

Home- A Reality or an Illusion

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Abstract: Manju Kapur is regarded as a modern feminist who has very different approach from her contemporary authors towards feminism and the difference lies in her treatment of feminism which makes her characters outstanding from the other authors. As far as her novel Home is concerned, it is undoubtedly a specific example of her modern thinking which is deeply rooted with values. Nisha is the central character of this novel. She is the single girl child in her family. Home is regarded as a place where every family member feels secure but Nisha is sexually exploited and abused by her own cousin Vicky within the four walls of home. Then she has been sent away from her home instead of Vicky just for the sake of family honour. Though she performs so well in her studies while staying away from the home but she has to come back there after some years and her studies suffer a lot and no one cares about it. In her patriarchal family, the sole purpose of a girl's life is to get married and that is why a girl is supposed to acquire all the qualities which are necessary to become a good wife. Her own self has no existence in her home. But she makes her own identity by her efforts. Manju Kapur has depicted the struggle of her journey in this novel.

Keyword: Home, House.

I. INTRODUCTION

Manju Kapur is a well-known name in the field of feminism in post-modern women authors. She is known for her wonderful grip on the social and familial structure in India. Though she is feminist but her feminist is not only about the problems of women but it reflects a victory also upon those problems through her characters. She has written five novels till yet-

- 1- Difficult Daughters
- 2- A Married Woman
- 3- Home
- 4- The Immigrant
- 5- Custody

Her first novel Difficult Daughters was the bestseller of the year 1998 and is based on the life of her own mother. Her second novel A Married Woman is the depiction of the suppressed feelings of a common married woman which she is not supposed to express for and she bears that suffocation as a part of her destiny. Her third novel is the centre of this research paper. Her fourth novel The Immigrant is about the feelings of alienation of Nina in her personal life and in a foreign country. Her fifth novel Custody reveals the picture of changed modern society of metropolitan cities and the impact of globalization and liberalization.

As above discussed, here the centre of research is the third novel of Manju Kapur that is Home. Home is regarded as place where a family lives together and everyone feels secure oneself in the four walls of home. But in this novel, home is presented as place where the life of a woman is confined only to serve and to obey and this tradition should be passed on to the next generations also as the values of family. There is no place for women's desires, no freedom for their aspirations and potentialities. Home was published in 2006 and it explores the complex terrain of Indian family, especially joint families about which Anupama Chawdhury observes-

“Home reveals a disturbing home truth that joint families can both destroy and preserve our maturity, individuality and mental progress” (2008:33).

Nisha is the protagonist of this novel. In her character, all those qualities can be observed which make Kapur's protagonists outstanding. She is assertive, self-assured and confident one in her family than any other woman and proclaims her womanhood in a bold manner. The novel Home is a captivating account of three generations. First, Lala Banwarilal, the second of his two sons and one daughter and the third of his grandchildren.

Lala Banwarilal is a successful businessman and the owner of a saree-shop in Karol Bagh, Delhi. He has two sons and one daughter, Yashpal, Pyarelal and Sunita. His elder son Yashpal marries to a girl of his own choice, Sona. Though Sona has all the qualities of an ideal wife and daughter-in-law but she could not birth to a child for the ten years of her marriage. On the other hand Pyarelal gets married to Sushila and is the father of two sons. Sona performs so many rituals and keeps fast for the child and ultimately gives birth to a girl child after ten years of her marriage but by this time she had to accept unwillingly the responsibility of Vicky, son of Sunita as Sunita was dead in an accident and she was childless at the time of her death. After two years of Nisha's birth, Sona becomes the mother of a boy child Raju and thus Nisha is the only girl child of her family. From her early childhood Sona starts to train her as an ideal girl who should look beautiful and be happy everywhere. As Simone de Beauvoir has pointed out in her 'The Second Sex'-

“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” (Simone de Beauvoir, 1983:16)

Clara Nubile in the Danger of Gender, observes-“In modern India the situation is still far from an ideal, liberated, democratic model. Indian

Women keep on struggling against the burden of tradition, against the legacy of the past and the orthodoxy of patriarchal system.” (Clara, 2003:271)

In her early childhood Nisha is physically exploited by her cousin Vicky but no one in the family can understand her fear except her aunt Rupa where she was sent later to recover from her agony. In Rupa’s home she performs so well in her studies and lives happily as Rupa has no child. But she has to come back to her home after the death of her grandfather. Here the atmosphere is totally different for her from Rupa’s house as no one cares for her studies and Sona’s only concern is to nurture the art of service and domesticity in her daughter so that she might be proved a good wife, daughter in law and a mother in her future life after getting married. Nisha is horrified by her mother’s idea of a daughter, the one who helps her each time in the kitchen whenever someone eats. Sona says,

“She is hopeless at cooking. Her real education is in the kitchen.” (P 135)

In the first year of her college Nisha gets attracted towards Suresh who belongs to a lower caste and she has to face the protest of her family against this relation. Later Suresh also denies to marry her because of the pressure of both families. Nisha cannot bear this situation and becomes the patient of Eczema. Her family wants to marry her as soon as possible but as she is declared mangli by her birth, her family could not find a suitable match for her for a long time. Nisha’s younger brother Raju gets married to Pooja and becomes father of a son but Nisha is still unmarried. She becomes frustrated from the emptiness of her life and does not want to waste her life only in waiting for marriage. She starts her own business of stitching garments by the name of ‘Nisha’s Creations’ and proves to be a successful business woman. In her success, she is supported by her family also including Pooja. After some time, there is a proposal of Arvind which comes for Nisha and after finding everything suitable for her, she gets married to Arvind with the consent of her family. In the first month of her marriage she becomes pregnant. She does not want to leave her business but because of her familial and motherly responsibilities, she gives it to Pooja but does not allow to use her name

as Nisha’s Creations as she is determined to come back in her business after a break because it gives her own identity to her which is shared by none. After ten months of her marriage, she gives birth to twins, a boy and a girl and starts to enjoy the bliss of her happy married life. In the naming ceremony of her children she feels herself fulfilled. Amid her family she is very happy and satisfied in her own home.

‘Her duty was over- God had been kind, however hard it was to believe.’ (P 336)

II. CONCLUSION

So, this brief discussion about the novel Home by Manju Kapur reveals that how difficult it is for a girl to survive in her own home with dignity and to live with her own choice Nisha has to struggle at every step in her life but it is her invincible spirit which gives her immense courage and which is the chief characteristic of Manju Kapur’s protagonists. Manju kapur is always aware about the current happenings around the society and she gives it expression in her novels also. Nisha is the representative of the changing image of woman in the society who is educated and self-confident.

As Dr. Ashok Kumar says,

“Manju Kapur has joined the growing number women writers from India on whom the image of suffering but stoic woman eventually breaking traditional boundaries has had a significant impact.”

III. REFERENCES

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