



A Study on “Representation of Women in Manju Kapur’s Novels”

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Abstract

Manju Kapur’s all five novels have different themes but deal with the typical middle-class dreams, hopes and aspirations. The background of these novels is urban in nature and catches the city life with ironical detachments. The various consequences of changing human relationship between men and women have been represented with detail and graphic observation in all her novels. She shows her deep insight in telling the tales of common people in daily life. There is a unique tone of experience in the so-called journey in this world. Traditions, conventions and customs all these things are linked with a unique sense of freedom which has been recognized as the essence of modernity. According to K.K. Singh, “Compassion, sympathy, sacrifices and cultural loads are linked with womanhood. Kapur’s unique sense of feminism in her novels is well displayed in an outstanding manner. She presents human beings in the context of conflict; especially family conflict has been reorganized as the core issue of her novels”

Key Words: customs, feminism, middle class, relationship, society, traditions, women

Introduction

In the novels of Manju Kapur, feminism can be traced out in different perspective in the so-called age of modernity. In the world of Literature, all of her novels have got great appreciation from the readers, the reviewers and the critical experts. She has handled different types of themes, archetypal middle class dreams, beliefs and aspirations in her novels. She explores the female status in family and the society. Family issues are the central theme of her all novels. She believes family situations, the nature of human relationship and persistence of human reality. All the novels of Manju Kapur have the soul of modernity. Modernity is distinguished from freedom which is linked with Traditions, conventions and customs. Compassion, sympathy, sacrifice and culture loads are linked with womanhood. Kapur’s unique sense of feminism in her novels is well displayed in her novels in outstanding manner. She presents human beings in the context of conflict; especially family conflict has been reorganized as the core issue of her novels.

Manjukapur’s first novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998), it has got appreciation from all type of readers. In South Asia, *Difficult Daughters* is the first best book so it awarded the Commonwealth Writer’s Prize in 1999. *A Married Woman* (2003) is the second novel to her. It brings much more attention for her. *Home* (2006) is the third novel of her. *The Immigrant* (2009) is the fourth novel. *Custody* (2012) is the fifth novel of the novelist. These five novels have a background of urban in nature and catch the city life with sarcastic aloofness. The different significances of modifies human relationship between men and women have been symbolized with detail and graphic surveillance in all her novels. Her works have a unique tone of universalization a plight from personal to universal, from innocence to experience in the so-called journey in this world.



Through her novel she focuses on the life of female characters. Her central characters struggle for their own identity in the patriarchal setup. In these novels mainly focuses the masculinity of men is forever in question. Her novels explanation of women's struggle for freedom from the restrictions they have been set by the conventions. Thus, Kapur's fictional works are representative of extending arena of women's writing in English from India.

Kapur's novels show the lives of women portraying their fight for basic rights, longing for their own identity and survival. With the help of education the protagonists are become aware of their self-reliance. It also helps them to walk on new horizon. They have considerable liberty of expression and thoughts. In each and every field they not only compete with men but also work efficiently like their male counter parts.

Manju Kapur is talented with a fine faculty of creative perception. The pragmatic presentation of life in all novels impresses every one. She plays the role of a natural observer in her works. She highlights the negative aspect and the behavior of the existing society. Through her novels, she conveys the message that people should rise above the petty man-made barriers of caste, religion and culture and should imbibe the spirit of love and fraternity. She attempts to show her concerns at the growing tendency of unrest in our society caused by man's attempt to exploit man for selfish gains and motives. She, in fact, shows her keen interest in the relationship of individual and society and then searches the possibilities and mechanisms of change in the individual resulting in society at large. Her investigation and presentation of human consciousness are directed towards an objective account of human's emotions assessing Indian confrontation with reality. Her novels are not propaganda for reforms but they represent the ambivalence of change.

To give realistic touch to her observation, Kapur does not idealize or glorify but presents the life as it is, with its variegated canvas. Jealousies, intrigues, petty, quarrels, and rivalries are there, but at the same time there is goodness, patient sufferings and heroic endurance and living faith in a benevolent God too.

Through her artistic creativity, she presents new insight into the ambivalence of change in woman and man and human nature. She is convinced that freedom is deeply connected to the abolition of poverty; therefore she provides a platform of propagated against the evil of society. Kapur is brilliantly realistic because of her marvelous associate with the rural and urban life of India, particularly Southern part of India. It is admirable to be sure that in the broad range of her novels, she has effectively presented all most all the significant features and different colours of Indian receptivity throughout her novels. She has drawn the sensible characters and situation to represent the sensible change the world is going through.

Manju Kapoor in all her literary works investigates the various problems faced by woman with in the Indian societies which have been dominated by their male males. In her first novel *Difficult Daughter* present the narrative tale of the central character Virmati. She was not good dealing with her daughter in proper way. But Virmati has pounded with new aspects to deal with the issues against for the right of education, in choosing their life partner and economic independence. Virmati opposes the oppression and she symbolizes among the



girls who want to choose what she wants in future and declines the economic dependence on their male flock. She did not want to be treated like sex toys. In this way, we can say Virmati as “New woman” who is want to be educated and wants to develop her life in a very good manner. Ashok Kumar comments, “A major preoccupation in recent Indian women’s writing has been a delineation of the inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships. In a culture where individualism and protest have often remained alien ideas and marital bliss and the women’s role at home is a central focus, it is interesting to see the emergence of not just an essential Indian sensibility but an expression of cultural displacement”.

Manju Kapur stands as a voice of women through her feminist writings, presents the character of Nina in *The Immigrant* who strives for her own liberation and attains a voyage of self-identity in the foreign country, Canada. Her failure in a love affair obligates her to live lonely in Delhi. Nina has to marry with NRI dentist living in Canada. Nina, who is born and brought up in Indian culture shifts to Canada with her husband where she becomes unsuccessful to cope up with the culture of Canada, in short, Nina falls into the dilemma of her traditional mindset of Indian middle-class society and her solitude, disappointment growing into the western culture. Nina, the central character of this novel, shifts to Halifax, Canada, after marrying Ananda, who is a dentist by profession. She has to resign her job of lecturer in Delhi which is in the true sense, her loss of individuality. Nina’s educational qualification proves to be worthless in Canada which entraps her as unemployed. They even fail to produce a child which stands as a big reason for their broken relation. Though she is fond of reading books, she fails to escape from her feelings of alienation. Hence, she gets indulged into the dilemma of east and west.

Ananda labels her as “the perfect mix of east and west.” Manju Kapur, too, writes that “Her devotion to her mother and her willingness to consider an arranged introduction proved her Indian values, while her tastes, reading, thoughts, manner of speech and lack of sexual inhibition all revealed western influences. Due to her experiences as an immigrant, Nina learns the fact that east and west have tremendous differences which can’t be equal. This fact ruins her dreams about a foreign country as well as married life. This is an ordinary picture of an immigrant who can be seen as alienated due to the entrapment of outlandish people and surroundings as well as a new culture. Mahnaz Afkhami rightly points out: “Along with the loss of their culture and home comes the loss of the traditional, patriarchal structures that limited their lives in their own land. Exile in its disruptiveness resembles a rebirth for the woman. The pain of breaking out of a cultural cocoon brings with it the possibility of an expanded universe and a freer, more independent self.”

Manju Kapur takes writing as a protest. She thinks it is a way of mapping from the point of a woman’s experience. Through her novels she talks weird problems will come out a socio-political development in India. This novel is real depositions of woman concern her personality cult in the individual personification of a vicious marriage she has expounded the male dictum of woman as a holy cow even though women are not very interested in history and those in power trying to twist and turn historical facts to serve their own purposes. As a modern writer Manju Kapur recorded the truth and nation’s socio-political flux through her fictive narrative. She defines the traumas of her female protagonists from which they suffer and perish in for at lump. In the novel *A Married Woman*, the author deals women’s problems in the modern context. It is a seductive lover story of love passion. It is also deals political and political issues on the time.



A Married Woman deals Astha's physical relationship with Pipeelika. Astha, the protagonist of the novel perils the closing of the acquisitions of her traditional marriage and secure family. The author deals the disputed issue of homosexual relationship in a challenging way. This is a normal one in modern societies through we may or may not accept it. But in India it is not a common and not acceptable one. But the author handles this theme very boldly.

Astha's yearning for a scope in her life other than being a wife, mother and a daughter-in-law against a strongly sensed in context of Indian sectarian politics. It presents an interesting account of combination of problems, unsafe and unrest faced by middle class woman and nation both at the edge of transition. The novelist presents a lesbian relationship between Astha and Pipeelika but in the end traditional norms are set in play to restrict women's sexuality within the structure of heteronormativity, relationship that are confined, within marriage and often with opposite sex. Manju Kapur presents in her novel the changing image of women moving away from traditional portrayals 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 for self-expression.

Home is Kapur's third novel. It is the story of common in every home in India not only the story of Banwarilal. She tells about the value of human relationship and joint family. She considers family is base an every human. It also deals with the cultural values of Indian society. In Banwarilal's family have more than twenty members with their different ambitions and different dreams but they living together. The novelist also explores the hopes, aspirations, failure, frustrations and conflict between two generations.

Conclusion

Manju Kapur's literary success lies in her being a firm traditionalist while transmuting the dissimilar phases of national experience into major works of art. Her intellectuality and sophistication do not wear her away from the national tradition. As an author Kapur is extremely fascinated in story and social remark rather than psychosomatic portrayal of her character, multifaceted method or a deep visualization of life. Her novels give a realistic description of fashionable Indian reality. Kapur's five novels remain to the reader's as feministic theories also. She stresses those issues of feminism that are prevalent to the circumstances in India in order to help us realize how complicated it is for women here to arrive at an evolved into a state of mind being attentive within the milieu of belief and custom. Her novels are evident women's fight for liberation from financial, political and social bondages. She has endeavored to evolve her own stream of development of new women grounded in authenticity. Kapur's novels extensively include the budding tradition of Indian women's literature in English.

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