

Metamorphosis of Women in Manju Kapur's Novels

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an effort for an examination of the transition of women characters in Manju Kapur's novels. Manju Kapur, one among the eminent female Indian writers of contemporary era, has written almost six novels. Most of her novels revolves around the theme of upper middle class people, educated women who denies their responsibilities and families owing to personal endeavour, financial prosperity, sensual desires, emotional independence etc. The pressure of attaining self independence and personal achievements form the base for all her novels. Their desires are spilled out only after their marriage. By closely examining Kapur's novels, it registers the dilemmas and obstacles in marital life. Through her novels, Kapur makes us aware that Life is not a bed of roses and either husband or wife should compromise each other for a better well being.

Women in her novels, being untutored of having educated are deluded by themselves and therefore ruining their lives eventually.

Keywords : Self Identity, Metamorphosis, Tradition, Marriage, downfall, Escapism.

Introduction

India is a society undergoing through transitions. Men and women are always evolving between the Social functioning and dependabilites. While the typical traditional stereotypes are still seen in house holds, there are metamorphosis happening amongst Modern Indian Women. The transformation of women started budding after the Indian Independence in 1947, while the country focused on its own Identity and citizens. Women Literary started blowing up and women are now stepped into professional fields as well. Even the patriarchal ideologies began to shackle and women break the so called 'being home' shell and placed a respectful position in the society. Now a transition is evident in the status of women, and they started realizing their true potential. The works of Manju kapur are a string of issues faced by

women like Self discovery, Identity crisis, Realization of the self, Inter and Intra personal relationships etc.

Transitional Feminism and Displaced Identities

Literature is the mirror of society. It reflects the notions and bias of the society. Through Indian Literature, the life of Indian people mainly their culture, lifestyle, language etc. are being protected to an extent. Manju Kapur, is considered as one of the laudable writers among the contemporary Indian female writers. Her most acclaimed novels include: *Difficult Daughter* (1998), *A Married Woman*(2003), *Home*(2006), *The Immigrant* (2000), *Custody*(2011) and *Brothers* (2016). She focused on women protagonists. The agonies of women from different atmosphere who tend to liberate themselves from the shackles of society is very well portrayed in her novels. A metamorphosis among women is evident, but some are perverted due to their crisis and backgrounds.

Kapur's novels awakes the consciousness of modern Indian couples who are unaware of love, sex, betrayal, culture and responsibilities as well. How the female protagonists are misled by themselves while trying to exploring their individuality is illustrated skillfully in her novels. She paints the sufferings of women in their marital life and the pangs of relationships break up and also the switching of female characters from traditional backdrops to unconventional and radical ways. Her novels focused on illegal affairs, lust, betrayal, money, lesbianism, infertility etc. Marriage is a socially and legally sanctioned union between spouses which establishes the rights and obligations between them. A couple who are planned to get married should understand the means and ideologies of marriage throughout their lives. The dichotomy between social involvements and liabilities are caught up in the novels of Kapur.

Difficult Daughters, the debut novel of Manju Kapur portrays the obstacles in women education and the struggles in their life skillfully. *Virmathi*, the female protagonist undergoes many twists and turns to fulfill her desire of higher education. The novel is an exemplum for the tensions existed in a mother- daughter relationships.

Kapur illustrates the long-term pre-marital affairs of *Virmathi* and professor *Harish* and the novel is an endless argument between marriage and education. The writer points out the consequences and stigma existed in social behaviour. In case of the protagonist, sex satisfies her need for love.

Virmathi, who is educated and moreover a middle class women is ignorant about her pre-marital relationships with a married man. These dilemmas made her restless and flustered. Through an educated girl, she still went wrong and she has to be aware of the things happening around her, but instead she chooses the wrong path thinking that, it is the way to prove her individuality. And this problem ends with a conclusion that, in a patriarchal society though both male and female are equally involved in a mistake, only female has to face the consequences.

Most of the times , Kapur’s protagonists are in a conundrum of their choices even though they know it is not applicable to the Indian society but still they cannot get rid of it. Virmathi says, “ In my family, marriages are not made like this.” DD(152). But out of nowhere, she fall in love with the professor blindly and asks him to marry her.

Kapur’s second novel, *A Married Woman* also reinforces the issues in marriage, marital discord and lesbianism. It deals with a Married woman Astha, her love and concerns during the period of political chaos. Astha has a homosexual relationship with Pippe, it happens because of her unawareness of marital relationships. Being unconcerned about her responsibilities, she has abandoned her obligations as wifehood and motherhood. Astha who maintains a better bond with her husband, began to shatters when she met Pippe, a widow of a Muslim activist. Her life became meaningless after involved in the protest and rebellion. And thus a deep attachment happens between them. Both of them feel solace and intense love on each other. Kapur discloses the post modern features in Pippe’s statement through her character portrayal, “Sufficiently isolated from conventional society to believe her choice of partner concerned only herself.”ANW(117).

The demurral attitudes which existed in our society towards the upbringing of girl child in India is illustrated in her third novel *Home*. Kapur introduces Nisha, the protagonist as intrepid, upskill and stabilized. Kapur takes the readers through three generations and reveals the lively and rarely enthralled accounts. The myriad issues faced by an Indian family such as the revolt against the age-old traditions , quest for identity, the issues in marriage, the dilemmas faced by women and women’s struggles for the survival etc. are explored in the novel.

The *Immigrant* revolves around the story of an Indian couple, Nina and Ananda, it deals with the quest for Identity, alienation and the issues related to their transformation through becoming an Immigrant. Both of them are in search of a cordial co-existence in their married life but are bound together by their secludedness. They both find pleasure in extra marital affairs. Nina's partner in her illegal affairs is her library science classmate. Thus her marriage life shatters and it ends in ultimate separation. Nina defends her illegal affair with Anton by declaring “ That she liked, she had lived who can feel guilty about living? Judging from the evidence and the sexual therapy centres, every citizen in North America regarded good sex as their inalienable right. It was her too”(TI 260).

Moving on to Kapur’s *Custody*, it explores the complexities existed in marriage and family in modern India and also reflects the life of changing women in a time of increased globalization also. And the novel also throws light on the issues of children marriage and how infertility blames females only and how the consequences of divorce affects children. The novel makes a comparison of two different women, Shagun, who betrays her family and Ishitha, who showers true love. Shagun finds happiness being with her husband Raman's boss, Mr.Ashok khanna as he is much wealthy. She ignores her husband and children also her obligations as a wife. She asserts

“ I want something else in my life, can't you understand that? We always meet the same people, talk about the same old things over and over. It's boring (Custody 46).

Her sixth novel *Brothers* limelights how inferiority complex and insecurity affects marital harmony. Tapti, the protagonist who faced the traumas because of her unsecured, inferior nature of her husband Mangal Singh. In order to elude from responsibilities, he wants her to bear a male child. Finally she proclaims that she is not a child bearing machine and she felt like losing her youth at the age of twenty five. Tapti affirms, “ She need space to distance herself from Mangal's desire. Like an oyster reacting to a grain of sand, she vowed to establish a professional life, become someone who couldn't even remotely be construed as a stay at home breeder of male child.” (*Brothers* 266).

As per Indian tradition, a woman who leads a life independent and if she doesn't want to adjust with anyone and proves her individuality is considered as felicitous

Each culture has different concepts of marriage, but the meaning of marriage is same which is the union of two people of opposite sex. The attitudes, thought process, behavioural patterns etc are different. Both the couples should have a compromising mentality and understanding rather than breaking each other on trivial matters. For the sake of children, they have to adjust and compromise in their lives. Illegal relationships never proves one's identity it only ruins the life of an individual. Cultural mortality and social ethics must be followed in order to keep up the values in life. Kapur emphasized that, for attaining a fruitful life, adjustment and acceptance is mandatory.

Conclusion

The domestic issues faced by women are skillfully dealt with the novels of Manju Kapur. The women protagonists of her novels risk the safety of marriage, family bonding and domestic duties in the quest of autonomy, which is suppressed by the hardship of pallocentric society and domestic duties. Nevertheless, the uplifting of the shades of grey in women relationships is portrayed immaculately throughout her novels.

The transition undergoes on women due to their dilemmas regarding marital relationships are vividly picturized in her novels. Even so often, Kapur is tagged as the 'Chronicler of Indian families' to which she replies, " My own feelings is, describe me in anyway you like, as long as I am relevant, as long as I am read, I don't really care... Families reflects all society-social mores, cultural trends, gender relations, class equation - all of them are seen brilliantly in my novels. "

There exists a tussle between Tradition and Modernity. Kapur tried her best in exposing the traditional aspects of society.

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