

Socio Cultural Influences in Manju Kapur's Novel the Immigrant

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Abstract

Manju Kapur is a famous Indian writer. Her novels are Difficult Daughter, A Married Woman, Home, The Immigrant, and Custody. Kapur famous for expressing woman's thoughts in female perspective. Her protagonists are belonging to the background of middle class. Kapur's novels' themes expressing feminist thoughts. Kapur's portrait her female characters psychological condition in family life, and their needs, their agony then express how their overcome their problems. The main problem is seeking respect, attention from their husband, when their expectations fail to satisfied after that they start to think about themselves. Their sense of neglection make them to get their self-respect, self-identity and want them to stand in their own feet. This paper going to critically analyze Manju Kapur's novel the Immigrant with the help of Sociocultural theory.

Keywords: Society, Culture, Nature, Immigrant, Self-Discipline, Rootlessness.

Manju Kapur is one of the famous woman writers in India. Her five novels are expressing woman's thoughts in female perspective. They are Difficult Daughter, A Married Woman, Home, The Immigrant, and Custody. Manju Kapur's first novel Difficult Daughter won the 1999 Commonwealth Writer's Prize for best first book, in Europe and South Asia. This paper is going to analysis her one of the novels Immigrant.

The immigrant is the fourth novel of Manju Kapur. It was published on 2008. The theme of the novel is sufferings of immigrants due to adapt a life of new place (Country). Social and cultural context are different from a place to another place. According to researchers Humans are social animals. Their thoughts, behaviors, languages are unconsciously influenced by their social and cultural factors. Is humans are using social and cultural norms to fulfill their desires?, is humans using social and cultural norms as a tool to make their life more convenient?:

Social cultural factors influence people's feelings, behaviors, attitudes, values, beliefs and interactions. These factors shape social development, economic development and cultural change... social cultural factors influence the feelings, attitudes, values, beliefs and interactions of a population group. Examples include social classes, religious norms, wealth distribution, language, business and health practices, social values and attitude towards work. (Forsyth)

Nina and Ananda are the main characters in this novel, both Nina and Ananda are born and brought up in India. Ananda is Nina's husband; he belongs to a traditional Brahmin family. Ananda has an elder sister, her name is Alka and she got love marriage. His parents raised him with the surrounding of the rituals and lifestyle of his caste. Ananda is a typical Indian son. He wants to repay his love as a son to his parents in the form of giving good decent life in their old age. His parents' death makes himself feel meaningless in his life. On account of his uncle's motivation, he leaves India and migrated to Canada.

Nina is a thirty years old woman, living with her widowed mother in Delhi. Nisha is working at Mirada House College. After her marriage with Ananda, she migrated to Canada.

Sociocultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky(1896-1934)is a famous Russian psychologist. According to Vygotsky society and culture are the important sources for human's cognitive development. Vygotsky's three sociocultural concepts are:

1. Social interaction
2. More knowledgeable other
3. Zone of proximal development

Sociocultural theory stresses the role that social interaction plays in psychological development. It suggests that human learning is largely a social process, and that our cognitive functions are formed based on our interactions with those around us who are "more skilled." According to the sociocultural perspective, our psychological growth is guided, in part, by people in our lives who are in mentor-type roles, such as teachers and parents. Other times, we develop our values and beliefs through our interactions within social groups or by participating in cultural events.(Cherry)

Social Interaction

Humans are learning from their environment through interactions since their childhood. Social and cultural interactions develop human cognitive level.

Ananda's parents raise him as a perfect Brahmin in the environment of the rituals of the cast. Cigarettes, non-veg, alcohol, and immoral activities are taboo in his early life. Ananda's college life changes him little by little. In his hostel, roommates are also Brahmin students but they all take cigarettes and alcohol in their hostel room. At the end of his studies in the college, he is not only graduated in studies alone but also in smoking and taking alcohol. He realized his every success step by step give him liberation from the taboos of his family:

From the moment of his birth Ananda had been surrounded by the rituals of his caste. Before he left home, his parents did their best to reinforce the practices of a lifetime. He was a Brahmin; his body must never be polluted by dead flesh. Low caste boys in the college hostel might try and tempt him towards non-veg, cigarettes and alcohol. Should he deviate from the pure habits they had instilled in him, his mother's heart would break. She assured him of this with her disturbed,devoted gaze.

Ananda was put in a room with three boys who, including the other Brahmin., all smoked. The air was blue with the haze of constant indulgence. He breathed deeply and smelled liberation. From cigarettes he graduated to alcohol. As he moved from first to second to third year at King George's he found parents allowed their sons a certain autonomy if they were doing well. So, freedom went hand in hand with success. He absorbed this lesson. (Kapur 14)

More Knowledgeable Other

Human cannot learn everything by himself. He needs to learn knowledge from others, who experienced more than him. Like parents, teachers, elder persons can give knowledge through advice, their knowledges are gained from their experience.

Ananda feels completely broken after his parents' death. His uncle Dr. Sharma, brother of Ananda's mother motivated him to do his master degree at Dalhousie University at Canada. His Uncle try to pull him away from his gloomy state, so he pushes Ananda to a new life and goals. Dr. Sharma advice Ananda to complete his degree and join as an assistant Dentist to a senior Doctor then became a citizen of Canada. It gives him a meaning to live his life. Then he energetically starts to work hard and reach that position. "Destiny though had other plans. His mother's brother, the doctor uncle settled in Halifax for the past twenty years, urged him to come to Canada. In India he would be constantly reminded of his loss, whereas if he wanted to make a fresh start, this was a country filled with opportunities. He sent one through the post: admission forms for the Dalhousie University Dental School"(Kapur 17).

Zone of Proximal Development

According to Vygotsky, self-learning cannot accrue all kinds of knowledge. Human needs other's help to elevate him from his stagnant state. Others like friends, peer group and also people, who are well versed in certain area.

Ananda has problem in his sexual life. From his girlfriend to wife, he unable to satisfied any woman in his life. It develops the inferiority complex within himself. His girlfriend Sue openly advices him to meet doctor for his problem, it hurts his ego. He completely avoids female companion. He compromises himself he could not satisfy western woman but he could live with an Indian woman. He disappointed when his wife starts to complain him for getting pregnant. Even his wife suggests him to meet doctors, who are specialist in those particular area. Ananda meets doctors for his sexual problem, he gets better result after his treatment:

Two weeks later Ananda's therapy ended. He has lasted almost twenty minutes inside Marty. Dr Hansen assured him that his present condition would be permanent as long as he continued to follow the techniques, they had taught him. His three thousand dollars had been well spent. Flushed with achievement, he set off for the long journey home. He felt there was a sexual world waiting to be conquered; the prowess she had not had as a bachelor was now his. (Kapur 201)

Sociocultural Influence

Nature creates a perfect structure for all species in this world. According to science human is a social animal. From the beginning humans are living a life like other animals in the worlds. All animals in the world are completely depend on nature. Evolution of human kind makes great development in human cognitive system, human start to think differently from other animals. Animals in the earth depend on nature, due to survival animals flexing itself to nature, but human start to flexing nature for their comfortable life.

In nature there is no inequality between male and female species. Society, which is created by human, have vast difference between male and female. Society constructed by group of people with certain behaviors, customs, norms, these things combine and create a culture. Culture is different from place to place, so each place in this world has their own culture, behaviors, norms in their society. In nature female is the center, because procreation process largely depends on female species, but in society and culture male is the center, because it created by them. Man creates society and culture's norms positively to them. Society and culture show partiality between man and woman. In India partiality between man and woman are immense:

Culture and gender are closely intertwined with biological factors creating predispositions for sex and gender development. However, sociocultural factors are critical determinants leading to gender differences in roles and behaviors that may be modest but culturally important. Culture has profound effects on gender-related behavior, values, identity, roles, and how these are

regarded in various social contexts. Culture governs the socialization of children, the tasks children are taught, the roles adult men and women adopt, and the expectations that govern women's and men's attitudes and behaviors. Culture provides the context in which gender roles, identity, and stereotypes unfold as well as parameters regarding sexual behavior. Culture affects variation in gender-related behaviors between individuals within a cultural group as well as variation between cultures. Culture can maximize, minimize, or even eliminate gender differences in social behaviors and cognitions. Indeed, it is impossible to separate gender and culture. (Best and Puzio)

Ananda is born and brought up in India. His traditional background and his parents' influence he become a typical man of India. He used with cigarettes and alcohol in his college times even he strongly influenced by his family. His parents' death makes him to migrated himself to Canada. He struggles a lot to adapt himself with a new culture and way of life. He entirely changes his lifestyle to become a citizen of that new land. He goes out with female companion like his friends.

But he unable to sexually satisfied his female companion, she advised him to see doctor for his incompetency. He could not digest and he feel insulted by a woman. He compromises himself like he is not match for western woman but he could marry an Indian woman, because Indian women are not demanding on sexual needs and will hesitate to talk about man's potentiality. Ananda gets this confidant from his own culture "Ananda thought mournfully of his sexual difficulties, and wondered whether the breakthrough moment would com with an arranged marriage. Certainly, he could count on a willing, patient, forgiving, loving partner" (Kapur 46-47).

India's culture and norms are expertly molded it's woman. Indian woman's characteristics are an obedient daughter to her parents, an obedient and devoted to her husband, accepting man's decision is always right, man is the head of the family because he is the bread winner of the family, even a husband is drunken and useless to family, his wife should accept his husband then only she will accept by society as a chaste woman. These things are encouraging Ananda to marry a Indian women name call Nina.

Nina is thirty years old woman living with widowed mother in Delhi. In her college time she loves her professor, who is fifteen years older than her. She loves him to get love, which could not get from her father, but her professor just uses her as a toy, he neglects her after he sexually satisfied himself with her. Nina affected by this incident. As an Indian woman her guilty conscious secluded herself from remaining world:

He was fifteen years older than her, a teacher in the English Department at the Arts Faculty. Rahul liked to love serially. Unfortunately for Nina, he reminded her of her father. She offered him her heart and expected his in return--for surely the combined forces of youth and devotion would persuade him into commitment.

She kept this relationship secret from her mother. She was looking for love on her own terms, untainted by convention and respectability.

Eventually the serial lover moved on. She thought the pain would destroy her. Despite her knowledge of his nature, in her weakened state she succumbed to his blandishments eight months later. Then followed four agonizing years dotted with moments of ecstasy as she waited for him to declare that she was the chosen one. But Rahul had always made it clear thathe wanted to have his cake and eat it too. Like all cakes this one was chewed, mashed into pulp and swallowed.

Her self-respect finally forced her to choose loneliness over compromise. Silently she grieved, the only men in her lifelong dead authors. (Kapur 6)

Nina's loneliness, fading beauty, and her mother's force make her to marry Ananda. She starts her life with Ananda with lots of dreams. Nina struggle to adapt the culture of Canada, she needs

to change her dressing style, food and most importantly adapt new weather of that land. “they didn’t convey how much she would undergo while assaulted by changes, changes so thorough that she felt rootless, branchless, just a body floating upon the cold surface of this particular piece of earth” (Kapur 176). She tries to overcome her loneliness, alienated feeling with her pregnancy, but unfortunately her husband’s incompetency fails her to get pregnant. She forces him to see sexual therapy doctors. Ananda feels irritated of Nina’s nagging about his treatment.

Ananda takes sexual therapy at California but he does not tell anything to his wife about his treatment. During therapy his sexual partner Marty help him to improve his progress. Ananda avoids sexual therapy with his wife because of his prestigious problem, but he ready to take another woman as a sexual partner for his therapy. The treatment gives him great improvement in his sexual life with his wife, but he is not satisfied sexual relationship only with wife. New land and new culture boost him to have sex with other white women. Relation between the husband and wife fading slowly. Nina also influenced by her feminist group. Accidentally Nina have sex with her library course classmate Anton, but she do not feel any guilty of her infidelity, after that incident she frequently have physical relationship with Anton. New land, new life, new culture set them free from their guiltiness of infidelity.

Society and culture are deeply influence people, but it depends on people weather they utilize good things in culture or immortalize benefits in new culture. A strong person can live with self-discipline in any circumstances for example Gary, Ananda’s Canadian friend. Gary warns Ananda for his infidelity and extra marital affaire life:

Gary proved unreceptive, despite the close, smoky atmosphere of the pub, despite the beer they were drinking, despite the chips and peanuts they were munching. The Dental School Gary, the one who slept around and urged him to do the same, had disappeared into a strait-laced father of three. Everybody feels like straying, man, doesn’t mean you do it. You got her all the way from India, like into less than two. No fair, man, try and give it up, it just gets worse. Otherwise, divorce will be the result. I’ve seen it happen every time.’

After this judgmental attitude, never before seen in his friend, any mention of the trip to California was unthinkable. Instead, Ananda was reduced to making lame excuses for his behavior: arranged marriages-not like here-same expectations don’t apply which even he could tell made him sound like a callous bastard.

Gary looked skeptical. They finished their drinks quickly in an atmosphere that had become strained.

Now here was an opportunity to show his friend that his heart was firmly in place with wife and home. (Kapur 252-253)

Gary’s overwhelming youth life make him do many amorous things but after his marriage he and his wife Sue are be faithful to each other and has three kids live a lovely life.

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