



STRUGGLES OF WOMEN IN MANJU KAPUR'S HOME

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ABSTRACT

The male society has dominated women for ages. The male chauvinistic society is not ready to give what they crave for. On seeing all these things many writers proclaim women's independence. Manju Kapur is one among them. In her novel, *Home* she explores how her female characters are suffering. Through the character of Nisha, she explores the manner in which Indian girls are moulded to suit the needs of a patriarchal society. Nisha while living in her home feels herself homeless and shelter less. The female characters like Sona, Rupa, Nisha and Sunita are subjected to a disharmonious life. They try to resist themselves and swim along the currents of life. Sometimes there are accidents of drowning like Sunita. Only if the strings of domesticity are pulled in the correct manner, the music will be in harmony.

The male society has dominated women for ages. They subjugate women not only physically but also mentally. The male chauvinistic society is not ready to give what they crave for. On seeing all these things many writers proclaim women's independence. Manju Kapur is one among them. In her novel, *Home* she explores how the women struggle for their identity. She shows how her female characters are suffering. Through the character of Nisha, she explores the manner in which Indian girls are moulded to suit the needs of a patriarchal society. It shows the protagonist Nisha's domestic disharmony and her struggle to survive in her own family.

In the novel *Home*, Manju Kapur goes back to her theme of three generations residing in one house. It is about the home of Lala Banwari Lal, a patriarch who strongly believes in living in a joint family. He is the head of the family and runs a cloth shop in Karol Bagh. He has two sons namely Yashpal and Pyarelal and a daughter Sunita, who is married off to Murali in Bareilly. The beautiful elder, Sona is married to the elder son of Banwari Lal while the

younger one, Rupa is attached to a junior government officer of less value.

Home is usually supposed to be the place where people relax and are comfortable. But Karol Bagh's house starts to lose its peace and comforts when the younger generations get married. Due to one marriage after another, the house is filled with new brides. The new brides find it inconvenient to use the same bathroom which is in the corner of their house. The two brothers, Yashpal and Pyare Lal plan that, "With a growing family, it is very difficult'...the separation is impossible...'what is the solution?' demanded Yashpal plaintively, not dreaming that Pyare Lal had 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" (H 168).

Rupa has only a husband and a father-in-law in the family. Rupa and her husband, Prem Nath remain as a childless couple throughout the story. Rupa does not bother about this. It is difficult for

Sona for having no children who lives in a joint family.

Sona blessed by all materialistic riches is mentally tortured by her mother-in-law because of her emptiness and her mean birth. Her dedication to her family and her passive suffering extend to torture her. She starts her fasting on Tuesday, living a life of devotee. Sona thinks that "There must be some deficiency in her prayers or a very bad past karma that made her suffer 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" (H 14).

The childless Sona makes a lot of efforts to sustain in the family. She faces much oddness but continues her patience to get child. She relentlessly prays to god, "She tried to calm herself by praying, closing her eyes to concentrate on her favorite 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" (H 19). In the traditional family, infertility creates a big problem. They find fault only on Sona. They fail to see that Yashpal is also responsible for that problem.

Sona finally gives birth to baby girl, Nisha. Everybody is happy. Sonadeliivers Raju and is welcomed more than the first. Nisha has to face discrimination observed against the females. The mother says: "Nisha set a wail 'I want to go too'. You can't said her mother shortly. Why? Why can't I?' It is better for girls to remain inside. Why? 'You will get black and dirty...' "Don't go out in the sun you will get even darker" (H 51). She is a girl and she must take care of her fair complexion which is considered as an essential for a prospective bride in the traditional Indian mind set.

The family never lets Nisha go outside and play with her brothers. When Nisha goes to play with Vicky, the son of Sunitha, she is sexually abused by him. During night, she screams heavily and has sleepless night. Everyone in the house feels that something has scared her in the house. She screams during her sleep. She tries to sleep that describes: "From being a child who went to sleep the minute her head hit the pillow, she refused to lie down or close her eyes. 'I will stay up all night,' she declared.

I want to be all she said...' I had bad dreams, I had bad dreams. But she couldn't say what they were" (H 63). To sort out this problem, she is sent to Rupa's family. There she feels comfortable with them and they educate her.

After her schooling, Nisha is brought back to share the family responsibilities and to look after the old grandmother. Nisha renders her contribution as per the needs of the family. She wants to fight against the notions of her mother who considers her daughter a mere helper in the kitchen. Nisha protests to Sona that, "Rupa said there is always time to learn cooking, but only one time to study...Sona says "That Masi of yours has ruined your head. What does a girl need with studying? Cooking will be useful her entire life" (H 125).

Nisha's love affair is declined by the family. The family decides to discontinue her studies in order to stop further issues. Nisha swirls into depression. She becomes prisoner in her own house. Her mother cries and bursts, "This girl will be our death. My child, born after ten years, tortures me like this. Thank god your grandfather is not live. What face will I show upstairs? Vijay gets his wife from Fancy Furnishing while my daughter goes to the street for hers" (H 198).

Nisha suffers in silence because she is not able to share her private sorrows with her mother. Her mother is not inclined to share. Most of the sorrows are imposed by the mother herself. Nisha's dreams are badly battered by her family. She wants her lover to declare his undying love, defy prejudice and authority. But Suresh does not give any response. Though she controls her sorrow, she is not able to forget Suresh. Modernity is largely unacceptable to conservatives.

Her oscillation is useless, because she herself is powerless, quiet and mute. They canvas her to leave all her dirty love and advice 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" (H 200). Nisha's misfortune continues and the first proposal fails because of her past involvement with Suresh. The failure makes her mother grudge: "Are you satisfied Madam? She demanded. This is what your roaming around has done. This is the way

people talk. Are you pleased with our humiliation?" (H 221). Nisha blackens her own respect and tarnish the morals of the traditional family.

When Nisha realizes that her marriage with Suresh can never happen. An acute sense of having deeply sinned, harbored in the recesses of her mind, translates into a boldly skin disease, called eczema. Her skin becomes scratchy, burning, oozing and bleeding; she feels that the ugliness within her is coming out. Her pathetic condition due to her skin disease can be seen when she speaks to the 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" (H 229).

She tells her prospective groom that she should have freedom to run her business even after their marriage. On the wedding night, she finds no enthusiasm in her husband. He never says what he feels for her. Nisha is surprised to think what sort of marriage is hers.

Like a modern woman she craves to spread her horizons beyond traditional limits of a woman. It is only in marriage and child birth that she is forced to find her ultimate happiness and fulfillment. But Nisha is confident that she will resurrect it after her maternal obligations are over. Thus, Kapur portrays the character of Nisha as an educated, confident, self-assured, bold and independent Indian woman. This novel reveals that a girl in Indian family is whining under the burden of patriarchy. Thus, Nisha while living in her home feels herself homeless and shelterless.

LalaBanwari Lal's only daughter, Sunita marries Murali in Bareilly. When Banwari Lal goes to visit him, he seems to be a decent person. The dowry is not asked, there is no mother-in-law and there is no sister to claim their share. This fact makes Banwari Lal believe that Sunita leads a happy life. Murali is a drunkard person and used to abuse her which is unknown to her parents. Murali wants her family "To invest in Bareilly, to either open an outlet that he would manage, or failing that, to help upgrade his shop. Her dowry had been small, he demanded redress. They are cheating you; they palmed you off like a poor girl, and now they are rich, they should share... her life would be hell

afterwards." (H 17) In the society, dowry holds the happiness of middle class women like Sunita. At first, Murali denies getting dowry from Sunita's family but later when they become rich he strongly demands it.

The female characters like Sona, Rupa, Nisha and Sunita are subjected to a disharmonious life at least for some period of their life. They try to resist themselves and swim along the currents of life, at times there are accidents of drowning like Sunita. Only if the strings of domesticity are pulled in the correct manner, the music will be in harmony.

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