

Role of Women in Selected Novels of Manju Kapur

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ABSTRACT

Feminism is a political movement as well as theory emerged in 1960s. It asserts that women should have same rights such as legal, political, educational, cultural, economic, etc. like men. Feminist movements have campaigned and continue to campaign for women's rights, including the right to vote, to hold public office, to work, to earn fair wages or equal pay, to own property, to receive education, to enter contracts, to have equal rights within marriage, and to have maternity leave. Feminists have also worked to ensure access to legal abortions and social integration, and to protect women and girls from rape, sexual harassment, and domestic violence. Changes in dress and acceptable physical activity have often been part of feminist movements. Although feminist advocacy is, and has been, mainly focused on women's rights, some feminists, including bell hooks, argue for the inclusion of men's liberation within its aims because they believe that men are also harmed by traditional gender roles. Feminist theory, which emerged from feminist movements, aims to comprehend the nature of gender inequality by probing women's social roles and lived experience; it has developed theories in a variety of disciplines in order to respond to issues regarding gender.

Keywords: Feminism, Freedom, Gender, Movement, Nature, Rights, Role, Society, Women

INTRODUCTION

This paper is going to make a deep study of the changing roles of women in Indian society by taking into consideration the literary works of the great feminist writer Manju Kapur, the novelist of the Post independent era who have very skillfully and effectively presented the predicaments which are imposed upon them and while fighting against these predicaments, how they come out of their traditional roles as a mother, daughter, sister and above all as a wife or a home maker and acquire many unimagined and novel roles like teacher, social worker, social activist, business woman or corporate personality and many more. The research is completely based on the study of the women characters in the novels of Manju Kapur. This novelist is regarded as the feminist writer and her writing is supposed to be feminist. The prime objective with which the feminist movement was started was to change the destiny of the women who have no rights, freedom, no honor and no social importance in such a social structure where the men are supreme. India is one of the traditional countries with male dominated society. In our Indian traditional male dominated society, the condition of the women is the same as that of the women who live in other male dominated societies in other countries.

What the feminist movement did in the western countries, the same is the done by the feminist movement in India. The changed role of woman is one of the greatest accomplishments. The feminist movement has done a great job by helping women to come out of the slavery of the male dominated society and made them what they wanted to be. The movement changed the very plight of the Indian woman who thought that her world is within the four walls of the house. She never thought that she could have some roles as an individual in the outside world where the men rule with their all whims and might. The woman in the past was completely traditional, uneducated, superstitious and confined.

Being lived in such atmosphere; her thinking had become narrow and controlled. They could never think that there can be a different world outside the four walls of their house, there can be some more roles for her to play. She was completely cut off from such dynamic world. It was so because the men of the traditional society wanted them to be so. They too were ruled by the age-old philosophy which was anti-woman and which taught that woman's place is within the house. The women living in such an orthodox society became so habitual to their surrounding and age-old philosophy that they too were thinking that the marriage is their destiny and their husbands are their master. Their duty is to obey him and serve him and his family. Male dominated society and its anti-woman ideology is the root cause of women's backwardness and their suffering and victimization. This society was against the education of women. The society used to think that if women got educated, they would change themselves and that would be the great risk to the existence of their society. So, different rules were made for the women that deprived the women from going to the school. So, no education, no progress for women. One of the reasons of women's exploitation, suffering and their victimization is illiteracy which closes the doors of the new world which teaches that there is no difference between male and female. They are both equal. That was not the thing in the male dominated society.

In male dominated society, men are given supreme status and the women are considered to be a secondary or inferior creature with subordinate status.

The Feminist movement analyzed the root causes of Indian woman's miserable plight. The first commendable thing which movement did was that it campaigned for woman's education. It gave the new voice, new power, new vigour, new confidence, new thinking which changed the very life of the traditional woman. It expanded the horizons of her thinking. She realized how much she has suffered due to anti-woman society. She could not be what she wanted to be in her life, its just because of this society. She broke her silence with the support of the feminist philosophy and protested against the injustice done by the contemporary society. The Indian women rebelled and revolted against the patriarchal social structure and its old conventions. She fought for her rights of freedom. She fought for her education. Education gave birth to a new woman who is confident, bold, unafraid of men and financially independent. Education assigned them new roles which they could never think of when they were within the four house of the male dominated society. Education took them out of their house and introduced them to a new world.

Manju Kapur is the prominent feminist of the post-Independent India who have depicted this change in the woman, in her predicament, in her destiny and above all in her role. Her women characters represent Indian women fraternity, for example, Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, shows how a girl, Virmati fights against her own family and its age-old conventions and social values. She fights for her right to educate herself. She fights for her right to marry the person of her choice. The novel very nicely displays the struggle of this woman who through her education gives up her traditional role as a traditional daughter comes before the audience in different roles like a girl fighting for her education, fighting with the society to legitimize her marriage with the married professor which is against social conventions and in the role of woman who fights for her right to be a wife of the professor.

Significance/Importance of Study

This study will help the readers to understand the journey of Indian women from a typically traditional woman into a highly modern, educated and independent woman. It will help the readers to understand that how women are growing vigilant and conscious about their rights and how they are coming out of their limited world and acquiring new roles and new position in the contemporary society. It will also provide new insight and new way of looking at the lives of the women. It will change the mentality of the traditional people who believe that the women should be within the house; make them more liberal in their treatment of women. It will create great awakening in the society about the plight of the woman and compel the society to think of women as equal to man. Directly indirectly, the thesis will contribute to feminist cause of woman's empowerment. The research work will help the readers to look at the novels of these writers from different perspective. It will provide them with ample opportunities of doing research on the life of Indian women with the help of these novels. Above all this research attempt is important because it shows that how the roles of women are changing with changing circumstances.

Nature and scope of study

What woman was in the past is not the not the same. Indian feminist movement has given birth to a new woman with multiple roles to play. Today we see women encroaching into the most prohibited territory of men i.e. field and acquiring many prestigious positions in the different spheres of life. Kiran Bedi, Kalpana Chawal, Sheela Dixit are some of examples of the women with the changed roles.

The present research study include only three novels of postcolonial novelist Manju Kapur. These novels are *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman* and *Home*. The novels provide enough scope to study them as social and historical documents. Such study has not been taken up for critical analysis so far.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The novels of Manju Kapur and many other feminist women novelist like Anita Desai, Rama Mehta who have presented new women with changed roles in their novels, are a great reservoir for research activity. Ample research has been done by the research scholars and ample is to be done. Abstracts of the following papers on the writing of these novelists in national and international seminars and conferences show that the writing of these novelists furnish opulent opportunities and possibilities of doing research on many hidden issues and aspects in their writings. In this research paper, the writer analyzes the issues related to the middle class or upper middle class women. The writer discusses in the detail the issues related to this class of the society by giving reference of the novels like *Home*, *Difficult Daughters* and *Married Woman* by Manju Kapur. The article deals with many issues related to the women of this class of the society for example: Whether or not a girl has the right to make her own choices in life.

The article is about Akhila, the major character in *Ladies Coupe* by Anita Nair. It shows the impact of patriarchy on the lives of the Indian women. Akhila struggles against the male dominated society and it's age-old conventions

which do not allow her to live her life as she wishes. How Indian women are exploited and used in human relationship is best discussed in this paper.

In this article, the writer deals with the life history of the female protagonists in the novels of Manju Kapur. How women like Virmati in *Difficult Daughters*, Nisha in *Home* and Astha in *A Married Woman* go against the stream of the traditional way of life and accept the new way of life with new ideology is discussed here. All these women characters break the social conventions and emerge as new women with independent ideology.

The article is a critical study of the character named Nisha in Manju Kapur's novel. The writer has made critical study of Nisha and her revolt against the male dominated system to find her own identity. The theme of women's search for identity is the core part of the discussion. It is a brief survey of the Indian English fiction. Through this article the writer shows how the change is occurring in the image of the Indian women through the study of women characters in the feminist writers like Nayan Tara Sehgal, Kamla Markandya and Anita Desai and many more. The writers say that women in their novels are changed women because they have learnt to speak about their problems. Silence has gone and speech has taken its place. Through this speech the way these characters are changing themselves and changing the society is shown here.

This article throws light on the life of people living in urban middle class family in India. How the families in this class lead their lives is shown by taking the reference of the people in the novel *Home* by Kapur. The writer discusses the ups and downs which occur in the life of these people who go according to the traditions of the society. Through this article, the writer throws light on the women character, Rukmini and her struggle against all adversities which follow her like shadow. In most critical moments and situations in her life she does not lose her courage and morality and emerges as an ideal sufferer who makes no compromise with values.

The article is an endeavor of the part of the writer to look at the novel *Inside the Haveli* by Rama Mehta from a feminist perspective. The writer through this critical study brings before the readers the major character of Geeta of *Inside the Haveli* as a great feminist who fights for the problems of the women who have been serving the *The Ranis* in the havelies of Rajasthan. Her struggle between traditions and modernity and her social reforms which she brings about in the haveli culture is critically discussed here.

The writer comments on Shashi Deshpande's and Anita Nair's feminism which is displayed in their novels. Whether they are same or differ in their ideology of feminism when they display it while dealing with the lives of the women character is critically discussed here. The article is a historical survey of Indian English Literature and the contribution made by the Indian women writers in different forms of literature like poetry and fiction. He has referred many novelists like Anita Desai, Kamla Markandeya and many others who are contributing to the realm of fiction. The main objective of this article is to show that the image of women in Indian fiction is changing.

Present paper endeavors to analyze the female quest for identity in Shashi Deshpande's novel *That Long Silence* through the female protagonist, Jaya. Shashi Deshpande portrays the image of modern women who face void and feel vacuum in their life. It shows that how the character Jaya tries to go against the social convention to fulfill her thirst for self identity. Manju Kapur deals with the problems of the Indian women's predicament and its impact on the psychology of these women through the women characters in her novels. This article comments on the philosophy of existentialism which Kapur presents through the struggle of her women character's predicaments which are imposed upon them by the contemporary male dominated society.

In this article, the writer makes a critical study of the lives of the women characters in the novel of Shashi Deshpande and shows the changes occurring in their lives. The paper shows that how the novels of Shashi Deshpande deal with the problems and concerns in the lives of the women representing middle class of the Indian society. The paper is especially concerned with the problems and concerns in the lives of the characters in the three novels of Shashi Deshpande i.e. *The Dark Holds No Terror*, *Roots and Shadows* and *That Long Silence*.

The writer has made critical examination of the novels of Indian women novelist and shows how the process of empowerment of women in India is taking place. She has critically discussed lives of the women characters in the novels of Manju Kapur and many other women novelist who deal with the theme of women's empowerment. This article deals with the lives of the people in the Indian society in the novels of Manju Kapur. The author comments on the women characters specially women who live in different classes of the society and their struggle against the social conventions and social taboos of the traditional society of their times.

Mamta Bhatnagar writes of the transition occurring in the life conditions of the Indian women through the women characters in the novels of Manju Kapur. The writer says that this transition is transforming the Indian women from traditional women into modern women. He discusses the change which occurs in the lives of Nisha, Virmati and

Astha who represent Indian women fraternity in Manju Kapur's novels. The article throws the light on the story of woman, Akhila, who revolts against the social taboos and social conventions of the male dominated society. Being fed up with futility of the family relationships, she goes on a journey to Kanyakumari in search of freedom and identity.

In this article the writer deals with the age old problem of man woman equality. She says that even today, the women are not treated equal to men. Kalpana Rajput writes on this problem by taking reference of the novel of Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*. The article throws light on the man woman relationships in *Difficult Daughters* of Manju Kapur. It also critically examines the intellectual and emotional dilemma of Virmati, the protagonist in the partition and post partition days. The article presents the portrayal of women in the fictional works of Indian English novelist, Manju Kapur, based on her perceptions of women's liberation and autonomy within the socio-cultural spaces and paradigms in India. Kapur's woman characters reflect her views on the role or religion, tradition and myth in molding Indian women, as well as suggest a way to promote women's right.

The article throws light on the handling of the theme of marriage and marriage concerns in the novels of Manju Kapur. Manju Kapur has very authentically dealt with this problem in her novels like *Home* and '*Difficult Daughters*'. The article is about the character of Virmati in Manju Kapur's '*Difficult Daughters*'. The way she fights against the social taboos and social conventions which prevents women from going out of the house, marrying the person of their choice, leading their own lives on their own terms and conditions, makes her a feminist. How she is feminist is discussed in this article.

The article is a comparative study of the lead characters in *Ladies Coupe* and *The better man* of Anita Nair. The writer throws light on the life struggle of Akhila and Mukundan who are the leading characters in these novels. The paper attempts to analyze whether the writer gives a deeper insight into the middle-class ethos and culture. Is there a tone of protest to awaken the conscience of society? Are they able to project different, serious issues and problems existing in society or also try to offer a solution; whether they have told the realities or there are contradictions too. The novels of contemporary women novelists Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Kiran Desai and Anita Nair would be analyzed.

The article throws light on the life Astha, the protagonist of "*Married Woman*". How she struggles against the restraints of the traditional society and emerges as a new woman is well discussed in this article. The article is about the emergence of a new Indian woman in Manju Kapur's *Married Woman*. The writer tries to prove that how the protagonist of the novel, Astha differs from other ordinary, traditional woman in Indian. How does she struggle against the male supremacy is best discussed here.

The paper throws light on the family structure which Manju Kapur used in her novel, '*Difficult Daughters*'. The paper also reveals how social values are cherished in family structure. The family life, Lala Diwan and its struggle to maintain the social values and family conventions is best studied here. The writer shows that the women characters in Manju Kapur's novels are not traditional women who think that marriage is their destiny and they are to obey their husbands.

The women in the novels of Manju Kapur differs from this category of woman and breaks all social taboos, and conventions and merge as a new woman who is aware of herself. The women in the novels of Manju Kapur are the personification of the new women.

It is an attempt on the part of the writer to show how the Indian women are reflected in the novels of both the men and women. He says that personality of the Indian women is somewhat neglected in the writings of men. The women writers are too much emotional and sentimental in depicting the condition of the Indian women. The article probes into the condition of the Indian women in the contemporary society.

The article is about the emergence of completely new women in the novels of Manju Kapur. The writer discusses how the women characters in the novels are different from that of the traditional women with confined lives and confined thinking. He says that the women who appear in the novels are modern and away from the influence of social conventions and social taboos. How these women breaks the male supremacy and create their own world is critically discussed in this article.

The article probes into the suffering of the protagonist, Virmati in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*. The writer tries to get the answer of this question whether the sufferings of Virmati are imposed or self imposed. The writer studies the life of Virmati from different angles and brings before the readers the truth behind the suffering of Virmati. Change occurring in the women's sensibility and her attitude is critically discussed. There is no doubt that the women of the modern times are conscious of their self, individuality and existence. They cannot tolerate any kind of injustice done by the male dominated society.

CONCLUSION

It is an attempt on the part of the writer to make the analytical study of the women's lives and their psyche within the context of south Indian family. Through this article the writer tries to show that the women in the Indian families are coming out of their traditional roles like someone's mother, daughter and above all wife. The change occurring in the sensibility and attitude of the Indian women is critically examined through her. The writer exposes the changing roles of the women Indian society.

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