

Vulnerabilities and Endurance of Women in Manju Kapur's Home

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Abstract:- The woman's life and struggle under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society are reflected in the novel *Home*. The impact of patriarchy is highly focused on the novel. It also reveals how women characters like Sona, Rupa, and Nisha are suppressed inside their homes in the name of familial values and virtues. This paper aims to analyse, how women in the Indian society become victims of tradition joint family after marriage, and how they suffer and live in the family with an absolute endurance inspite of all vulnerabilities and manmade virtues.

Nissim Ezekiel in his popular poem *Enterprise* has rightly mentioned “ Home is where we have to gather grace” which shows how one could find peace of mind and harmony only at one's home not anywhere else.

I. INTRODUCTION

Home is, “The place where one lives lastingly, especially as a member of a family or household.” However, for those who live in an actual home, they would know that the power of a home, and that it goes beyond its concrete description. It is an impassioned constitution combined with values and foundation of nurturing. A home is not just a residence built to live in, which would be the definition of a house. Home is a place where the family is at comfort, and it is a place to look forward to new opportunities to live in every day. A home is not built by bricks or wood and is built with the bond and love of family. Home is where memories are cherished and created.

The male-dominated and male-oriented culture immersed the personalities of the typical Indian Women. She loses her identity and left with absolutely no wits and stripped of her independence. Moving towards education, work and politics were a distressing struggle for her because suffering in silence has developed into her very being. She glorified in her sufferings that were inflicted upon her by the free male-chauvinistic society.

The women writers of the 20th-century focus light on the different facets of the society they live in. Manju Kapur has vividly painted the inner turmoil of women characters in her novel *Home*. Male Chauvinistic atrocities in the patriarchal society are depicted through Manju Kapur's *Home*. Chauvinism is a phenomenon in which they could barely tolerate in the modern world. There are so many vulnerabilities, and predicaments are seen directly or indirectly in this family

saga. The women are the silent victims of their family members in the form of ideas, opinions, traditional views, and mechanical actions on them.

Banwari Lal family is traditional and patriarchal. They have always believed that men must leave the house to work, and women work from within. His two sons follow father's way and rules without question. As the head of the house, Banwari Lal is ready to do anything for the honour of the family and to maintain its unity. He believes, United we stand, divided the energy, time and money, and the family will never be squandered. At first, his principles are challenged by his elder son, Yashpl, who falls in love with a customer and then marries her. The opposition of the love marriage is a traditional stigma that prevails in the society. Sona's childlessness and Nisha's empowerment is considered shameful. It has always been believed that a girl is supposed to find satisfaction in her performance of her duties through her multiple roles of mother, daughter, sister and daughter-in-law. The home is a Karma-Bhoomi and for a woman to aspire life beyond the limits of the home is unnatural. Malti Mathur says, “Any woman who wished to give up the security and safety of the confines of the home for an uncertain, unsafe identity outside, are looked upon as no less than a Jezebel.”(85)

Sona is a beautiful woman, married to Yaspaul. After hearing ten years of criticism as an infertile woman, she gets pregnant. During those ten years, she has always been compared with Sushila, who is her co-sister and wife of Pyare Lal. Susila delivers Ajay within a year and Vijay in the next few years. Sona's mother-in-law used to hurt her without any reason. Sona's childless situation continued to make her vulnerable. Her sister Rupa who is also childless, says to Sona, “ Even God needs to be helped sometimes.” (23) Sona tries to calm herself by praying and closing her eyes to concentrate on her favorite image of God, and says, “I am growing old bless us with a child, girl or boy, I do not care, but I cannot bear the emptiness in my heart.” (19) After the death of her sister-in-law Sunita, her father in law brings Vicky, a ten-year-old boy. The boy was pushed towards Sona, when she feels very bad for this fresh arrangement by the fates for her certain misery. She admits to Yashpaul that it is impossible for her to look after Vicky. Sona does not want to be the mother of ten years old boy, a borrowed child from another woman's womb. When her mother in law says, “God has rewarded your devotion. Sometimes our wishes are fulfilled in strange ways.” (26) Sona felt her chest would burst with pain.

The elders of the family abuse Sona's girl child, just because of her horoscope and addresses her as a child of Mangali. According to astrology, it is believed to be unfavourable for marriages, causing discomfort and tension in the relationship, which leads to disharmony between the spouses and ultimately to more significant problems. This is believed to be caused due to the fiery arrangement and nature of the Mars, that is named after the Roman god of war. Also, if two mangliks marry, the adverse effects are believed to cancel each other's problems. There is a superstitious belief that the negative consequences for a single manglik marriage could be resolved if the Manglik first persons a ceremony called a Kumbh vivah, in which the Manglik marries a banana tree or a peepal tree.

The girl child named Nisha is not fair in complexion, who is molested by her cousin Vicky. The trespassing and the violation of virtues are seen in the character of Vicky. He threatens Nisha not to reveal this to elders, as they would not allow her for school after this. After the death of his mother Sunita, Vicky could not get a proper space in his grandparents' home. Even Sona reluctantly plays the role of his surrogate mother. He longs for attention and space from the family members, which he would not receive till the end. The lack of affection and the feeling of forsaken made his nature very arrogant, and the birth of Nisha is intolerable to him. So from the beginning, he hates his cousin Nisha, trespasses his limits.

Here, Home stands for homelessness. Nisha being a small child could not express the injustice done by her cousin Vicky to her. Nisha's mother gives birth to Raju, and there she realises her mother's lack of attention to her. As she could not concentrate on her studies, she wanted to stay with Rupa, her own mother's sister. Like an immigrant, she migrates from her parents and home. She leaves her own family and stays with Rupa, who provides a proper shelter and schooling to Nisha. This is the place where Nisha breaths the air of freedom and psychological solace because here she never finds any noise of her cousins and the disturbance of Vicky too. She gets proper attention from Rupa and her husband too, with their help she completes her schooling as a bring student. They treat Nisha as their daughter.

Being a girl child the responsibility of looking after the old woman falls into Nisha's hands. After eleven years of stay in her aunt's house, she is being compelled by her father to take care of her grandmother. She returns to home, her condition is,

At night she was forced to sleep next to her, inhaling the all-pervasive urine smell, in the day her emphatic farts and loud, lingering burps repulsed her. Her mother persistently pointed out her presence to the old woman, she has come home to be with you, neglecting her studies, leaving her aunt and uncle, they miss her so so much, still she is here (128).

In her college, Nisha falls in love with Suresh. He was tall and thin, with a sallow complexion. Her meetings with Suresh became regular. He appreciates her physic and pretty

hair. He takes her to the beauty parlour for a hairdo. He admires her as she has a resemblance to a famous actress Suriya. On the way to her home, she viewed the family members' anger in all its variation, being thrown out of the house. Nisha wept over all their comments. In one circumstance, Nisha's countenance leads to yield to his wishes of trespassing the virgin virtues. On protest to the same from her to Suresh's wishes makes her recognise the vulnerable male chauvinistic, crooked, society of men around her. Nisha gets a revelation about the majority of men in the society around her is with the wrong intention. Then she overcomes from her lover Suresh, who no longer returns to marry her.

No choice is given to Nisha to choose her life partner. She accepts the thrust choice of her parents. Since she has Manglik dosha, she marries Arjun who is a widower, and many elders to her have an incompatible outlook to Nisha. She never denies the choice of her family.

This is a kind of "Pseudo Psychic" ceiling of belief of getting completion of felinity only when given birth to a male child. The term pseudo means false or 'pretend'. Pseudo-psychology refers to a psychological practice that is false or unfounded. Many practices that fall under the umbrella of pseudo-psychology are quite popular and enjoy a wide following of believers, and it is not true. Both astrology and psychic readings fall into the category of pseudo-psychology because they do not follow the guidelines of the scientific method. In this novel, Nisha's mother Sona also feels contended only after she gives birth to her son Raju. Because from the beginning her mother in law talks in such a way that her womanhood gets completed when she gives birth to a male child. Then she gets due respect even from the family members only after giving birth to Raju. Most of the Indian family has the same idea even today which is a falls belief or unfounded.

Simone de Beauvoir boldly opposed all those institutions which worked against the betterment of the women. In an angry tone, she condemns marriage because marriage is the destiny offered to a woman by society. Marriage makes women dependent upon their husbands. Even economic independence does not assist them to get themselves disentangled from emotional dependence and attachment.

The novel *Home* is a modest attempt to decipher characters that to the world the family speaks as one voice. However, within the house, each's voice may chatter, murmur, question or complain but they all must eventually fall silent indifference to wishes of the family as a whole. This presents Manju Kapur's understanding of human character and her maturity as a novelist. In this context, Anupama Chowdhury observes: Home reveals a disturbing home truth that joint families can both destroy and preserve our maturity and mental progress. (2008:33)

In today's India, women are refusing to reconcile with the patriarchal and male governed society and tries to establish

their identity. In this context Simon De Beauvoir comments: The situation of woman is that she- a free and autonomous being like all creatures nevertheless finds her living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other (1986:167)

Though the women characters are sealed under many rules, the protagonist Nisha proves her identity at least by the end of the novel as a businesswoman of bouquet shop to prove her identity. The recent Indian writers are fond of focusing on the new women or liberated women. However, in reality, there are many women inside the family are remain as a silent sufferer in the name of traditional and familial values which should be eradicated from the Indian society. The proper space should be given to women inside the home and by her family members in order to prove her identity.

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