

**Protagonist women characters in manju kapur's *Home***

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**ABSTRACT**

The present paper deals with Manju Kapur's third novel *Home*. The fiction is clear for its focus upon the better off of women's position in a household as well as in a society. Kapur focuses upon various important themes of female issues concerning emergence of independent identity of Nisha a young daughter in the joint family. She presents Nisha the protagonist as bold, educated and balanced. Her feminist sensibility has been suppressed to a great extent by patriarchy. Her novel explores the complexities of a joint family system where emotional turmoil and rivalry lead to breaking of familial ties. It explores the complex terrain of Indian family and reveals many issues that are deep rooted within the family the revolt against the age old traditions, the problems of marriage, lastly the women's struggle for survival.

Key words : women's dilemma, identity crisis, feminism

The present paper deals with Manju Kapur's third novel *Home*. The fiction is clear for its focus upon the better off of women's position in a household as well as in a society. Kapur has evoked several societal evils which may include caste based prejudice, classism, superstitious beliefs, prohibited female education, eradication of child marriage etc. The institution of marriage is an intimate oppressor to marginalize women within the society. A girl is never needed to discuss about her marital descendants. Love marriages are preferred as a social sin and worthy of shame while arranged marriages are viewed with the eyes of respect and hope for dowry negotiations. To break the male dominance shackles, a woman requires to question the popular prejudices and to reinvent their identity.

Manju Kapur's novels focus on female protagonists struggling to break the shackles of patriarchy and are in quest of identity against the dogmas of social and cultural critical thinking. A major preoccupation in recent Indian women's preoccupation writing has been portrayal of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationship. They have to exist subjected to patriarchy. Manju Kapur is a post-colonial writer who intuitively perceives the situation of women in male dominated society. Her novels present the struggle of women to establish an.

The novel "Home" moves forward through the depressing tale of strangely captivated Manju Kapur's woman, Nisha between her innermost desires and family oriented responsibilities and restrictions. The novel is a brisk account of three generations. It is a joint family saga having Lala Banwarilal as its patriarch. It is an extraordinary story of a middle class joint family. Each individual's voice may chatter, complaint, question but all fall silent to the common interests of household as a whole. One genuine problem of any one person is treated with rejection. The depiction of authentic question of one female by another female is the ultimate outcome of the novel. The love marriage of the elder son of Banwari Lal comes up with lots of abused remarks and regarded as a sin. While the arranged marriage of the younger son is cheerfully welcomed and socially applauded as it enables to have dowry benefits.

The opening chapter of the novel entitled 'Sisters' describes the two sisters - Mrs. Sona Lal and Mrs. Rupa Gupta. We are informed that both of them were childless. Of them one was rich and the other poor. Sona is the eldest daughter-in-law of a cloth-shop owner named Banwari Lal. Rupa is the wife of an educated but badly paid government servant named Ramesh. Both of them are irrespective of their social and familial backgrounds. Both of them had difficulties in their personal lives. Rupa is the younger sister. She had difficulties that are easily narrated. Sona's difficulties were unheard agonies in a joint family. The traditional business of the Banwari Lal family is selling saris. When the business 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 shop. The daughters are confined to the family home. The envy and suspicion grip parents and children alike. There is the need for escape - whether through illicit love or in the making of pickles or the search for education. This becomes ever stronger. There are two female characters Sona and Rupa. They are sisters. One is good looking and the other merely plain. Sona is the beautiful elder sister. She is married to the elder son of Banwari Lal while the younger one, Rupa's husband is just a junior Government officer. Sona is not able to conceive even after two years of her marriage. Her mother-in-law comments her occasionally: "What can you know of a mother's feelings? All you do is enjoying life, no sorrow, only a husband to dance around you." (18) Sona performs every duty as a wife and daughter-in-law.

The real heroine of this novel is Nisha, the daughter of Sona. Nisha suffers greatly from her childhood till the end of the novel which is heart rendering. Sona is the daughter-in-law

of Banwari Lal family. Kapur tries to portray the traditional families and the beliefs of these families in the horoscope. Unfortunately, Nisha's horoscope says something negative about her. Marriage is one of the most crucial issues in the life of a woman as it decides her ultimate fate. There are many factors working in once being properly married in an expected family. The chief among them is the physical appearance of a girl. The centre of the argument in the discussion is constantly on a single issue. Kapur meditates on the need to do a job for a woman. It is found that the modern women like Rupa in the fictional works of Manju Kapur are well aware of the changing times.

The women in Manju Kapur's novels are usually of two types – traditional and modern. The traditional women like Sona in *Home* think that women's role is limited up to the marriage. They think that a woman should be trained in domestic work to be an ideal daughter-in-law. On the other hand, the modern women like Rupa think that the girls should be educated so that they can be individuals. It is true that unless they are allowed to go outside the four walls of the house, how they can come to know the world. Kapur also questions the submissive and passive existence of women and their roles as subservient as well as obedient to the patriarchy. The attempt has been made how women like Virmati in *Difficult Daughters*, Astha in *A Married Woman* and Nisha in *Home* go against the stream of the traditional way life and accept the new way of life with new ideology. The other women related with these protagonists are also different kinds of women playing the multidimensional roles at their own places. There is a transition occurring in the life conditions of the Indian women through the women characters in the novels of Manju Kapur.

This transition is transforming the Indian women from traditional women into modern women. The change occurs in the lives of Nisha, Virmati and Astha who represent Indian women fraternity in Manju Kapur's novels. The new image of women presented by novelists under study is ambitious, lustful, power hungry and bold. She is an assimilation of western influences as well as her native culture. She is a hybrid who despite of all kinds of upheavals, is able to strike a balance among diverse spheres of her life. All domains of her growth, social, political and psychological remain the focus of our investigation. No female member appears to be happy in this fiction. The tragic end of Sunitha, a female character, is the best instance for this. She is the only daughter of Banwari Lal who chooses a man of dubious credentials as his daughter's groom. As the result, Sunitha burns herself and dies leaving her ten year old son Vicky. Now without any prior interaction, Vicky is pushed to Sona, because she is seen as an inferior object in the eyes of everyone around her. Sona finds none to share her worries; she tells her sister Rupa that life has become unbearable for her since Sushila entered the house. Her grievances are sidelined and no one is there for her to give ears to their prolonged anxieties. Both Sona and Rupa are childless.

It is perceived as the curse that resulted as the aftermath of their sins in the previous birth. According to tradition, a woman who bears a child can only be called a complete woman. In '*Home*', the condition of Rupa is quite comforting since her husband who works under government service, does not expel her from his homw. However, Rupa is not at all peaceful. She is seen preoccupied by melancholic thoughts due to her infertile state. The childless Sona makes strenuous efforts everyday to sustain her place in the family. However, she is taunted by all very poorly for her barren state. Over ten years, Sona has suffered lengthily and eventually, she gives birth to a female child and names it Nisha, the protagonist of the novel Home. When Rupa hears this news, she is immensely gladdened and in the later years, she herself brings up Nisha when Nisha is left in a desolate situation. Manju Kapur has acutely examined every misery of Indian women through the depiction of her protagonist Nisha who takes up the core part of the novel. Like the children of her age, she is not allowed to play outside. On the contrary, she is labeled 'girl child'. It is very pathetic and also deserves critical attention that gender difference is thrust into the mind of a child in the very budding stage and the society imposes a boundary for her which she molested by her cousin Vicky which she is by no means able to bear. She feels that she has been exploited and spends all her time in fear and bewilderment. Abandoning her parents, she has to stay in her aunt's house just for the sake of safeguarding herself.

However, the protagonist Nisha becomes winsome in fighting against all odds. She happily gets educated, goes to college and loves a man as per will. When she is well determined to have nuptial knots with Suresh, societal norms again emerge and class discrimination ceases the marriage proceedings.

Nisha consoles herself and finds happiness in being self-dependent. She moulds herself as a character of indomitable spirits since she has got none in life to share any kind of pep talks to cheer her up. As Clara opines, "Marriage must be followed by motherhood", Nisha conceives a baby which is perceived by all as the cessation to her endeavours in being progressive. This is because, the traditional Banwari Lal family believes that men have to toil out of the house and women within. For them, holding women inside house would alone pave way for social status. It is the conviction of the male members that women's submissiveness can make their heads high in their neighbourhood.

In Home, the protagonist represents the post colonial Indian women who do not conflict with the male, but are prepared to take responsibilities. Their diverse problems like stress, feeling of isolation, alienation and quest for identity are described vividly in this novel. She uses two kinds of women. Women of the first kind are the representatives of the conventional society. Normally, these characters are either the mother in law or the mother of the protagonists who tend to subdue women under men in the name of custom. The other kind refers to their daughters who get transformed their naïve stage into aspiring individuals. For achieving their equality, they

are stepping out of their rigid familial unit in order to attain individuality. Manju Kapur uses the mother image as the personification of stereotypical values and the daughters break them.

It is Kapur who depicts women of a home not merely as unspeaking dolls, but as the industrious ones who never feeble to work from dawn to dusk. Moreover, they are so intact in keeping the secrecy of the family which is the thing that lies at the heart of every family. Home opens doors for any who desires to gain insight into Indian culture. In other words, this inimitability won her tremendous international acclaim. The female protagonists of 'Home' explain the duties of women in tradition- getting married, raising children and obeying all the in laws. A family structure is good, but it should not set boundaries for feminine development. These women characters make us identify their feelings in a way we could feel that we are not these characters. Nisha, the daughter of Yashpal and Sona, emerges as the main protagonist in this novel. She endeavours to set up her own identity by refusing to reconcile with old patriarchal rules. Her unfortunate childhood days in which she was not permitted to play outside like others causes a sense of repulsion toward traditional values. She is as she tends to be because of the exceeding inculcation of social conventions in her young age.

Manju kapur presents Nisha as a properly educated character which gives her self will. She defies the social structure; she receives good orders in business by which she becomes a successful business woman. Her economic emancipation makes her discard the social codes and invigorates her to display her talents. It is Nisha who changes the entire picture of Banwari Lal's family. Nisha gives birth to twins-one girl and one boy and is now a complete woman owing to the spectacle of society. Anita Sethi in her critique writes: "As tradition battles with transition, the older members of the Banwari Lal family struggle to adapt to the seismic changes rippling through the country, from Nisha restyling herself". Maghalakshmi, a reviewer of Home, observes, "Social structure conditions one's thinking. A person becomes that under which circumstances he or she lives". She tries to argue that patriarchal clutches alone have conditioned women's minds and confined them within shackles in the name of values. If women are provided equality, they can achieve social standard.

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