PORTRAYAL OF FEMININE PSYCHE OF INDIAN WOMEN IN MANJU KAPUR'S SELECT NOVELS

K. P. Bhavatharini
Ph.D Scholar, PG and Research Dept of English
V.O.Chidambaram College, Tuticorin

Dr. Anita Albert
Assistant Professor, PG and Research Dept of English
V.O. Chidambaram College, Tuticorin
(Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli)

Abstract:
Manju Kapur in her works depict how women manage to negotiate both the spaces in their lives, through sacrifices they have to make the home fires burning and also through their personal lives they find some kind of fulfillment outside the home. It is interesting to note that her female protagonist talks of their identity, their freedom but their freedom is confined only to their body and heart. Life of women is not easy when compare to men. All over the world women are portrayed as morally, intellectually and physically inferior to men. She is considered as the property of men, her role in the society is to reproduce and serve the household. Women too have accepted this and have been submissive but few women have tried hard to show their individuality and come to the fore in spite of the struggles they face. Her novel portrays the struggle of women to attain their aspirations despite their family’s negligence and also deals with the most delicate issues of human life and analyzes the misconceptions about it. This article is proposed to explore the portrayal of feminine psyche of Indian women in ManjuKapur’s select novels Difficult Daughters, A Married Women and Home.

Key words: Identity, Freedom, submissive, negligence, feminine psyche.

Manju Kapur is one of the leading luminaries among the Indian women writers. She closely examines the issues of woman in and outer space of their family. She focuses on how her protagonists are bravely faces the struggles and manage to overcome it but some women are helplessly accepting the relentless pressure of absurd life. It is commonly known that women have always been the central character of many literary works through literature which has mostly created by men. Manjukapur in her works depict how women manage to negotiate both the spaces in their lives, through sacrifices they can make their home fires burning and also through their personal lives they find some kind of fulfillment outside the home. It is interesting to note that her female protagonist talks of their identity, their freedom but their freedom is confined only to their body and heart. Life of women is not easy when compare to men. All over the world women are portrayed as morally, intellectually and physically inferior to men. She is considered as the property of men, her role in the society is to reproduce and serve the household. Women too have accepted this and have been submissive but few women have tried hard to show their individuality and come to the core in spite of the struggles they face. Her novel portrays the struggle of women to attain their aspirations despite their family’s negligence and also deals with the most delicate issues of human life and analyzes the misconceptions about it. This article is proposed to explore the portrayal of feminine psyche of Indian women in ManjuKapur’s select novels Difficult Daughters, A Married Women and Home.

ManjuKapur has tried to depict her themes organically with appropriate adjustment and adaptations in spheres of style and point of view. She has portrayed different facets of human feminine psyche. Though the character of Virmati in Difficult Daughters, Astha in Married Woman and Nisha in Home. Kapur has portrayed the feminine psyche of neurotic women. The cause of their mental imbalance is different. In the contemporary society, women writers begin to
explore the violence against women. In the present paper, the researcher deals with five novels of ManjuKapur where she has portrayed incidents of violence against women.

Difficult Daughters starts with Virmati’s funeral where her daughter Ida is about to find her mother's past. The opening line of the novel is “the one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother” (1). Virmati, the protagonist of Difficult daughters belongs to a traditional family in Amritsar. Virmati is a daughter of Surya Prakash and Kasturi. When Kasturi is busy with her constant labourVirmati is made to act like a second mother to her siblings. She could not get her childhood care and love from her mother rather she often gets scold from her and instruct to do all the household chores. In spite of her impediments at her household chores, she manages to excel in education. She decides to prove her individuality and realize the necessary of freedom an identity after she had met cousin Shakuntala. When the two brother Surya Prakash and Chandra Prakash were separated Virmati’s fate was turned. Being traditional and conventional women Kasturi wants her daughter to settle down with the marital bond not given much importance to her education as well as her emotional conflicts. There arise a clash between daughter and mother.

At times Virmati was betrothed with the canal engineer Inderjit. Meanwhile she falls in love with the married professor Harish, a tenant of her aunt whose influence made her to drown herself instead of getting hitched with the man whom her parents elected for her. She silently suffers the humiliation and her parent’s anger. But her only comfort was to receive a letter from the professors. Later she was decided to send Lahore for her further studies. She meets Swarnalatha, a social activist. Again the thought of independence bloom in her mind. But the professor does not want to leave her and follows her there too. She becomes pregnant but because of Swarnalatha she manages to abort it and face the situation in a bold manner. Her agonized mind is revealed in her utterances “Here I am in the position of being your secret wife, full of shame, wondering what people will say if they find me out not being able to live in peace, study in peace and… why?” (149). Virmati becomes a principal in a school but still love Harish. She sent away from the school because of her affair with him and with the help of Syed Hussain, his friend she gets married with him. But still her agonies continue because of her family as well as the professor’s. Her story is run parallel to India’s freedom struggle. The novel gets awarded because of its autobiographical element. ManjuKapur said the story of Virmati is like her own mother’s story who had married a man who was already married. Virmati was ostracized by the society as she enters into a marital relation with a married man in the other hand professor is accepted by the families.

The second novel A married Woman begin with the protagonist Astha, who is a single child of her parents in Delhi. The father being a bureaucrat decides to give a good education to her without recognizing the inner potentialities in her. Her mother’s only wish is to settle down her daughter in a well reputed family. Though Astha grows as a normal child her mother tends to spies her when she attains her teen. Astha gets married with a foreign return graduate Hemanth. The couple blessed with two kids. Asha is a very good partner to him and also a teacher who handled classes for twelfth standard students. Hemanth resigns his bank job and turns to a businessman. Both of them were busy with their job, they does not have a time to spend. Virginia Woolf puts it convincingly as follows, “Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size” (33). She was asked to lead the theatre group led by AzajAkthar Khan, a lecturer as well as a social activist. He came to know the perspectives of her and encourages her to write a dialogue for the stage drama about Babri Masjid. Hemant does not like that Astha gets too much involvement in the script writing. After few days they come to know that Ajaz was assassinated in a bomb blast. Hemant finds fault on her mourning over his death.

Asta gets involved in the Manch activity which was formed after the death of Ajaz. She starts working for them. Her involvement makes her to neglect her husband and children. Though Hemant is busy with his business he tries to find some time to enjoy with his family. But she leaves
with them for Ayodhya where she meets Pipleeka Khan wife of Ajaz. Their relationship gets strengthen with time which emotionally turns them into lesbians. Pipee seems to be understanding Astha more than Hemant. Moreover the former instigates her to indulge in the new relationship with her, “There was no aphrodisiac more powerful that’s talking, no seduction more effective than curiosity” (218). Astha was not given much importance to her paternal as well as maternal home. After her father’s death her mother sold the property and hand over the money to Hemant which hurts her. She turns to be spiritual and moves to Ashram. She felt woman can handle monetary funds too but the action of her mother and Hemant hurts her as they consider her incapable of handle the amount. Astha’s paintings won great reputation but due to her frequent head ache Hemant does not allow her to further which she does not expects from him. She turns her attention towards Pipee which makes her to neglect her family members. Hemant tries to reunite the loss of relationship between them as he plans a tour for abroad. After the return Pipee reveals that she could not continue her relationship with her because she decides to do her Ph.D at abroad which fall a thunder to Astha. She returns to her family with a broken heart. ManjuKapur has rightly portrays the sufferings of women faced in their day to day life through her novels. As an educated and employed women, she feels that she has the competence to compete with theirs and can prove herself in the society.

The third novel Home clearly explores the conservative family systems where women are not allowed to express their ideas. Nisha, the protagonist belongs to LalaBanwarilal’s family who were migrated to Delhi from Pakistan after the partition. Lalabanwarilal was the head of the family who had three children, Yashpal, Sunita and Pyrelal. Banwarilal started their business in the Karol Bagh area. They struggle hard to sustain their business in Delhi and get their own fame as one of the reputed trader in Delhi. Yashpal wants to marry Sona whereas their family members could not like to get them hitched. Yashpal refuse to marry any other girl rather than Sona, so his parents allow him to marry the girl as per his wish. But they was happy that they could make their second son to get marry according to their wish and also a girl from their own community. Sona’s life becomes fruitless because she could not bear a child whereas Sushila gives to two sons. Sona kept prays and did many sacrifices for having baby but unfortunately she could not bear a child for a long time. She was made to be a mother of Vicky, Sunita’s son. Sunita was died because of the violence against women.

Sona did not want to accept Vicky as her child but in a joint family she could not expose her desire. Her feelings are suppressed. She gets some relaxation from her sister Rupa, she seem to be the only relief for her. Sona was beautiful and had a wealth and lovely husband but she remains unhappy on the other hand Rupa was not beautiful as her sister and also not wealthy as her sister. She too was childless but she enjoys her life all the time. At last Sona gives birth to Nisha and Raju. But after the birth of Raju she too starts to show gender discrimination between her children. She could not give much attention and care to Nisha. As a result the abandoned Vicky tries to harass Nisha sexually which leads her to have nightmares often. Simone de Beauvoir has defined the pathetic condition of women as, “I am too intelligent, too demanding and to resourceful for anyone to be able to take charge of me entirely. No one knows me or loves me completely. I have only myself” (45). So Nisha was sent to Rupa’s house for a change. Rupa and her husband manage her to become normal and tries their best to give her good education and taught her the importance of education for a female child in the male dominated society. After the death of her grandfather Nisha was sent back to Sona to look after her grandmother. Sona scold Rupa for not teaching Nisha about the culinary skills. Sona says, “This is the life of a woman: to look after her home, her husband, her children, and give them food she has cooked with her own hands” (127). She taught that the girls’ life is fulfill once she can do all the household chores and getting married and giving birth to a child. She begins to scold Rupa for not rearing Nisha the way she expected.
Nisha tends to fall in love with the low caste boy and bunk her college to spend her time with him when it was noticed by her family members, she was made to be caged inside the house. Her family members settled him some amount to get rid of her. After that Sona starts scolding her often and humiliated her which makes her to develop eczema. Because of the skin disease her marriage gets postponed when Raju gets married to Deepa, Sona’s condition become even worse because she was not allowed to touch her brother’s daughter Sneha which hurts her. Rupa is the only consoler for her. Nisha joins a teacher in play school but it did not give any satisfaction so she quit the job. She wants to run a business on her own. She request her father, at first he strictly oppose it but somehow she manage convince him and undertake a business on her own. She proves herself as good business women and can open “Nisha Creations”. She too became a successful trader but she is forced to give up the business after her marriage because she needs to look after her family members.

ManjuKapur’s female protagonist feels that they do not have the qualities of man who can leave unprotected and isolated. They feel and shake the bars of their cage which is their home. But they do not mediate leaving the level or point at which something is about to begin of their cage-home even in their desert, painful moods as they are Indian family women. Though the characters of Virmati, Astha and Nisha. Kapur has prevented the irritable soul of related to woman and portrayed the feminine psyche of Indian women. The cause of their mental imbalance is different. However, both of them are not normal. They might be called sub-normal if not abnormal or uncommon. The remarkable aspect of Kapur’s psychological probing of the women is that she includes females of different age groups. Thus both of these novels present an interesting glimpse of inner working of human mind.

References: