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Reflection of culture and Tradition in Manju Kapur's *Home*

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Abstract

Manju Kapur is a versatile author, and all of her novels portray the true and authentic picture of human life under various circumstances. The novels of Manju Kapur invite our serious attention, and the quality that we find in her books is of rare merit and distinction. *Home*, one of her most successful delineations from the perspective of the social and cultural milieu, forces the readers to think deeply on a lot of issues of family life. Nisha, the protagonist has to suffer a lot just because the members of her family do not try for equality and justice. The present paper tries to present such more delineation. It reflects the cultural and traditional aspects also.

Keywords- Home, Novel, Family, Suffer, Male, Society

It is generally believed that Indian Novels in English registered a remarkable growth in the decades of Eighties. However, it is conveniently forgotten that in the next decade of nineties the tempo was sustained and some outstanding novels and novelists appeared. Novelist like Allen Sealy (*The Everest Hotel*), Amit Chaudhary (*Freedom Song*), Sudhir Kakar (*The Ascetic of Desire*), Arundhati Roy (*The God of small Things*), and Manju Kapur (*Difficult daughters*) appeared almost at the same time. Women studies also receive considerable serious attention in the decade of nineties. New names like those of Shashi Deshpande, Namita Gokhlae, Gita Mehta, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Anita Nair and Gita Hariharan have made significant contributions to Indian Novel in English by their forceful and distinctive writing. Women writings show that they have broken their long silence and defied the norms of patriarchy within Indian tradition and culture. Most of the women novelists in our country have provided a new dimension to English literature by opting for conditions and issues related to women in such a male chauvinistic society and social way of living. "Apart

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from Love, Sex, and contemporary reality Indian English women novelists have also feminist Novels. The rights of women must be preserved, the women novelist seems to say” (Das, 57).

Manju Kapur, the novelist is full of Indian fragrance, and we find some kind of rare originality in her works, and this originality is the recognition of our culture and tradition. She raises her voice in her works through the characters. Her novels deal with women who raise their voice for rights and sexual equality. Home is a place where a girl gets attached to the traditional values of her family and which after marriage she carries it to her husband’s household. Throughout her life she is silent to the domestic violence that is passed from one generation to the other. The male-dominated society dominated women for ages. Women have been the silent sufferer both physically as well as mentally. It shows how female characters are suffering in the name of tradition and culture. Like Manju Kapur’s debut novel, *Difficult Daughters*, her third novel *Home* also depicts the women of three generations, Banwari Lal’s wife, her daughters –in- law namely Sona and Rupa and Sona’s daughter Nisha. Through the character of Nisha, Manju Kapur shows the domestic violence which she undergoes and also her struggle to survive in the society in which she lives.

Home is about the home of Lala Banwarilal, a businessman at Karol Bagh in Delhi, a patriarch, who strongly believes in living in a joint family. He is the head of the family. Men in the family are carried forward to work outside the home while their wives are implied to play their roles at home. There are many blows that come to Banwari Lal’s joint family. The unhappy marriage and the suspicious death of his daughter Sunita, who leaves behind a son named Vicky, whom Banwari Lal keeps in his household despite opposition from the other family member. Now Sona the elder daughter-in -law of Banwari Lal is forced to shower her motherly love and emotions into her dead sister–in law’s son Vicky against her will and wishes.” Beti now you are his mother. God has rewarded your devotion. Sometimes our wishes are fulfilled in strange ways (Kapur, *Home*, 27).

However, Sona’s pain and sufferings as a childless woman is comforted only after ten years of her marriage, when Nisha is born as her first child. She is the apple of every one’s eye in the family, everyone in the family is very happy, but this happiness could not last for longer time as Vicky on the other hand, very soon becomes the Black sheep of the family who is hated by everyone partly for his misfortune and partly for his bad behaviour towards

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Nisha-the loving daughter of Yashpal and Sona who is born after ten years of rigorous prayers of her mother.

Nisha is the protagonist of the novel, and Manju Kapur has very minutely described the tumultuous growing up years of Nisha in a heart rendering manner as she is abused by her cousin Vicky and though the family members have the knowledge of Vicky's incestuous behaviour towards Nisha, they do nothing owing to the family honour. Manju Kapur has tried to present a lot of issues in this book which are commonly encountered in a joint family and are usually kept under veil to protect family honour, in the name of tradition and culture. Manju Kapur in the present novel *Home* delineates the everyday struggles Indian women face when they try to assert their individuality and claim their own space within the structure of joint family. Kapur through the child sexual abuse of Nisha brings out the gender based violence in the family and shows how the woman is oppressed through her body. This physical assault, "endures an invasion of the self, the intrusion of the inner space, a violation of her sexual and physical autonomy". Kapur depicts the life of the protagonist Nisha to show that in Indian homes the socialization of the girl child is a complex process, the main purpose of which is to inculcate in girls the appropriate codes of conduct including self-effacement and self-denial and to train them to see their life primarily in terms of service to others. "*Home* offers an interesting as well as shocking realities of a traditional family life of India. Here, in this novel Manju Kapur's writing does not choose a wider canvas rather reflects whatever happens within the four wall of a house of an Indian businessman family; she very cleverly depicts the ups and downs, the ins and outs, tension and happiness that goes between the tradition and modernity in a traditional family. In it the novelist has taken up the portrayal of a joint family of Banwari Lal who runs a cloth business in Karol Bagh, Delhi. He has in his family his wife, his two sons Yashpal and Pyarelal and a daughter named Sunita. Both the sons sacrifice their studies for helping father in trade. Here Manju Kapur brings out the minute description of a traditional family that how joint efforts are made, sacrifices are done for the smooth running and development of a business. In this story there are also two sisters named Sona and Rupa. Yashpal the elder son of Banwari Lal falls in love with Sona. This incident has really shaken the family as the parents have never thought that their such a responsible son will fall in the trap of a beauty. His mother was also intolerable to this. She says "The girl must have done black magic to insure him, otherwise would he go against his

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own family after seeing her face for a second” (Kapur, *Home*4). Finally the marriage was done but Yashpal’s mother does not like Sona as she finds that all the attention of his son is focussed upon her, In a traditional family a bitter relationship is often seen between a daughter in law and mother in law, and this is very beautifully depicted in this novel by Manju Kapur. This novel also unravels the sexual exploitation of one of the major character Nisha the daughter of Yashpal and Sona by Vicky. It is not made public for the fear of disgrace. Further Manju Kapur has also projected new generation that how intolerable they get after the death of their grandfather Mr. Banwari Lal. They never try to accommodate themselves according to the situation. They changed the house and also renovated the old shop without caring the sentiments of their elders. Here through the novel Manju Kapur has tried to contrast a balance between the old and the new, past and present, tradition and modernity. After a lots of ups and downs in her childhood Nisha grows up, she starts going to college and gets romantically involved with a boy, However she is left heart-broken and further gets skin disease which ruins her beauty.

Each and every girl naturally gets nervous when she thinks of marriage and going in a new family and environment. A girl is never allowed to discuss her marital descendants. ‘Why does he want to see me?’ persisted Nisha. I don’t want to see him. You have chosen, it is enough. Sona beamed at the proper feelings of her daughter. Of course there is no need, but he is very particular, But mind, you don’t say much,’ she added.” (Kapur, *Home*, 297).

Kapur evoked several societal evils which include classicism, superstitious beliefs and intimate oppression to the marginalized women within the society.’ Don’t talk like a fool,’ scolded Yashpal.’ It is custom. We have taken with our daughters- in-law; we will give with our daughter.’ And without her asking, he added, “We have also spoken to them about a maid. If your mother-in-law wants, she will stay there; if not, we will pay for her to come and go every day. We have told them you need help in the kitchen. It was Pooja’s family who showed us how to do these things.’ (Kapur, *Home*, 299).

Manju Kapur makes a satire of the Indian psychology of visiting ashrams and Babas for getting opinion and allowing them to take decision in their own family matters. These Babas directly and both indirectly govern the family, grabbing attractive rewards (profits). Apart from this, Indians are well known for staying in the ashrams by paying a lot of hard

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earned money as a gift for a peace of mind and thinking of safety and security. Manju Kaur wishes a social reform in this issue.

‘Does he know about me?’

The father sighed.’ We have told him. Babaji also advised.’

That is why he wants to see me, to see how bad, hardly noticeable.’ (*Home*, 299)

Even in a married Woman, one evening Astha said to Hemant, Ma has found some swami. She wants me to go to him and look inside myself.

‘Rubbish. These people just try and sound clever.’

‘That is what I said.’

‘Who is this man?’ I don’t know. (*A Married Woman*, 56).

Home deals with the traditional bias against women in patriarchal system of our society. It demonstrates how women have suffered in the traditional set-up, even though they are known to be makers of home and hearth. The novel probes the issues that women lose their identity after their marriage as they find themselves in a new culture and tradition.

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