



## THE EVOLUTION OF *NEW WOMEN* IN THE MANJU KAPUR'S NOVEL "HOME"

K.V.S. MAHESWARA RAO<sup>1</sup>, Prof. S. PRASANNA SREE<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1&2</sup>Lecturer in English, A.M.A. L. College, Anakapalli,  
Visakhapatnam (District), India



K.V.S. MAHESWARA RAO

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### ABSTRACT

Since times immemorial women are not treated equally with men. They are oppressed, subjugated by man in all spheres of life. In order to make women aware of her suffering and to come out of her pain women started to get themselves educated. Education became their weapon. With the advent of colonialism women had a chance to read and write. Gradually women took stance to write. The writings of men are different from women. Men used to write from women's point of view, this made women to realise the true suffering she's undergoing and she took courage to defend herself. Thus the advent of women novelists have come to the platform of Indian writing in English. Among many Indian women novelists Manju Kapur is one such novelist who belongs to the second generation of women writers who is known for versatility and characterisation and portraying the sufferings of women. This paper is about the novel *Home* in which the discrimination of women is reflected through the character Nisha. Nisha is an embodiment of many women in the society.

Key Words: Suppression, Confined, Persecution, Discrimination, Contemporary, Subjectivity.

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Indian tradition observes woman as meek and she as an object of pleasure and subordinate to the male members of the family, carrying each and every dictate of the man with downcast eyes, and confined strictly within the four walls of the house. Since times immemorial women who constituted half of the world's population have an age-long history of suffering under discrimination and persecution. It is true that a good and virtuous woman in Indian society availed the status of goodness; it is equally true that a woman's goodness and virtuousness was judged on her capacity to endure unquestioningly and uncomplainingly the atrocities against her by her husband and also the ruling patriarch. This disturbing picture of woman is

not something new or unique only to India. This is the predicament of women all over the world.

Fiction, being the most characteristic and powerful form of literacy expression today, has acquired a prestigious portion in the Indo English Literature. Fiction by Indian women writers contributes a major segment of the contemporary Indian writing in English. It provides insights, a wealth of understanding, a reservoir of meanings and a basis of discussion. Through women writers eyes we can see a different world, with their assistance we can seek to realise the potential of human achievement, in any appraisal of the Indian English Literature and appreciation of the writing of its women is essential.

Today there is no field without the entry of woman. Of late, women have been accepting many challenging tasks in many fields...like Engineering, Architecture, Aeronautical etc., in the present day literary world, there are several great creative women writers in all Indian Languages. Many Indian women novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity that is not imposed by a patriarchal society. A number of Indian women novelists have produced novels highlighting the true state of Indian society and its treatment of women. Recent writers depict both the diversity of women and the diversity within each woman, rather than limiting the lives of women to one ideal. Among such writers Manju Kapur has her stand.

Manju Kapur, born in 1948, in Amritsar is an eminent writer of Indian writing in English. Being one of the contemporary writers, she works as a teacher of English literature at New Delhi. Her novel *Home* revolves around the suppression of women. Nisha the protagonist of the novel is discriminated within her own family her mother Sonia shows her favouritism towards her son Raju. Women from ages especially Indian women are expected to follow the role models of their goddesses like Sita, Savitri and Gandhari. But these models are traced and the point is that these ideal women existed only in epics; they were princess and queens and were much far from the pains and sufferings of the woman in the modern world who doesn't even have an identity of her own. She lives for others and breathes for others. Manju Kapur portrayed woman through Indian English fiction as the silent sufferer and up holder of the tradition and traditional values of family and society has undergone a tremendous change and is no longer presented has a passive character. Nisha as an individual rebel against the traditional role breaking the silence of discrimination and suffering tries to move out of the caged existence and tries to assert herself. Here the author builds characters of high potentiality and individuality trying to be themselves without disturbing the boundaries of family system.

In the chapters of the novel one finds Sona the protagonist's mother went through the path of suppression. Sona's mother-in-law once treated her with contempt and the same Sona in the role of a

mother showing discrimination between her daughter and son. In most of the families the boy child is considered as a boon the male child is considered as a blessing to the family. Whereas a girl is considered as a burden to the family. In a small instance: When the boys went out to play, Nisha sets up a wail to accompany them, Sona admonishes her that girls should remain indoors as they would get black and dirty. But Nisha argues,

Nisha: "So what? Raju is black."

Sona: "Raju is the colour of Krishna."

Nisha: "I also want to be the colour of Krishna. I am going to play cricket in the sun."

Sona: "Krishna is God. You will look like the sweeper woman who comes to the house. You want to look like a *Kali bhainsi*?" (*Home*, 52)

This discrimination is seen throughout the novel. Sona feels that a girl has no right to choose her place of happiness. She states, "What is there in happiness? A girl has to be happy everywhere." (*Home* 135). Nisha is criticized for her zeal to take – up higher education also, her mother 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." (*Home* 127). She adds, "People are suspicious of brides who are very educated. Too many ideas make it difficult to adjust." (*Home* 140)

Another element in Manju kapur's *Home* shows the choking closeness and destructive limitations of Indian family values. The family system is portrayed as a closet dark world where any hint of an individual their expression is swiftly trampled to death, and to be substituted. This came out true in the life of Nisha. The novel explores the complex terrain of the Indian family and reveals many issues that are deep rooted within the family the revolt against the age-old traditions, quest for identity, the problems of marriage; and lastly the women's struggle for her survival.

Nisha's struggle for basic rights, the thirst of education she becomes aware of her self reliance which is proved in concern with new women. As Simone de Beauvoir says, "One is not born, but

rather becomes woman". So, Nisha is tuned, she is made to listen and accept by elder women's in the family.

Not only in the life of Nisha are many women suffering from economic and socio-cultural disadvantages in the male governed society. The society was patronized by patriarchy. The women were silent and remained only as rubber dolls for others to move as they wanted. They had been deprived of their basic rights, their aspirations to their individuality and self-reliance. Manju Kapur is quite happy to be dubbed a 'chronicler of Indian families,' but do feel free to choose any label that will float your boat. "My own feeling is, describe me any way you like, as long as I am relevant, as long as I am read, I don't really care ... Families reflect all of society – social mores, cultural trends, gender relations, class equations – all of them are seen brilliantly in the novel," says Manju. The novels appeal to her not only as a writer, but as a teacher as well.

This novel is about the family of Banwari Lal. The shop owner Banwari Lal, his sons Yashpal and Pyarelal and their wives and children and it explores the world of joint families. This world of joint families is not the large happy make believe families of films. It is a world trying to grapple with complexities of adjusting your aspirations and individualities with those of the others inside closed walls of the house, facing challenges of generational changes, trying to accommodate growing children in narrow personal spaces and even narrower working spaces.

The story that had started with the tale of Sona and Rupa finally finds its calling in Nisha-Sona's daughter who spends her childhood, scarred by incestuous abuse, at auntie Rupa's home. But it is her later pursuit in life-Nisha takes up her studying English literature in a university, falling in love with a low-caste boy, forcefully standing up to her conservative family, despairing at being jilted by the lover, her courage in struggling with the meanness of life, her attempts at finding her place in an uninformed society that refuses to recognize the promise of her merits, her petty jealousies, unarticulated complaints and simmering frustrations that inevitably accompanies a life riddled with

disappointments- that become central to the concern of the readers.

In the novel one finds Nisha as a woman who first encounter's to stand on her own in order to evolve as a new woman. Various female characters of Manju Kapur like Virmati, Astha and Nisha to move into this forbidden territory, while Nisha has to wait for a very long time in spite of all her physical and mental attainments due to astrological reasons. The portrayal of woman in Indian English fiction as the silent victim and up holder of the tradition and traditional values of family and society has undergone a tremendous change and is no longer presented as a passive character. However, Mrs. Kapur seems aware of the fact that the women of India have indeed achieved their success in sixty years of independence, but if there is to be a true female independence, too much remains to be done.

We see the emergence of new women in Manju Kapur's heroine Nisha who do not want to be rubber dolls for others to move as they will. Defying patriarchal notions that enforce women towards domesticity, she asserted her individuality and aspired self reliance through her education.

This nurture the desire of being independent and leading lives of her own turned Nisha into a New Woman. In order to be an individual woman it does not mean that a woman want's to get away from her circle of family no a woman want to be independent along with shouldering the responsibilities, for the sake of her husband and children. Yet they are not arrogant or rebellious but are bold, outspoken, determined. Thus the protagonists of Manju Kapur are New Woman with confidence and courage.

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