



EGOCENTRIC DEPARTMENT IN THE NOVELS OF MANJU KAPUR'S *HOME AND A MARRIED WOMAN* : A BRIEF ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the egocentric behavior of women with the references of the novels of Manju Kapur who show how joint families can destroy as well as preserve an individual's life. In depicting the inner subtlety of woman's mind, Kapur displays a mature understanding of the female psyche; she manages to blend the personal with the external. Manju Kapur focuses on assertion of individuality which leads her protagonist to their isolation from their relatives or marital disharmony. Kapur indirectly evokes the women from immature activities of society.

Key Words: *Female Psyche, Oppression, Egoism, Self-assertion, Patriarchal society.*

INTRODUCTION

The position of women has long been a burning issue in Indian society. It has been a topic of discussion not only in Indian history but also in the literature. The status of women in India is strongly connected to family unit is patrilineal. Families are multi-generational, hierarchical, with the elders having authority over the younger generations and the males over females. Indian women who express anger towards the family members that they are not being valued enough by other family members for the effort they make. Their perception of themselves and their role in the family tends to differ from other family members.

Manju Kapur is predominant for her depiction of Indian marriage that has the female protagonist's shows how the Indian females surrounded with others and the role of women in their marriage life. Manju Kapur concentrates on social reality, roots of Indian family, women psyche, generation gap, man-woman relationship, and problems faced by every

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common man. She is like other female novelists concentrates on women; she especially focuses on their awareness on individuality.

In some cases, women are in need of individuality while their marriage is in despair. The men who are the products of patriarchy cannot treat their wives equally at sometimes consciously and unconsciously. These inscribed cultural factors on men are also at sometimes the cause for marital conflicts. Manju Kapur concentrates on marital issues, not only to imitate her Indian society but also she wishes to see the changes through her novels. Though in her novels, she concentrates on female characters and their assertion. She indirectly provokes society from such vulnerable and immature activities in marriage.

Egocentrism is the inability to differentiate between self and other. More specifically, it is the inability to untangle subjective schemes from objective reality, an inability to understand or assume any perspective other than their own. The word ego means “individual”. So egocentric behavior is a way of behaving that is centered on the individual.

The Indian society is basically patriarchal where a woman is given the secondary role but the modern woman does not find any sense in such self-sacrifice and earns for self-expression, individuality, and self-identity. Throughout her life a woman depends on her father, brother, husband, and son consequently, she loses her own identity, but always remains an urge in her heart to prove herself and gain self-identity.

Kapur tries to express the social changes of the time also alter something deep inside the individual. Her novel touches myriad issues like revolt against deep-rooted family tradition, the search of selfhood, woman’s right, and marriage. Kapur portrays the many female characters like Sona, Rupa, Nisha and Sunitha etc. throws light on the condition of woman and gives a tone of humour to intensify the pain that serves as a satire to slash the society. Both the sisters are childless, which is enough to make their life miserable and especially of Sona who lives in a joint family with her mother-in-law.

In the novel *Home*, the marriage of Sona to Yashpal also has a story as she was chosen by her future husband because of her extremely good looks and fair complexion. The novelist mocks the practice of marriageable girls to accord themselves in any occasion so that can grab suitable matches. Mother of Yashpal is so cruel to her daughter-in-law that she doesn’t want to visit, “a clever, manipulative, dowry less creature” (89). Even after ten years of marriage, Sona was not able to bear children which make her life even more miserable. Though her husband is caring but her mother-in-law keeps on taunting her. Kapur wants to highlight the issue that a woman is the biggest enemy of woman as even the death of Sunitha, her sister-in-law, murdered by her husband not to bring enough dowries in marriage, is not enough to make her mother-in-law soft and considerate. When Sona tries to console her against the

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death of her daughter she screams, “You think sleep is possible? What can you know of a mother’s feelings? All you do is enjoying life, no children, no sorrow, only a husband to dance around you”. (18)

The untimely death of her sister-in-law gives Sona the charge of her son Vicky who is rejected by his father. Sona is not at all happy to be the mother of that ugly son of Sunitha but time and again she is consoled by her husband, sister and mother-in-law that may be it is the fruit of her prayers which is fallen in her lap as a blessing of God. But, suddenly after ten years of her marriage may be by chance or by the blessings of God, Sona conceives a baby and with the birth of Nisha, she feels elevated in the family but it is only with the birth of a boy she feels her importance in the family. Kapur highlights the importance of boy baby in the family by her writings.

Sona, the protagonist’s mother is an ordinary girl, married into this prosperous Banwari Lal family. Her mother-in-law treats her with contempt for having bewitched her son by her good looks and forced him into marriage. It is only after ten years when she gives birth to Nisha and later to Raju that she becomes secure of her respectful position in the Banwari Lal family. Sona, who has born suppression, contempt and fought the fierce battle for equality treating her daughter Nisha inferior to her son Raju, in a small instance: when the boys went out play, Nisha sets up a wail to accompany them, Sona admonishes her that girls should remain indoors as they would get black and dirty. But Nisha argues,

Nisha: “So what? Raju is black”.

Sona: “Raju is the colour of Krishna”.

Nisha: “I also want to be the colour of Krishna.

I am going to play cricket in the sun”.

Sona: “Krishna is God. You will look like the sweeper woman

who comes to the house. You want to look like a Kali bhainsi?” (52).

Nisha’s college life filled with adventurous, making her modern and bold in her decision. She begins to define her independence and react to her rigorous upbringing at home. She wants to negate everything her mother stood for. Her first step in this direction was to cut her hair which her mother valued as indispensable for womanhood.

To encourage her rebellion she thought of the girls in her class, girls with swishing open hair, wavy, curly blow-dried, or hanging straight, framing faces with fringes, flicks or stray tendrils. She thought of her own, in the thick, rubber-banded plait, never falling free, ugly, and unimaginative. (147)



Nisha's internal turmoil takes the shape of a strong motivation within her. She does not want to escape or turn back; instead she wants to face the odds in her life. She explores her strengths and ideas and decides to fuse them with her father's influence.

Astha, the protagonist, in *A Married Woman* is a happily married woman who in the initial years of marriage savors the marital bliss but as the time passes, she realizes that loneliness has pervaded her life. She feels her husband, Hemant, ignores her psychological and emotional needs and expects her to take care of the family, against all odds. He remains oblivious to her preferences, not only as a wife but also as an individual. Astha ends up indulging into a full-fledged love relationship with a woman. She feels Hemant is incapable of comprehending her emotions and desires, and has crude understanding. In fact she herself is incapable of resolving the issues with Hemant.

In her novel, Kapur has exhibited the new facets of the married women. Her new women, Astha and Pipeelika are disillusioned in life with their suspicions of male integrity, and their awareness of male frailty. Kapur thinks that, "There is a man within every woman and a woman in every man when manhood is questioned and womanhood is fragmented" (201). By knowing the causes of problems of women in and out of the family Kapur has emphasized on the causes of Astha's restlessness and her search for identity.

Astha likes to have a break from dependence on others and proceeds on the path of full human status that poses a threat to Hemant and his male superiority. Although she finds herself hoodwinked between the pressures of the modern society and fetters of ancient biases she sets out on her quest for a more meaningful life in her lesbian relationship. She commemorates her insulted feminine sensibility raising the male tantrum to socially transform a society.

If women are given chance for self-fulfillment, can become stronger and are ready to fight all obstacles. These novels usually dwell upon the emergence of women from marginality to centrality, from role to individuality. Egocentric behavior is a stepping stone, from which we may learn many important lessons. By the parameters of egocentric behavior, we need to serve the collectively that love our neighbor as our self.

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