



Cupidity for Self Identity in Manju Kapur's Novels

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Abstract

Since its origin, Indian writing in English has been inevitably linked to India's growth and progress as a nation. There have been notable writers who have determined the development of this Indian literature. Manju Kapur, a vibrant Indian writer, is one of them, and she has claimed about the matter of contention that women face today. Today in world literature Indian English fiction formed an essential role, especially in the post-independence period. In this the main part was played by the Indian women writers. Because they were affected and marginalized by the social issues, cultural domination and gender bias. They wished to change the society towards woman as a free bird. They protested in many ways for their freedom in the society. Before two and half decades the novel was started writing in the same theme the writers followed a stereotype theme. Such as patriarchal traditions and gender discrimination in the fictions. But in the modern era it was all changed by these writers blessedly. The protest was raised in the way against the patriarchal issues and this was because for a new thirst of freedom and declaration of self-suffering.

Keywords: Feminism, Patriarchal tradition, self identity, gender discrimination, modernization.

1. Introduction

In the modern era novels were written in the theme of feminism. The novels had their theme as the new woman who needs freedom from the traditional bonds and wants to violate the laws from the bad superstitions around them. These new women need freedom to talk boldly about love and sex bravely. Manju Kapur entered into the Indian writing English as one of the bold writers who needs to say frankly about the issues of women in India. She shows the number of attempt made by the women for her development in the male dominated society. Kapur's themes always based on feminism; sometimes they were very closer to the standard of eroticism. Manju kapur's writings always undertake the issues of Self analysis and the difficult situation of women who has been affected by the patriarchal traditions modernization etc., she always creates her fictional characters as a woman of modern era. Kapur always deals with the problems of women in various extensions. When she started to write her *Difficult Daughters* her age was 41. She often excited that.

“Writing is the most solitary of arts” (3)

Kapur's five novels begin with the ideas of progress of women in the society. When we views *Difficult Daughters*, she gave importance to the education system to the girl child. She portrays the friendship between women in *A Married Woman*. In *Home*, she proved that how joint families and their women suffer to unite the bond of the family. Her other prestigious novel *The Immigrant*, depicts the problems faced by an Indian woman as an NRI. *Custody*, deals with the theme of divorce and infertility problem of a woman in the society. As in the words of Steinem:

“Women of every race are the only discriminated group with no territory, no country of their own, not even a neighborhood. In a patriarchy a poor man's house may be his castle but even a rich woman's body is not her own. Somewhere in our lives, each of us needs a free place, a little psychic territory”. (10)

In *Difficult Daughters* Kapur had presented the protagonist as a woman of self identity, educationist and also how she became a prey of an educated man's love. Kapur proves that the destiny of the woman based on her own wish. The novel starts from an upper-middle class Arya Samaj, especially Punjabi family. Kapur shows the women on the period of no voice to get their rights. Virmati is the first daughter who takes care of ten siblings. The family in Amritsar believes in Swami Dayanand Saraswati and his beliefs of women's education.

Ida her daughter told the tale of her mother and she wants to rebuild her mother's life as she lived. Against the terrible environment by the deadly partition. Kapur in *Difficult Daughters*, showed the woman protagonist as the woman of brave and also she presents the other female characters as how they struggle for their own identity to survive in the society. Shakuntala, Swarnalatha are the two contrast characters lived with Virmati. Though Virmati admired them in such a way but she failed to follow that in her life. Shakuntala educated herself and neglected her marriage life and she too gave courage to Virmati followed her advice. In the case of Swarnalatha, Virmati participated in the freedom movement. This sort of issue is expressed in the words of Simone de Beauvoir as:

“The woman who has an option to abortion disowns feminine values, her values, and at the same time is in most radical style running counter to the ethics established by men. Her whole universe is being disrupted”. (508)

Fortunately they have succeeded in their lives but Virmati was cheated in her personal lives. But kapur's point of view on Virmati showed us a woman's struggle which leads to change her life and also her relatives' life in the society. In our Indian society women have to accept the identity which was given by others once she got married she was automatically needs to obey their orders and commands. She was a human who never put demands or conditions in a marriage life. There in the base itself she was at detached from her individuality. Before she had an identity which she has in her birth place but now she was not in the accept a new identity in a husband's home she was dried up with her identity and tries to search a new one but in that she fails often because of patriarchy. It is possible to feel fulfilled simply by observing in the words of Gur Pyari Jandial clearly states,

“It would be mistake to devalue Virmati's struggle she failed, for what mattered was to have made the attempt: what is necessary is to break the patriarchal mould and for Virmati to do that in the forties was great achievement”. (11)

For women marriage is a necessary one which she has to begin a new life and to make generation in the society. But actually she was trapped in a net of society which made her not to think about her own self desires and when she realizes it either she became a woman of adventure or she became old and

protests for her oppressed society. Virmati the woman of adventure needs humans who made her to be realise all the time that to be herself she was educated and what she thinks to live she was be worthy of it. At one stage, when she started realizing the position and over stress makes her to states the words:

“I break my engagement because of you, blacken my family’s name, a locked up inside my house; get sent to Lahore because no one knows what do with me. Here, I am in the position of being your secret wife, full of shame, wandering what people will say if they find out, not being able to live in peace, study in peace and why? Because I am an idiot”. (137)

But her aspirations which she wants to become led to unsuccessful only when she got the job in Sirmaur as a headmistress of a girl's school she was very proud of herself she loved to work that she did her duty whole heartedly and live the happy female there. The decision which she took in her life brought her to the shame over her responsibilities in the school. She made a choice which was wrong and that lead her life full of suffering. In *“Feminist Perspective in Difficult Daughters”* Ramnavmiwala Meera says:

“Our titular hero Harish, when gives Virmati a position of co-wife, the real purpose of marriage for Virmati is lost. As a woman, she cannot bear the life of insulted human being and she cannot enjoy the relationship with Harish”. (148)

She was respected by the sincerity of her work but the secret visits made by the professor Harish and also her affair before marriage with leads her to lose the faith and truth of her employer. Finally she was compelled to leave her job, her house and also her school after leaving her job she could move to Shantiniketan and renovate life again but she had able to move her journey towards it but she saw a person who is professor Harish’s friend talked to her and there she was trapped again from her adventurous life again.

The marriage life of Virmati is not a good and satisfied one. What she expected is not then that everything she thinks as a dream only. She suffers a lot by her in-laws especially Ganga the first wife. Her identity is nothing before all the problems. She is educated and born in the family of wealth and the proud. She is not having those things after she got married with the professor. But at the end of her individuality fades away. She has a collection of tragedy which makes her still be dared and bold to face all the things. Though Shakuntala in her way of life she got succeeded but Virmati, not even happy moment she crossed. She always worried about her future. Kapur wont allows her to take freedom of choice, because of Virmati’s attitude towards life is totally different from other woman.

When she started to breaks her from the patriarchy of old superstitions and to change everything around her into newer level. Her belief in the love marriage and the relationship with her lover Harish seems to be an escape from the unwanted arranged marriage by her parent. She feels the love of Harish, a new one and she engaged herself, spending moments with him. She needs that kind of love from her family, the understand and care was missing instead she has to take care of the younger one as a mother. Sometimes she thinks about that this love gives her a strength and courage to stop her marriage, even though she fights before for her higher studies with her parents, when they said no she was unable to protest them. She feels that love can do anything, and at last it did everything to her because of her fate. Vandita Mishra in her words in *The Pioneer*:

“Eventually, marriage to the man of her choice is no triumph either. As second wife, she must fight social ostracism outside the house, and compete for the kitchen and conjugal bed with Ganga, the first wife inside it”. (qtd. in Milhoutra: 169)

Manju Kapur presented Virmati as strongest, educated women who won’t fear about anything before her marriage but she was totally changed when she gave birth to a daughter. Life never shows us the

hidden surprises. Sometimes we feel we are not having anything but the fact is we are always blessed beyond life. Nina is also the same kind as Virmati has taken the decision to continue her education. Nina in *Immigrant* shows as how an independent girl will suffer though she is educated and has a job in a foreign country. Not like Virmati she has not fallen in love net, but she was cheated by her colleague and continued her job in Miranda college. Though she is thirty she never feels about her marriage life why because she don't want to leave her mother lonely. But the same Nina got married and went to Canada she worried a lot and when she came to know that her mother was there and she felt that she was a lonely bird to fly in the sky. As in the words of Manju Kapur:

"In marriage, the power of shopping together cannot be underestimated. Planning the week's menu suggests a stronger future than sex ever can"
(181)

Nina like that she imagined in her mind that Ananda somewhat cheated her but the actual reason is she was avoided by Ananda and he frankly asked her to accept whatever he does. Nina as in kapur's words not a woman of patience and not doing a silent rebel. When she was out from her grandparent's house and breathed an independent air, there she started to raise her voice for the woman in the patriarchal society. In kapur's words,

"She was a perfect mix of East and West 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".(86)

Sometimes woman has to accept everything but in some cases like Sharing the bed with someone is to feel her shame of her own life. Kapur's view about this issue is an acceptable one. It is published in the period while the migration problem came when North America, U.S, Canada changed their policy of immigration for Asians. In kapur's words,

"Perhaps that was the ultimate immigrant understanding. Not that any one thing was steady enough to attach yourself to for the rest of your life, but that you found diverse ways to belong, ways not necessarily lasting, but ones that made your journey less lonely for a while. When something failed it was a signal to move on. For an immigrant there was no going back . . . The continent was full of people escaping unhappy pasts . . . when one was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home. Pull your shallow roots and move. Find a new place, a new friends, a new family. It had been possible once, it would be possible again". (330)

That title itself suggesting about the separation, migration and globalization in the novel visualizes the seventies in its backdrop. As Nina once find out her husband is not loyal to her, she feels little bit stress but she realized that she has to stand self only. That moment she has felt about the immigrant experience. She thought that if something is failed in our life we have to take a deep breath and move on with courage, though loneliness and the quest for identity makes our move very fast to face our other world. As in the words of kapur :

"One was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home. Pull up your shallow roots and move. Find a new place, new friends, and a new family. It had been possible again". (334)

Isolated feeling and homesick environment made the novel in its way of special thinking of Kapur. It would surely cause some sympathy. In *Home*, Kapur presents how a joint family which always follows the tradition and culture dropping gently on the ground. Their trust in the culture and their own patriarchy. The women don't go for work but men do family businesses was continued by the men and women have to work and take care of the family. As in the words of Warake.

“She wants no more to be a doll to be sold in the market. Nisha’s quest for identity and freedom as a human being significantly expresses Manju Kapur’s feminist approach” (273)

Banwari Lal is the head of the family who loves his son and grandson and daughters very much. Banwari Lal was a man of simplicity and tradition bounded devotee of a holy man named Baba. He never wants a single amount to be wasted as in the early days he neglected to buy a bicycle is a proof. Whatever he earned, whatever the profit comes, he put in his business only. Not only Banwarilal and also his sons never went on a holiday. But they had an entertainment with their family, is sit together and eat and going to a local film on those days. The clothes which they wore were the leftover pieces in the shop. The holy man often says to Banwari Lal as,

“Pray to the Devi, everything will be all right, feel the cows, feed the Brahmins, everything will be all right” (6)

After him his sons continued the family business and the family flourished till his granddaughter Nisha came to involve in the business. The novel makes us to realize that how women suffers though they are educated and talented in some families they are not allowed to go outside Kapur has presented in a colloquial voice. She has given a considerable and puzzling theme of work which we can understand the characters easily because Kapur made an attempt to give this work as a complete work.

We can able to feel the voice of each and every individuals voice which can chatter making some question or they can complain about someone or something but they never ever made any shame to the family. Nisha’s father Yashpal, gave her a place to work and also on an agreement of return, he gave twenty-five thousand rupees to start a small business. Luckily, he trusts her skills, talents and also her potentials. He didn’t show any discrimination among the children in the house. Yashpal said

“She was more intelligent, methodical and independent than Raju” (296)

There Nisha, the protagonist, finds herself a way to develop herself as an independent woman in her life because of the business. In *Home*, Kapur portrays Nisha as woman of adventure. Women were governed for ages by the male society. They suppressed women mentally and physically for their own desires. She has recognized her personality when she gives birth to a son. If it is not happened there will be hatred face seen by her in the family. The narrator portrays the sad side of a Sona before she got the baby girl. She was beautiful and educated some Unbreakable things happened in the home based on her infertility issues. She was everything in the house but she was a woman with no back ground, so she felt lonely when others use to say her infertility problem.

The whole family rejoiced to adopt Vicky, her sister-in-law’s son. Her mother-in-law gave this idea and Sona was upset the maternal longings. Though she maintained to be the mother of Vicky all the time she needs to watch him, or else someone could say that she is not caring him a lot. They may scold or lament to their in laws directly. Sona in this stage worried about her unluckiness of her stage. She always thinks that as in the words of Kapur,

“As god was her witness, she had nothing against Vicky. But was this dark ungainly, silent, sullen child any substitute for the baby that was to still the yearning in her heart, that was to suckle from her breasts, and use her ample flesh to its satisfaction? Her blood turned and though her blood was used to burning, it now raged so fiercely that nothing but her own blood could staunch the flames.” (Pg: 26)

2. Conclusion

Manju Kapur presented the Indian families bewildering form and also, she acknowledges that the ideas and the superstition followed from the ancient period itself. She had given the focused point of the deep-rooted trust of the family and their women, how they struggle against those stupid believes, especially the quest for identity, the matriarchal problems and at last how she is struggling for her position to stand in the patriarchal society. In *Difficult Daughters*, *Home*, *The Immigrant* are all represents the same only the search for self. But Manju Kapur's heroines in the novels surviving within the reality and the fact of the life successfully they made. To conclude this research article, it is a lime light to the society that she had given new faces of woman to the age-old society.

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