

Amendable and Fractious Womenfolk – Pondering over Manju Kapur's Novels *Difficult Daughters* and *Home*

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Abstract

In the first decennary of twenty first centenary, there are many advancements of women, to be observed in the grounds of education, economy, politics and health. They have developed the ability to assert themselves in matters relating to their lives. Earlier our community and culture was inclined by classified theory of patriarchy and dominance. The woman were close mouthed and always in mute mode. They always yearned to be self-supporting and were needy of unaided individuality. This current paper examines the pair of Amendable and fractious women in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* and *Home*. The twain novels is an effort to ponder Kapur's conclusive educated middle class woman captured in the median of tradition and modernity. Kapur has joined her hands with novelist like Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Gita Hariharan, Chetan Bhagat to express the Daring women hood in the new limelight of recklessness.

Keywords: Amendable, Assert, centenary, conclusive, decennary, fractious, inclined, limelight, mute, ponder.

Introduction:

Manju Kapur surfaces as a new magus wizard in Indian Literature. She was born on 25th October in 1948 in Amritsar, Punjab. She spent her tender ages of Juvenility in Washington, Dalhousie, Canada. To her credits, she obtained M.A. English from Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. She secured her M. Phil from Delhi University and turned up as Professor of English at Miranda House in Delhi.

Manju Kapur dislodges multitude concerns of women in her twain novels – *Difficult Daughters* and *Home*. She struggles to balance women parallel to men in all possible measures. Kapur believes irrespective of their sex all should be given an equivalent freedom of space to pick their options in life. All her novels chiefly advocate the contingency of literary to import absolute self-reliant ability of self-sufficiency. In our deep-rooted tradition where women are exemplified by Epic and cosmic characters of Laxmi, Saraswathi, Sita, Savithiri, Ghandari

but now it's refreshing and fascinating to witness the emancipation of elevative cultural shift towards progressive pace with this background. Indian writers are boosting towards expansion and have gained the hallmark of global appreciation. Their penmanship is no more regarded as low-stuffed, depreciative and content less output. The sparkling glitz of their accomplishment as fictionist is because of their boon power blessing to explore the structure of human thought and nature with empathy, pain realising sense and insightful perception. Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Shobaa De, Mahesweta Devi, Anita Nair, Sudhamurty and innumerable women authors are belling endlessly to crack speechlessness of vexation. These distinguished fictionist try to end the quarantine period of women hood and are demanding to see the real unmasked face of liberty to get ultimate justice irrespective of sex.

In these two novels Manju Kapur portray women who strive to inaugurate their own selfdom. The stagnation that they suffer and the obstacle that they face in the domestic limits of marriage and family is plainly brought out by the novelist. Manju Kapur started her race course of writing career in 1994. She acknowledges that her novels are not about personal analysis but her intellectual thinking based on her academic experience. She acclaims in one of her interviews that "I can analyse only because I am teacher". She considers writing as her backbone about which she need to conscious and aware all the time. Kapur auras the essence of life fabricated in her teaching, home and writing.

The Novel details two categories of Indian women. The prime are long established deep rooted traditional types of women who are habitual to transmitted age old values who conclude life unaccomplished without marital status. These prime women feel that the system of wedlock can ensure safeness, security, status, contentment and care regardless of its insignificant difficulties and restraint. Kasturi, Sona and Ganga belong to this conservative classification. In India to be a home maker is an expletive curse instead of being a blessing in disguise. Domicile women are always underrated, they are terrified to cross family threshold and are caged in to their own family. They are imposed to follow the societal constituency framed by others for them. Professor Harish's wife Ganga is one such exemplar, she so dutiful that she always prays for the well-being of her husband even after his second marriage with Virmati. She takes it her destiny to be installed in the same house with his step wife. Kasturi depicts the status of women of 1940 (Nineteen Forty's). She always struggles with continuous pregnancy which turns a curse instead of bliss.

"Her life seemed such a burden, her body so difficult to carry. Her sister-in-law's words echoed in her ears, breeding like cats and dogs; Harvest time again" (*Difficult Daughters* P.7).

Kasturi is educated enough but relies and depends on her husband for taking any resolution towards using any precautionary measures to put an end to her child-bearing cycle. She is entangled in the vicious series of mothership. She assumes her daughter Virmati's life too will clone with her. As a result she lays foundation of home making at the initial tender age of

ten. Virmati being the senior and eldest of ten brothers and sisters is unwillingly masked to enact the role of second mother. Ruby Milhoutra says,

“Kasturi’s repeated pregnancies made her sickly, resulting in her total dependence on Virmati to manage her house hold. As a Natural consequence her unique position in the home is lost which she has to yield to her daughter quite unwillingly. Virmati thus become a „substitute” and not the double that every mother wants her daughter to be. As a consequence the relationship assumes hostile dimension” (P.3).

Virmati, longs for warmth and concern from Kasturi, but the latter never deliberates her care towards her daughter Viru. This is one of causes for Virmati being captured in love affair with a married man. For Kasturi, Matrimony is the ultimate destination of the girl. In her words,

“A Woman’s Shaan is her home (*Difficult Daughters*, Page 16).”

The next category of women who hold a modernistic view point are Virmati, Shakuntala and Swarnalatha in *Difficult Daughters*, these girls own a illustrated outlook in novel.

They protest and to prove to be a threat to accept the ancient theory drawn for womanhood. Virmati denies the notion of arranged marriage with Inderjit. Virmati’s negation of arranged marriages makes the whole family suffer from disgrace. Viru’s sister gets married to him. Her position get lowered and degraded. At this point Kapur elegantly sketch male dominion superiority, women dependableness. Maria Elena Martos Hues points out that,

“Virmati’s quest for freedom from the patriarchal moulds of tradition casts upon her eventually proves an erratic one, for she gets caught in the net of allocated female role that she was trying to evade. (P. 5).”

Throughout the novel, there is a Skirmish clash between conventional traditional standpoints of Kasturi and contemporary modern ideas of Virmati. Where Kasturi belittles Shakuntala for her thoughts but Virmati gets high on her individualistic interpretation. Shakuntala serves as a visionary model before Virmati to be followed. Virmati develops the notion that there is no solution for her problem inside the house. She moves out to seek higher education. Thoughts of India’s struggle for freedom kindle the aspiration for education in her. The hidden seeds begin to germinate and gets deeply rooted spreading its branches challenging the age old patriarchy. Even her marriage with professor does not prove to a successful one. She could not cope with Ganga’s fury in the same house. She seeks ways to come out of house and her husband’s oppressive love. She realizes that things are not same as they look. She becomes economically independent. She plans the life upon her own terms in this process she loses her significant self.

The female characters who are protestant can be coined as new woman fighting with their own sex for liberty. The writers leads the readers and shows the burden of womanhood and education as only means to defeat the system of hierarchy which entitles man to take any decision. Shakuntala is disregarded and termed disgraceful in the family for her bold and manly

behaviour. She was not interested to collide with the institution of marriage which was a spaceless boundary. Her beliefs and speculations were boundless. She was progressive enough and was conscious of her works. Appearance of Shakuntalapehjni kept climbing through Virmati's head.

“Shakuntalapehjni who having done her M.Sc. in Chemistry, had gone about tasting the wine of freedom. (Difficult Daughters, Page 10).”

“Shakuntala briefs – These people don't really understand Viru, how much satisfaction there can be in leading your own life, in being independent. Here we are fighting for the freedom of the National, but women are still supposed to marry, and nothing else. (*Difficult Daughters*, Page 17).”

In Lahore, Virmati musters with Swarnalatha, who has enrolled herself in pressure group of activist for women liberation and freedom movement. She is a diplomatic girl with her own fancies and stand points. She desires to explore the territories other than marriage. She becomes a prominent figure in political areas too. She suggest Virmati reasonably,

“Marriage is not the only thing in life: there are other important things for women to do”. “The War – the Satyagraha movement – because of these things, women are coming out of their homes. Taking jobs, fighting and going to jail, wake up from your stale dreams. (*Difficult Daughters*, Page 151).”

Women in recent era do not accept the historical role imposed on them. She is an assorted and multifarious person. They wish to shoulder the duties, not like a genie, who are a subordinate to discharge duties. They are unlocking them from thier subaltern state. Their mutiny is against suppression, deceit, fraudulent scam in the name of patriarchy. They demand recognition for their hardships in their assorted activities. They stand by the point that, unless and until they loiter outside the four walls of house, they can never predict and delve into the world outside.

Manju Kapur's third novel *Home* scrutinizes multiple domain of family sector. This novel chronicles potent blend of old and new tradition jostling with modern aspirations, quest for status, marital problems and finally long haul of women's endurance. Kapur has uplifted the issues of caste, classism, groundless religious and unproven superstitious beliefs, girl child abuse, finally at the top highlighted female oppression. Anupama Chaudhury opines,

“Home reveals a disturbing home truth that joint family can both destroy and preserve our maturity, individuality and mental progress. (P. 33).”

As in *Difficult Daughters* Manju Kapur's elucidate the mothers of three generations, in *Home*, She mirrors the saga of three generations in textile business at Karol Bagh. The warrior of novel, Nisha is reflection of middle class girl who is in handcuffed situation not able to take any decision as per her choices. In this story the novelist not only probe into the uncertainty of women but also shadows the gleam and glow of her handed over surrender. Single absolute

problem of a girl is looked upon with the pre-determined idea of rejection. Nisha is the victim of stereotyped family intentions. Her family is never ready to handshake with innovative plans. They find solace in their conventional and orthodox nested ideas which Nisha tried to dislodge.

Its home of Lala Banwari Lal, the rooted head of family who believe in extended family with all member under a single roof. They own a cloth shop in Karol Bagh. Banwarilal had two sons Yashpal and Pyarelal and a daughter Sunita. Sunita gets married to Murali in Bareilly. Murali is alcoholic as a consequence Sunita's innocent life get wretched. she dies a unexpected death . Lal's elder son Yashpal falls for Sona, a girl of ordinary family with no great financial status. whose love marriage faces disapproval initially, utter remarks and alas accepted. While the arranged marriage of younger son Pyarelal is blessed with social ovation as it facilitates to earn the fruits of dowry. Sona's younger sister Rupa gets married to ordinary Government employee of lower rank.

Home is centre where members unlace the day's tiredness and discomfort. But Karol Bagh locks up pleasure and relaxation. As sons get married, the house get two new brides at the same time, brides find it awkward and embarrassing in using the same lavatory located in the corner. The two brothers Yashpal and Pyarelal plan that,

"With a growing family, it is very difficult" The separation is impossible....." what is the solution? Demanded Yashpal plaintively, not dreaming that Pyarelal hand one. Pull down this house and build a modern one, a Modern house that would remove the angan and give them all more floor space, with bedrooms that had attached bathrooms. (*Home*, Page 168)."

Sona enters Karol Bagh with great expectations. Though she gets the angelic boons of richness at her in-laws but she is ridiculed by her mother-in-law for maternal infertility at the initial stage. She starves and does fasting on Tuesdays to get a blessing of a child. Sona things that,

"There must be some deficiency in her prayers or a very bad past Karma that made her suffers so in this life. She was humble, easy to mould, and ready to please. Sona was gold, like her name. But what use was all this if the Banwari Lal blood did not pass on in its expected quantity. (*Home*, Page 14)."

Childless Sona faces all battle of humiliation to continue in the family. Her patience gets testified frequently. She restlessly prays to god,

"She tried to calm herself by praying, closing her eyes to concentrate on her favourite image of god... please, 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(*Home*, Page 19)."

Alas all her prayers get paid back, she delivers the angelic beauty Nisha. Lal's family are on ninth cloud. New born Nisha is considered as the good luck angel of Lal's family. Sona

conceives second time and gives birth to Raju, she is sanctioned priority, unexceptional welcome more than the first.

Both sisters Sona and Rupa differ in thoughts of career and education of girls. Sona appears to have pledged devotion towards family. She considers marriage as a ultimate destiny of a girl to be assumed at her teens. She desires the same for her daughter. She has developed a wrong notion that the society breeds suspicion on educated girls. Rupa stands vice-versa on this opinion of Sona. Though she is childless, it does not bother her much. She is always in good books of her husband Premnath and father-in-law. In regards Nisha, she holds the stand that education provides the individual status to sustain the strength finance especially for girls.

Rupa rebels Sona, “There is always time to learn cooking, but only one time to study... Sona says, to Nisha, “that Masi (Rupa) of yours has ruined your head. What does a girl need with studying, cooking will be useful her entire life. (*Home*, Page 125).

Rupa even persuades her husband to send Nisha to DurgaBai College, by convincing him as the most suitable Women’s College for girls expecting wedding. Nisha gets into college as pastime activity waiting for a good alliance.

It” in her college life that a glimpse of individualism show casts on her. She observes her classmates and matches them with her. On her moves to college she falls for a guy named Suresh, who is an Engineering student. After ample talks and meets she candidly and fearlessly moves all around with Suresh in University lawns and premises.

As her love affair grows stronger she tries to outline her whim and fancies of new fashioned modish attitude. Even though aware about her family’s long-established values, she goes with Suresh to beauty-parlour. Manju Kapur smells the sense of growing versatility in Nisha’s nature. She looked most appealing and attractive after the hair cut. Suresh too agrees that. She went home fearing the result,

“It greeted her as she walked through the front door. Who gave you permission to cut your hair, suddenly you have become so independent, you decide this on your own, where did you find the money, the time, the beauty parlour. Where did you find all these things. (*Home*, Pages 149-150).”

Soon Nisha’s love affair gets revealed to the family. She faces lot to hurdles and obstacles, the family decide to stop her college to put an end her budding love. She stays locked in own house, Sona wails,

“This girl will be our death. My child, born after ten years, tortures me like this. Thank god your grandfather is not alive. What face will I show upstairs? Vijay gets his wife from fancy furnishing while my daughter goes to the streets for hers. (*Home*, Page 198).”

Nisha endures her grief all alone. Sona tears and shatters her with sharp criticism whenever chance strikes. Suresh stands dumb to this issue. He is unresponsive Nisha is unable

to give up Suresh. A conservative society never seals modernity in it. The family begin tenting her mind and advising her.

“Once you get married you can feel hot and cold as you like..... marriage into a family will enable you and your children to live comfortably for the rest of your life. (*Home*, Page 200).”

Nisha’s bad luck sustains her first alliance gets rejected when grooms family comes to know about her past activities with Suresh. Sona torments Nisha-

“Are you satisfied madam? She demanded. This is what your roaming around has done. This is the way people talk – Are you pleased with humiliation. (*Home*, Page 221).”

Nish develops a skin problem, called eczema. Her skin starts turning scratchy, burning, oozing and bleeding she turns restless and tell Doctor.

“I don’t do it on purpose. It itches so much, I can’t bear it, It’s like ants crawling all over me, her mother tells her: your skin will become as black as a buffalo’s, then nobody will ever marry you. (*Home*, Page 229).”

Nisha engages herself in play-school, where she works 8.30 A.M. to 12.30 A.M. that was not sufficient she wanted to establish herself. She had all aspiration to stand alone financially independent. As she is already a daughter of a cloth merchant she wanted to start a business of her own. There were certain misunderstandings between Nisha and his brother’s wife Pooja too, where she wanted to prove her worth enabling a business.

“She would be better than Pooja. She would not only be the daughter of a prosperous man, but be responsible for wealth herself. After all, her father’s blood flowed in her, the blood of traders. (*Home*, Page 286).”

Her younger brother Raju’s marriage before hers stings her both emotionally and mentally. She always struggles to prove her worth. She desires to spread her wings in the new horizons of business.

Nisha creation’s comes into existence. She took a loan of Rupees twenty five thousand from her father and promised to pay it back within stipulated time. She drafts the price of cloth very carefully. She managed the business under her complete knowledge. She gradually flourished in her business and learnt all ups-downs of business strategies. She forgot her past tragedies. She returned half debt to her father making him proud. Nisha learnt to feel the pulse of buyers in trade; she could vision the need of customer and was successful in cherishing it. Now she was on her own feet,

“She had paid half the Rupees twenty five thousand loan with four blessings, Papaji, you will get the other half by year, and she laughed, almost recapturing the liveliness that had been her in college. (*Home*, Page 295).”

Sona's only intention towards Nisha is getting her in the wed-lock. Though she supports her trading life but never moves away from the notion of marriage being the ultimate goal of girl's life. Sona believes that, the qualities of cooking, feeding and handling domicile works are the additional qualification in the market of marriage. Day after day Nisha was in full bloom of her business but the family was inquisitive about her marriage. Alas she was engaged to a childless widower, as her horoscope had some issues.

She tells her forthcoming groom that she should have freedom to run her business even after her marriage. Nisha creations provide the financial stuff required for her existence. At this point Kapurs shows women marching with men in the shades of equality.

Aravind who takes her to her real come "Now you are home", said Aravind as, they climbed the stairs. Marriage takes the replacement of business and within ten months she gives birth to twins. Now she adorns all roles expected by the society – daughter, sister, friend, wife and mother.

Conclusion

'*Difficult Daughter*' and '*Home*' is just a shadow picture of Indian middle class. Strong women are caged in conservative society. Education is the only source of emancipation. The new image of women sketched by Manju Kapur studies her as bold, powerful, decisive and ambitions.

Feminist critic R.R. Prasad quotes,

"The female protagonists of her novels protest against male dominated and the marginalization of women. Man has subjugated women to her will. Used to promote his sexual gratification but never has he desired to elevate her to genuine rank. He has done all he could do to depress and enslave her mind. (P. 154)."

In Manju Kapur's novel women are culminated hybrids of western and Indian culture. They are rooted in Indian liberated thoughts and prove to be Western. She strives to strike a balance in all domains of life towards her upliftment.

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