



A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY FROM INTOLERANCE TO PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT OF WOMAN IN MANJU KAPUR'S NOVELS: THE IMMIGRANT

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the immigrant issues of Indian women in *The Immigrant* novel by Manju Kapur. It is about thirty- one- year- old bachelor, Nina, who lived with her widowed mother in Delhi. She gets married to Ananda, an NRI, Dentist and takes off to start her new life. This article is concerning the life of a married woman, with her husband alone to talk with, all alone in an unknown land where Indian Culture and individuality have frequently remained unknown ideas. A journey separates one from their motherland towards the foreign land, everywhere it is distinct from the new culture and new adjustments. Nina soon ditches her saris in favor of sweat pants, what proves more difficult is adapting to the unknown rituals of married life. The loneliness and feeling of being uprooted rotate the character of traditionally brought up, Nina. Ultimately we find an absolute change in the character and attitude of Nina and she develops a new dimension towards lifestyle.

Keywords: Immigrant, loneliness, irritation, homesickness, conversion, identity crisis

Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant* is an outstanding tale of Nina who has been caught in the cobweb of her self-made world. Manju Kapur's presentation of Nina's tale is highly twisting because of its conflicting nature. *The Immigrant* deals with not only Nina because many Ninas are found in Indian society. The novel deals with the problems of a woman aspiring for the higher life in general. She becomes the victim of her own decisions. Her story also suggests how morality has been transformed in modern times.

In this novel, Manju Kapur seems to be interested to discuss the theme of feminism with the help of the character of Nina. Kapur is preoccupied with the theme of feminism in this novel. Nina shows enough boldness and curiosity in unfolding some of the important trends and issues concerning feminism in the general. Her central protagonist

Nina is the typical representative of the changing scenario as Indian social fabric is concerned. There is a perfect blending of aestheticism and moral purpose in the novel.

The *Immigrant* discusses the Indian diaspora in Canada, we will especially focus on diasporic experiences of her female character Nina, what kind of inequality she faces in Canada and how she manages to possess an identity of her own. Sankaran Ravindran rightly observes about these Indians immigrants:

"Indians abroad are not just people abroad. They are bundles of attitudes, convictions, anxieties, shared nations, fears, and anticipations, all of which are Indian in their very texture" (131).

Manju Kapur seems to be the true exponent of feminism in her novels. All her novels are well versed in her vision of feminism and she has devoted many pages in order to throw light on the condition of women in Indian society. Her sense of feminism is quite different from the motto of Western feminism. In India, the condition of women is viewed from traditional perspectives. People or critics are often mistaken and misunderstood in defining feminism in the manner of conflict or dilemma. Her novel *The Immigrant* deals with all these things in a comprehensive manner.

All the actions and incidents of the novel are centered around the character of Nina whose life and her relationship have been presented in great authenticity. Nina's marriage has been delayed because of many reasons altogether. Nina's mother is always worried about the marriage of her daughter. She went to many astrologers to make inquiries about the suitable bridegrooms for her daughter as soon as possible. For her, education is not so important as the marriage of her daughter.

Ananda is the central male figure in the novel. He is in Halifax and practices as a dentist there. In Canada, he has not been attracted by the Indian girls. He is also in search of his partner "The few Indian girls he met in Halifax did not attract him. He was too suspicious of the strings he saw around them. They might be looking for marriage, they might regard any physical contact as commitment, and they might get their parents to contact his uncle." (40)

She thought of those who had been nice to her, wayfarers on the path, nothing permanent, but interacting with them had made that stretch easier. Colleagues at HRL, the woman's group that encouraged her to be angry and assertive. Beth, Gayatri library school; the sense of community was there, warming but temporary-everything temporary. (333)

Finally, Ananda was selected as the husband of Nina. Nina was also delighted because she was already in her thirties and the typical tradition of Indian society gives minimum freedom to the girls to open their mouths to show their emotions and passions. Nina meets with Ananda and

shows her emotions and now she is ready to do whatever Ananda likes.

Even before marriage, Nina is ready to accept the physical advance of Ananda when Ananda was in India for his marriage settlement with Nina. Nina does not show any kind of hesitation in this regard. She does not feel any problem from her mother's side. Both Nina and Ananda were too mature to have sexual fulfillment. They are delighted and realized more and more pleasure in doing so. Both of them are responded to each other with eagerness and curiosity. Manju Kapur has presented the graphic description of their involvement.

Both Nina and Ananda get satisfaction in their involvement in sexual act. The pleasure they realize is beyond expectation. They forget that by now they are not married yet. They forget the limitation of their relationship. Their respective bodies are in the state of dominating their minds. Ananda was once again in the flight for Halifax, Canada. But this time with different thoughts and different mood he remembered those days in India at the time of his parent's death.

In *The Immigrant*, Manju Kapur writes about the problems faced by immigrants particularly women abroad. The problems faced by women abroad are different from the problems faced by men. Women had to adjust more and more. They are far away from their motherland and the traditions and conventions matter much for them. They have to adjust to new conditions that are not conducive to them all the time. In the nineteenth century, the problems of the immigrants were generally materialistic.

In the twentieth century, the problems faced by immigrants are psychological. They are abroad for better hopes and better life. They would like to enjoy a happy and prosperous life. But they suffer from emotional shock. They are not successful in their approach. Their problems have been complicated. Women have also become victims of men abroad. Men settled abroad come to their homeland to select the bride who might help them in their profession and business. They cannot survive abroad without money. The pomp and show of the

abroad also lure the immigrant to become the victims of their own cobweb.

Both Ananda and Nina were in favor of court marriage because they did not want to spend extra money on their wedding. They were also not interested in the rituals of marriage to be performed in their case. They would like to follow a shortcut way. Especially for Ananda, these rituals have no meaning and importance.

Their wedding was fixed in the month of December. But Nina was much interested in her own departure from India to Canada. She thought her husband would do all the things to take her along with him as soon as possible after marriage. In Canada, Ananda began to imagine her wife by comparing her with Nancy and other Western women in a romantic way. He was quite fanciful about her future wife.

Finally, Nina tries to assimilate herself with Western culture. She learns to break her solitude. She buys books from the grocery shop to fill her time. But reading books also fails to distract her. It seems her mundane and boring. She, in order to find herself out, begins to wear jeans and eat meat. She joins a library course so that she could remain engaged. But here she enters into an extramarital relationship which ends on date rape. At the outset, Nina feels guilty after the first sexual encounter with Beth. She begins to ponder what she had done. But soon she rationalizes herself when she says that she has done what she likes. She thinks:

That she like, she had lived. Who can feel guilty about living? Judging from the evidence, and the sexual therapy centers, every citizen in North America regarded good sex as their unalienable right. It was her right too. (263)

In the era of globalization, it is quite beyond the imagination of a man living abroad to think about an arranged marriage. The immigrants are very selective in their approach towards the institution of marriage; they begin to dislike the Indian marriage system for many reasons altogether.

Ananda began to fancy about his marriage with Nina. It seemed to have become a reality for him. He began to imagine Nina as his wife and how would she adjust in Canada with him become the real matter of consideration. Like a typical Indian husband living abroad, Ananda would like to think that his wife would possess certain habits.

Now the time came when Ananda as a bridegroom and Nina as a bride were ready for a union. They looked smart and beautiful. They looked at each other with curiosity. They were extremely happy at the time of their marriage ceremony. Ananda was very keen to know about various things about a marriage ceremony. Both Ananda and Nina were mature enough to have much sexual pleasure. At the bridal night, Ananda would like to provide much sexual pleasure to Nina, but he could not do so. On the other hand, Nina did not understand the consequences.

Nina did not feel anything bad at that bridal night. She felt that togetherness was more important than this mere act of sexual pleasure. When Ananda went into the bathroom, Nina began to imagine: "Nina had imagined a very different consummation. As she lay in bed she tried to transform reality into a scenario that would not confuse or upset her. Togetherness was the important thing. To be critical of how it was achieved was against the spirit of marriage." (91)

The passiveness of Ananda in providing sexual pleasure to Nina made her upset and boring. Ananda did not show any sexual inclination because of unknown reasons. This passiveness compelled Nina to compare Ananda with Rahul, her boyfriend in the college. Rahul was very active as Nina thought.

Nothing is steady and stable in a foreign land. If one thing fails, the immigrant tries another. An immigrant cannot go back. The book ends with a message which can make the immigrants' journey pleasant, "The continent was full of people escaping unhappy parts. She too was heading towards fresh territories, a different set of circumstances, a floating resident of the Western world" (334).

The last few words may reverberate through an immigrant self and provide a vintage

ground in the hollow land - "When one was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home. Pull up your shallow roots and more. Find a new place, new friends, a new family. It had been possible once, it would be possible again" (334).

Ananda suffered from physical deformities. He was not able to satisfy Nina's demanding attitude in sex. She was more curious about sexual activities but Ananda could do nothing. She tried his best to show his eagerness but he was helpless in this direction. Nina also understood the consequences.

Conclusion

Manju Kapur beautifully portrays the psyche of Nina in her novel. She minutely analyses her thought process so sensitively that the reader begins to equate with her characters. Time and again, people in a foreign land languish for their motherland, as a result, much of the smooth things they used to despise during their stay in their native country often tempt them. Therefore in concluding line, it can be said that Manju Kapur artistically handles the theme of discrimination to the identity formation of Nina in diaspora and successfully highlights the Indians and Indian culture in Canada in the second half of the twentieth century in her novel *The Immigrant*.

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