



The 'New Women' in the Novel of Manju Kapur



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Manju Kapur in one of the brightest stars of Indian Women Writers of English, joining Githa Hariharan, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Mridula Garg, etc. a very important and old critic of Indian writing in English remarks about the use of the English language, "The fascination of Indian writing in English language, "The fascination of Indian writing in English lies... in the phenomenon... of literary creativity in a language other than the surrounding mother tongue." He further adds about the use of dialogue in Indian writing in English works: "It would require very exceptional gifts and total bilingualism to express directly in English the lives of people who do not themselves speak English." He also goes on to say that under the English language surface there lays a radically different Indian mind. Rollason interprets this as a constant and creative tension between medium (English Language) and content (Indian mind). 'Difficult Daughters' by Manju Kapur is credited with several accolades including the prestigious 1999 Commonwealth Writer's prize for the Best First Book category in the Eurasia region.

Manju kapur has left her own mark on English novels. All these novelists have tried and been successful to portray today's woman who has turned and thrown the mantle of tradition, culture, patriarchy and social customs. Manju kapur's protagonist in the present novel lives within the sphere of reality and successfully finds her 'Home'. The novel presents Manju kapur's understanding of human characters and her maturity as a novelist. In this context Anupama Chowdhury observes: Home reveals a disturbing home truth that joint families can both destroy and preserve our maturity, individuality and mental progress."

Simone De Beauvoir comments:

"The situation of woman is that she-a free and autonomous being like all creature-nevertheless finds herself living a world where men compel her to assume the protagonist Nisha's quest for identity and survival. Nisha refuses to reconcile with the patriarchal and male governed society and tries to establish her own individual identity. Since the establishment of the society, woman is stamped as the weaker sex, denied full justice, social security, economic liberation, and political awareness.

Manju kapur's novel reveals the life of women, their struggle for basic rights, quest for identity and survival. With education they become aware of their self-reliance which is proved in concern with new women." As Simone de Beauvoir says, "One is not born, but rather becomes woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the female presents in a society it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature... which is described as feminine"

Allen and Barbara in their essay, "Why Men Don't Listen & Women Can't Read Maps" say: All things are not equal, men and women are different. Not better or worse - different (Allan & Barbara, 2001:pp3.5). So, women were suffering from economic and socio-cultural disadvantages in the male governed society. The society was patronized by patriarchy. The women were silent and remained only as rubber dolls for others to move as they wanted. They had been deprived of their basic rights, their aspirations to their individuality and self-reliance.

In the novel 'Home' heroine Nisha, is a new woman, a more assertive, self-assured; and confident one. By equally footing with men, she proclaims her womanhood in a bold manner. As a young college girl, she wants to apply her one brain and power to work as a businesswoman. She wants to represent the woman of the new millennium in its real sense.

Home takes us through a brisk and strangely captivating journey of three generations, the first generation of Lala Banwari Lal, the second of his two sons, and the third of his grandchildren's. The first generation of Lala Banwari Lal, the family head, runs a sari business in Karol Bagh, Delhi, where he settles after partition of India. Nisha is a girl who is born after a lot of fasting and praying on the part of her mother. Nisha is a representative of their generation. But after her birth she is declared as Mangali. To make the matter worst Nisha in her infancy fall a prey to the carnal desires of Vicky, a fifteen year boy and her kin. Vicky tries to seduce her. It affects her psychologically and mentally, as even though as a child, she doesn't eat and sleep well. Nobody could understand the reason behind her mental disturbance and she is sent to Rupa's home for a change. Rupa and her husband understand

that Vicky is responsible for Nisha's miserable condition; they could do nothing but sympathize. After entering into teenage Nisha is admitted to college where she meets Pratibha a very ambitious girl and Nisha too wants to become like her. While in college she falls in love with Suresh, a student of engineering college, Nisha boldly roams with him and openly meets him and is not afraid of anybody. Taking in consideration her good performance in studies she starts taking it lightly and giving more attention to her clothing, appearance, etc. when the entire matter comes into lime-light, her brother calls her as not trustworthy where she says, "Who you are to decide whether I am trustworthy" this rebellious comment reflects her modernity.

When Suresh, on the other hand, tries to convey her family that his intentions are pure and he only wants Nisha. No dowry, no fancy wedding, he doesn't even care if she is a Mangli. On account of this, she is moved by his nobility. She says her mother, "Who cares about castes these days? What you really want is to sell me in the market", she sobbed with indignant emotion. "Sell me and be done with it. What are you waiting for?" Nisha refuses to follow the age-old traditional marriage. 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. Nisha's quest for identity and

freedom as a human being significantly expresses Manju Kapur's feminist approach. Nisha's desire for establishing self-identity the attempt of Suresh meeting Nisha's family prove fatal and the marriage could not materialize because significantly enough, Manju Kapur, here, has pointed out the traditional male governed approach. Though Suresh loves Nisha, he wants 'to decide her future on his own' which Nisha refuses to allow. Later on Nisha is married there too she struggles to create rapport with her new role and in laws. Eventually after 10 months marriage she gives birth to twins. To sum up, it would be proper to say that Nisha as an individual could create separate room for herself in home and society. She, is an educated and spirited new woman, could refuse to be treated as an object instead that tried to establish her own identity. It is necessary to note that she belongs to middle class family in metropolis, is born and brought up in India, where social and cultural scenario is different than that of western countries. Her quest for self-identity, struggle for economic independent existence, and her equality with men depend upon Indian social ethos. In *Emergence of New Woman in Novels of Manju Kapur*, Laxmi Sharma is apt to say: "The emergence of new women in the realm of social, economic, cultural and racial aspects will also be probed... The concept of new woman in Indian society varies from the one in the west...."

REFERENCE

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