay's marriage is fixed solely after “he young lady had been seen, the kid had been seen, the costs settled upon.” With the assistance of Rekha's share, “that level over the shop was purchased”. The Banwari Lals are presently prepared to offer share in Nisha's marriage” After the endowment and marriage date were finished, the savants would be consulted on ways of changing over the unfavorable stars, and she needs to confront numerous difficulties before she is married to a single man.

The novel is an all around associated, grasping story of the Banwari Lals. As the title demonstrates, the clever bases on the worries of womankind more than those of guys, and a portion of the predominant worries of womankind as talked about in it are: settlement, desolateness and training and monetary autonomy. As per the pioneer women's activist , Simone de Beauvoir, the two essentials for lady's opportunity are: financial autonomy and freedom from universal practices of society.

While settlement and desolateness are apparently noticeable in the Banwari Lals, financial autonomy for ladies brought into the world of instructive preparing and freedom of ladies from social restrictions are tragically ailing in it. All in all, Home is a magnificent novel to peruse, springing as it does from the cozy experience of its creator. Every one of the female heroes of Kapur are up to speed among custom and innovation in their working class status. In their social milieu they seem instructed, modem, smart, refined, strong and confident. Their maladjustment in quickly changing modem world causes them to pine for more space for themselves. Consequently they attempt to rise above the social standards. Yet, simple endeavors – without clear level headed, solid self discipline and arranged activity are sufficiently not. Nisha's fantasies of heartfelt love and marriage and resulting disappointments are likewise awful flights. Every one of her heroes at last re-visitation of the customary method of life maybe with the acknowledgment that “Home is the place where we need to assemble effortlessly”

Manju Kapur's novel enables the readers to get an idea of the feminists struggle against partialities. This story is striking a balance between a natural co-existence on the one hand and unbound freedom and space on the other, Kapur's powerful tale of women's issues are usually accepted both Indian and universal. Manju Kapur is the most talked about and appreciated contemporary Indian English woman novelist. Her novel claims that the world she portrays has the stems from the intellectual experience of her academic life. Her basic approach is to liberate women from the cruel measures of patriarchy. The protagonists in her novel, suffer a kind of physical, emotional and psychological suffering, but finally are able to attain the long freedom to a great extent. Manju Kapur's women are portrayed within the border of their respective spaces subject to gender prejudice and oppressed to the level of giving up individual identity. A self-eradicating and self-surrendering living is thrust upon women, adjusting them to gender prejudice and willing accepting of their present situation. In all her novels Manju Kapur places stress on the cultural conditioning of the girl child in an Indian setup.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Manju Kapur holds great concern for Indian Women in all her novels. She concentrates on various feministic issues like female education and their empowerment, financial independence, mental trauma, and gender bias segregation. She narrates important issues of class and nationhood and connects them to the emerging sense of female identity in postcolonial India. Manju Kapur's message is loud and clear that society would be better off if women were competent. Women in Postcolonial India have opened the cage before flying out they have to strengthen their wings and vision to avoid perching on dangerous branches. Women are socially responsible in all their aspects and they

always strive to emerge as new women. Kapur's works delve into the multifaceted aspects of female identity. She examines how women negotiate their roles as daughters, wives, mothers, and individuals. Her exploration of identity aligns with feminist literature's focus on self-discovery and self-definition.

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