

# Home: Depiction of Social Reality in Manju Kapur's Novel

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### Abstract

*The portrayal of women in Indian English fiction as the silent sufferers and upholders of the tradition and traditional values of family and society has undergone tremendous change in the post independence period. Manju Kapur's novel, *Difficult Daughters, A Married Woman and Home*, displays a new confidence in using the fictional mode for creative expression and depicting social reality. Taking into account the complexity of life, different histories, cultures and different structures of values, women's question, despite basic solidarity, needs to be tackled in relation to the socio-cultural situation. The impact of patriarchy on the Indian society varies from the one in the west. Manju Kapur has her own concerns, priorities as well as her own ways on dealing with the predicament of women protagonists. Kapur, being one of the modern day women authors, has expressed herself freely and boldly on a variety of themes without adopting feminist postures. Her novels furnish examples of a whole range of attitudes towards the importation of Indian tradition. However, the novelist seems to be aware of the fact that the women of India have indeed achieved their success in sixty years of Independence, but if there is to be true female independence, too much remains to be done. The present paper attempts to portray the reality of a typical Indian family in Manju Kapur's *Home*.*

**Keywords:** Society, Solidarity, Reality, Patriarchy, Cultures

Social Realism is the interpretation of life which focuses on social issues and the hardships of everyday life, social injustice, economic hardship, through the unvarnished pictures of life's struggles. According to The Oxford Companion to English Literature, "Social Realism is a distinct term used loosely to describe a realistic, objective yet socially aware and detailed method of artistic presentation". A realistic novel gives pleasure to the readers, because it results in understanding of life and its problems. It provides a kind of inner illumination, sometimes there is a total emotional identification of reader with the character in the novel and he derives full pleasure from it. A realistic novel satisfies the readers' soul.

Manju Kapur's third novel, *Home* deals with ordinary middle class family life in Delhi. The novel depicts how family norms are being ignored by the new generation. It also shows various kinds of pressures on Indian women like the pressures on Indian wives to produce children – boys for preference. Kapur also shows very skillfully how the wedding ceremonies are used in Indian society for searching grooms for marriageable girls. She underlines very beautifully the fact that a girl does not have a home to call her own because her own parents remind her endlessly that she will be free

to do anything after her marriage in her own so called 'home'. In fact Home highlights Kapur's philosophy that people do not change overnight; sometimes they do not change over a period of time as well. Life without hope would be impossible. Thus Home is a splendid example of Kapur's understanding of the infidelity of human beings and their relationships, the power struggle within a family, the suppression of individuality, the selective thinking that can make a woman feel threatened and aggrieved by her son's bride.

The novel portrays many instances of social realities, especially in terms of treatment that is meted out to women in a male dominated society, through the portrayal of its women characters. In the beginning of the novel when the character Sona first met Yashpal, she was only seventeen years old. She had come from Meerut with her mother and sister to attend an uncle's wedding. Sona's mother wished that both of her daughters would look most charming in the function and the reason of this desire, which is present in almost every mother of a young daughter in India, is stated thus by the novelist: "It was necessary for marriageable girls to blossom during such occasions, it being that among the guests a boy, or better still his parent, would cast a glance and hold it steadily upon her person. Then it was hoped subsequent enquiries would yield results" (3).

Eventually Sona married to Yashpal. But she was not accepted as a daughter-in-law by her mother-in-law known only as "Magi", never by name – an indication of her status as nothing more significant than the patriarch's wife. Sona often realized her marginal status in that house: "When the two of them were alone, she could see how her mother-in-law had to struggle to even talk to her. Every gesture suggested the daughter-in-law had no right to exist, and if she had lived, why was she doing in their house?" (Home 12)

When she told her husband about the cold behavior of her mother-in-law, he tried to soothe her by saying, "She's not thrashing or beating you.... Then patience, my life, patience" (Home 12). Sona as an individual had no identity of her own. She was expected not to demand love, care and attention from her mother-in-law. Once she would perform the duty of a daughter-in-law i.e. to give birth to a child preferably a boy only then she would get the desired love and respect from her in-laws as Yashpal said to her: "Once we have children, you will see how she changes. Inside she is all love" (12)

Manju Kapur portrays the behavior of the Indian Mother-in-law. As when Sona tried to comfort her mother-in-law saying that she should stop crying since her tears would not bring her daughter back who had committed a suicide because of dowry system, the old woman glared at Sona and spat out.

Women has no home of their own, before marriage they should depend on her parents and after marriage on her husband and then on her son. It is an irony that woman is against the progress of a woman.

Manju Kapur also acquaints in her novel with the pressures of horoscopes within the institution of marriage. And when Nisha fails in her education due to lack of encouragement and support from her family, Sona says, "Her real education is in Kitchen... people are suspicious of brides that are very educated. Too many ideas make it difficult to adjust." (140)

Nisha realized that she belonged to nowhere. She had no home of her own. Throughout her life she waited for the moment when she would be in her own home after marriage where she would be free to realize her dreams. But now she had to do what her mother-in-law and her husband Arvind wanted her to do. If she wished her marital relationship successful, she had to push her frustrations aside, and focus on her duties as a wife and daughter-in-law.

Whatever will happen, will happen, she thought. She had grown up listening to this fatalism, now she felt its consoling power. Whatever has to happen, will happen. She could not control events, she could not demand love. This had already been made clear, but now she was willing to accept it." (331)

Manju Kapur through her novels has portrayed the mind and soul of her female protagonists, she dealt with the hidden and silent thoughts rather than their appearances. Kapur pictures the suppressed and subjugated world of Indian Women in her novels. In the institution of marriage, women try to adjust, tolerate and have to play the idealized role of wife. Social conditioning is a double-edged sword. Among women it generates self-effacement and a tendency to unquestioningly accept their second status. Among men it consolidates the belief that such servile, self-effacement among women is natural. This attitude keeps the wife and husband apart, neglecting any possibility of emotional attachment and psychological understanding.

In the novels of Manju Kapur, one can find the true representation of Contemporary Indian life, traditions and culture in its vivid and realistic form. Her social realism includes his understanding that human lives in middle class who are limited with opportunities. Social customs and reality are intensely described with unbiased objectivity and complete detached observation. Her novels are the expression of various problems of middle class society in which he has been involved. She has an eye for everything that relates to and is related to the life of middle class.

Now days with the spread of education and awakening amongst women, the scenario has changed. The 'new women' is aware of her rights. Here, Manju Kapur's women are ready to rebel against their parents and the society. Depicting the middle-class milieu, the novel *Home* concentrates on the struggle of women to overcome the dilemmas of pre-fixed definitions and gender bias. Moreover, Kapur has tried to bring out the reasons like the incompatibility, misunderstanding, fissures and raptures in man- women relationship. In order to live fulfilling and successful life women should be ambitious and men should be supportive.

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