

THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF MANJU KAPUR

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ABSTRACT

Manju Kapur is the prominent women writer in the field of Indian literature. She is considered to be the brightest star of Indian women writer of English. She is the growing figure in the field of literature, who has significantly contributed her work in Indian fiction. In all her works she deals with the problem of women suffering. All her novel beautifully pictures the longing struggle of women to attain their own identity. A feminist tradition plays a vital role in all her novels. She was well known for her first novel Difficult Daughters. This paper discusses the importance of self-identity in the novel Difficult Daughter and Custody.

KEYWORDS: *Self-identity, Feminism, Tradition, And Modernity*

INTRODUCTION

The Portrayal of women in Indian English fiction is the silent victim of tradition and traditional values of family and society. In all her novels, Kapur deals with the problem and suffering of women to attain their identity. Her novel beautifully pictured the longing struggles of women to attain their identity. She usually sketches her thoughts and ideas, which she later transforms into the form of writing through her female protagonist. She deeply influenced by feminist thinking. She believes in the concept of describing men and women relationship in feminine perspective is inevitable. Her novels give much importance to the female protagonist rather than male. She addresses the main issues of middle-class women in all her novel.

Manju Kapur is the phenomenal women writer, who skilfully describes the plight of Indian middle-class women. Her writing explores the cultural identity and the struggle for the self of women. Kapur's perception of women liberation is deeply stretched with social and cultural matters. Her novels play a significant role to insist the self-development of every woman for the betterment of Indian society. She is the author of five novels, her first novel Difficult Daughters wins the commonwealth prize in the year 1999. A Married Women in 2002, Home in 2006, The Immigrant in 2008, Custody in 2011 and her new work Brothers.

Manju Kapur is the significant writer in presenting the female characters. Kapur's novel deeply analyses the sufferings of women who undergone many family issues. Search for one's destiny is the central theme in all her novels. Her protagonists are educated which let them think in an innovative way to tackle all odds in their life. She has successfully portrayed the conflict of tradition and modernity through her female protagonist. One can see the emergence of new women in Kapur's heroines, who do not want to be a rubber a puppet in the hands of men.

As a feminist writer, Manju Kapur's novels deal with the strong protest of the male-dominated society. All her novel voices against the male domination towards women and also it presents the new Indian women voice against the male chauvinism. A New-woman in search of self-identity is her main theme and seeks liberation in all walks of life and it replaces the traditional image of Indian women.

This novel revolves around the three generations of women such as Kasthuri, Virmati, and Ida. Ida is the protagonist of this novel who recollects her mother's past in the eyes of her uncle. Kapur portrays her women characters in the sense of tradition and modern outlook. Virmati is the protagonist of this novel represents as the former category, Sakunthala her cousin presents in the latter category. Kapur shows the drastic change between these two women characters.

Kasthuri, the mother of Virmati gives birth to eleven children this makes her health becomes weak day by day. But her husband does not care about her. She fails to enjoy her equal rights. So she is put into a situation to give birth to eleven children. She does not find her way to speak about equal rights to her husband. Virmati gets pregnant by Harish and she becomes a second wife of Harish. He compels her to abort the child but she refuses to do that. This shows her identity of new women. She loses her identity and position in the society but she struggles a lot to make space for herself on her own. But she is very confident and rebellious attitude gives her strength to oppose the professor's sexual oppression.

Virmati likes her mother who treats her daughter Ida with the strict patriarchal norms. She fails to be an understanding mother for Ida. This forces Ida to suffer a lot from being independent. Ida belongs to the third generation who is the daughter of Virmati, fights for her identity, dignity, and self-confidence. She is the one who breaks all the traditional norms and male-dominated society. Thus, Ida becomes the typical daughter of a "Difficult Daughter", Virmati. Virmati life is fully under pressure of doing all household work.

Virmati plays a prominent role in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* by taking care of her family. Virmati becomes the second mother of her siblings. She does all the responsibilities and duties of what a male heir does. She divides her time between helping her anaemic mother with household works and her studies. She yearns to lead a cheerful life and aspires to become an independent woman in her life. This creates her image as a strong woman in the eyes of her readers.

Shakunthala, a cousin of Virmati leads an independent life in Lahore. Her way of dressing, lifestyle and activities of Sakunthala disturbs Virmati and she strongly decides to be an independent woman. Sakunthala visits to Virmati's house plants the seed of independency in Virmati. She wants to live like Sakunthala. She learns so many things from Sakunthala such as glamorous against restrictions. Virmati struggles from tradition and modernity. Sakunthala encourages Virmati to become an independent woman. These two women try to break the old costume and traditions.

Manju Kapur explores the hollowness of modern life through the four adult characters, Raman, Shagun, Ashok Kanna, and Ishita, who is the childless divorcee and two children, Arjun and Roohi. In this novel, Kapur rightly shows how the marital set up is disintegrated and ending in divorce and legal custody.

In this story, one is introduced by the main characters Shagun and Raman. Their relationship comes to an end when Raman comes to know the love of Shagun towards Raman's boss Ashok Kanna, who is working as a sales executive. Raman is a fast growing marketing executive at a global drinks company. Shagun is his extraordinarily beautiful wife. With his glittering future, her vivid beauty and their two adorable children eight -year -old Arjun who looks just like her and two -year

-old Roohi who looks just like him. The pair appears to have fulfilled everything.

Shagun is deeply in love with Ashok Kanna and in turn, he also loves her beauty. She has been a wife, mother at the same time a lover, is in dilemma and in constant conflict but as the affair becomes passionate and fiery, Shagun has no regrets in lying to Raman and her mother. She leaves children to her mother and goes off weekends with her lover. She also goes on changing the mindset of her children against their own father. She finally decides to go for divorce. Raman reacts violently as his male ego is hurt. Shagun's mother does her best to unite with her husband and advised her to be faithful to her husband. But she constantly warns her mother that she would never give up her love towards Ashok.

Shagun wants to come out of the protective environment of the peaceful and well-settled family set up. According to her, money is everything. She fights for freedom which was long denied to her in married life. Once lover and companions, husband and wife become enemies locked in an ugly legal battle over their two children. Caught in their midst is the childless Ishitha who is in love with the idea of motherhood. She takes care of the two children Arjun and Roohi. Though she fell in love on Arjun and belong to modern generation she knew her responsibility as a mother. Thus, she proves herself as a good mother and a passionate lover.

Custody is the riveting story of how family-love can disintegrate into an obsession to possess children, body and soul, as well as a chilling critique of the Indian judicial system. It is told with nuance, sympathy, and clear-sightedness, it confirms Manju Kapur's reputation as the great chronicler of the modern Indian family.

In all her novels, Kapur highlights on how women are illtreated in the name of patriarchy or tradition in the Indian society. Kapur's the germinal issues of women in a very befitting manner and the sick, pathetic condition of Indian women. In the novels of Manju Kapur, mother's domination is visible than that of the father. Virmati is forced by Kasthuri to do the household. Her father inspired and fulfilled all her dreams for studying further. Astha's mother forced her to marry and even after settling her family, she has more confidence in Hemant than Astha. Nisha's disaster is the cause of Sona's less attention towards her Nina is brought up hardly by her mother as a widow. So there is no one behind her for Nina in this world. And Shagun denies accepting anything from her mother in the matter regarding her marriage. Ishita follows her mother in marrying Suryakanta, but reject her ideas of living with her after torturing her for her infertility. Thus one comes to know that every decision is taken by the mother in the matter of marriage of the protagonists. In spite of all their problems they try to establish their self-identity and proved their individuality.

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