

MANJU KAPUR'S HOME: QUEST OF IDENTITY

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Abstract:

History displays how women are dominated for ages to ages. The patriarchal society is not ready to give what they crave for. In Indian Literature, during the period of pre – Independence, many women writers are emerged and explore the female characters in the male dominated society. Manju Kapur's fiction is an exploration of the Indian culture especially culture of the women rooted in a traditional India. Specifically, her novel *Home* (2006) is an expatiation of different types of women present in the novel. Rupa, Sona and Nisha are categorized as woman as empowerment, woman as traditionalism and searching for identity. This paper focuses on Nisha, the protagonist who opens her eyes wide enough to see the world through her own perspectives and raises her voice in the world to protect against the male dominant society. Collapsed with the burden of traditional values throughout her life, she raises her voice against traditional values and her family. Significantly, not only for higher education but also to establish her own identity by opening a boutique with name of 'Nisha Creations'. To become business woman where she doesn't want to be passive to be recipient of male hegemony. Instead, she raises ideology and finally over throws it. Through this *Home*, I thoroughly examined cultural factors before finding out how they hamper the identity of women. Nisha's quest for identity is unique in the sense.

Key words: *Feminism, Identity, Tradition versus Modernism, Roots, Gender Discrimination.*

Home (2007) is a masterful novel of the acts of kindness, compromise and secrecy that lies at the heart of every family. The protagonists of all the novels of Manju Kapur are seen as a common strugglers against all odds. Manju Kapur's third novel *Home* (2007) which captivates the portrayal of three generations. She is one of the brightest stars of Indian women writers of English and contributes to the progression of Indian fiction and the emancipation of women. . According to G. Baskaran "Women writers have added new dimension to Indian English fiction with their exquisite perception of men and matters. Their fiction constitutes a major segment of the contemporary writing in English" (220). According to Sonia Soni, "The emergence of the woman writers in the beginning of the 19th century is the landmark in the history of world literature" (85). She observes the women's emotions and psychological problems where they are suffering in their homes who is representative of Indian women in the modern 20th century. Kapur's female protagonist are crushed by the patriarchal society, patriarchal restrictions and expectations to assets their identity, achieve self – satisfaction and self – fulfillment in their lives. *A Critical Companion to Manju Kapur's Novels*, Singh says, "There is a unique tone of universalization, a plight from personal to universal in the so - called journey of her characters"(64).

Nisha, the protagonist of *Home* as a victim of their fate who struggles to establish her identity and to survive in their male dominated world. According to A.A.Khan, "The female protagonists of the Indian novels are mostly educated, aspiring individuals caged within the confines of a conservative society"(231). *Home* is assumed to be like a temple for getting peace, intimate relationship and relaxation. But for married woman it is not the place to talk of the oppression, hurdles and difficulties faced by them. In fact, family members try to change the conditions of their lives. Initially, Sona is the first daughter – in – law of Banwari Lal family who didn't get the proper respect and recognition because her family unable to give a huge amount of money and gifts for marriage dowry. They insisted about the co – sister of her who brought much dowry. So she had affected psychologically which made her life in isolation. Thus the home is woven and knit tightly together by the patriarch Banwari Lal. The head of the family runs a sari shop in Karol Bagh. She became silent without questioning so he treated her as a slave to do all the household chores.

The novel highlights on three female characters such as Sona, Rupa and Nisha who claim their identity in their own ways. Sona and Rupa were married to Lal's sons respectively. Rupa who lives in upstairs in their home and Sona too live with them. Rupa and her husband Prem Nath stay as childless couple where the family blame her specifically. Sona also not pregnant still. She always co-operated with her in-laws. In meantime parents arranged marriage for Pyarelal and Sushila, the latter brings a huge dowry. From this marriage, Sona realizes that Sushila has been much respected by the elders only because of her dowry. When she feels inferior to Sushila where Sona wishes to shift. But she couldn't leave from the family to live a separate life and remains the same.

Subsequently, she struggles to establish her place as a mother. After ten years she became pregnant. She gives birth to a girl baby. Everybody feel happy of the new girl baby which is considered as Lakshmi for the traditional family. They feel "It is good to have a girl in the house" (35). Girl is considered as Lakshmi for the traditional family. "And now the womb has opened, comment Rupa, a baby brother will come soon." (36) Yet they are expecting boy child as next. They think that boy will take care of the family and her first girl Nisha, who will marry and go to some other place. When she goes from here will take all the property. From the beginning they show partiality between the male and female children.

The Patriarchal family never let Nisha to go outside where the brothers went freely. According to K.K.Singh, "In the So-called age of modernity, the concept of home is in threatening condition. Human relationships are on the verge of changing. Transformation takes everywhere" (65). These atmosphere urges to live an independent life and self-dependent forever. She declines to reconcile with the male dominated family structure and tries to carve out her own individual identity. When Nisha is sexually abused by her cousin Vicky which affects her psychologically who can't reveal to anyone. Suspected by Rupa that something frightening and disturbing the innocent mind of Nisha. After this incident Nisha would undertaken by her aunt Rupa where her education began properly which is considered as secondary in Banwari Lal's family. By the support of her uncle Nath she studied well and learn stories and lessons well.

Tremendous change in Nisha's personality after she leaves from her aunt's home. Nath, thought that it was the night time to talk on the issue of Vicky with Nisha's father. But no one is ready to believe such tales about Vicky who was looked upon like their own child.

When Nisha's turn for marriage where her mother knows that she is manglik and very difficult to find match for her. Though Nisha is a modern thinker who is not ready to spend her whole day without food and water like her mother. She didn't believe in superstitions and influenced by Maasi's updated thinking about life. Inspired by Rupa who is entrepreneur of pickles and Nisha sees her mentor in her aunt. Due to this influence both are clashed oftenly between modernity and tradition. Nisha's mother insisted her to cook well and learn all the household activities. As a traditional mother, wants her daughter to be like her. She wanted her daughter to be rooted in the tradition that would make her life worth living. The novel narrated the story of real sisters – Sona and Rupa, born in the same house are totally different in their thinking after this marriage. They both are travel in a different path one as working woman and other as disrespect to her family. Due to family circumstances, she falls in love with Suresh. Though she is following patriarchal set up of her home where she fulfills her wish without any hesitation. This attitude gives confidence to earn money of her own and concluded that all the women can manage and overcome their problems. Now, she eagerly to do fashion designing course. She wants to be economically independent. But her mother opposed bitterly and Kapur always reveals the gender differentiation of the family and the male centred Indian society.

According to Prasad Amar Nath and John Peter Joseph, "According to Indian tradition a woman must defer to her husband in every possible respect. She must make the marital home pleasant for him" (193). Nisha is considered as victim of gender discrimination where she feels that she can't work outside like her brother. She requested her father to take with him to work in shops like other boys. She requests her father, "If only you could take me with you, Papaji," she continues, "I have seen girls working in shops. Why should it be Ajay, Vijay and Raju? There must be something I too can do". (267) In fact, this reveals her inner quest for independent existence and self identity. Instead of going shop she treated as equal as her brothers. She joined a play – school near to her home. Very sooner she gets fed up and leaves the job. Kapur spot lights that Nisha's struggle to adapt to the profession which is not for her own choice. Thus the author delineated through the character of Nisha that is very difficult for

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a woman to choose the profession of her own choice. Society structured the norms that woman could not be allowed to cross certain restrictions and working in shops is not considered to be a good profession for a woman.

Through Lal's family whom followed customs and tradition where Nisha wanted to modernize herself and old fashioned shop. She ignores the social structure and redefines herself that suit for her aspirations with the support of her father she started an exclusive shop named as 'Nisha's Creations'. She felt up that her father trusted her as he would have trusted a son. Her father helped in financial way too where she hired a tailor and collected material for suits from her father's shop. By accountability, she vows to return every single penny to her father.

In Karal Bagh market she becomes a successful and known as business woman. Now she is economically emancipated. When her aunt and uncle retalk of her marriage with Suresh in a traditional way. But she wants to meet him in a restaurant. Due to destruction of love with Suresh where she wants to adjust herself and replace another man instead of Suresh. Now she starts her journey towards emancipation and wants to do something valuable. She couldn't sit at home and waiting for proposals and achieve highly in fashion designing course. Her first step towards empowerment that she stands independent by economically. But these ideas are opposed by her father bitterly and oftenly. Punctuality, dedication and sincerity brings to the highest place in business and very much alert about her status as a reputed business woman. During this her marriage is fixed with Aravindh who is a widower and sacrifices her life for family and mother's wish.

After her marriage, life completely changed that she is disappointed by her husband what she expects from him which is different. He never shares anything with her. But she has the image of him who is highly respectable and responsible person who understood human feelings. He does not understand her desires and aspirations which gives more pain. After few months of her marriage she conceives and feels like a prisoner in the case of social norms. According to the frame of society she delivers twins at last. Even though she is living in her home she feels to be homeless – shelterless. By struggling to explore space for herself and attempts to be self – reliant in order to survive Kapur's characters are very different from one another. For instance, take Sona who considers marriage as the ultimate destination for her

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daughter. Another one Rupa thinks that girls should be educated so that they can be individuals. The protagonist Nisha, strives to explore space for herself. Traditionalism, Liberalism and Identity are symbolized this there characters Sona, Rupa and Nisha respectively.

According to A.A. Khan, “Indian literature spans a rich variety of themes. One of them is from the theme of a conventional woman to that of the new woman, reflecting in the process the changes that have been going on in the society” (230). Women are suffered day by day by domesticity, male hegemony and patriarchal set up. The protagonist Nisha, overcome the hurdles by her inner strength. By her intelligence she could survive in the traditional family and courageously breaks the silence within her. When Nisha affected by skin disease Eczema where she could not bear the pain and efforts taken by her with doctor’s advice which gives cure very soon. She decided that she wants to share and agree with fiancé that she should have freedom to run her business even after their marriage. Her sufferings mould her to become a determinant woman. Thus Kapur presents the changing image and transformation of women moving away from traditional portrayal of enduring self – sacrificing women towards self – assured, assertive and ambitious. Women making society aware of their demands and in this way providing a medium of self – expression. The journey of Nisha’s life starts as a business woman with self assurance and confidence in her performance. Nisha opens her mind in to broad aspect and see the world through her own perspectives and raises her voice in the world to protest against the male dominant society. Thus Kapur projects the protagonist is a symbol of roots which is nourished with traditional values to become a sacrificed daughter, a wife and a mother. She knows her prerogatives in life and is aware of the balance where she has to maintain her life. Finally she identities her inner strength through the journey of business.

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