



## Dependence Syndrome and Fallacious Stature in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman*

Dr. Dipak C. Dharne

Assistant Professor

Narayanrao Kale Smruti Model College,

Karanja (Gh) Dist- Wardha-442203

[deepakdharne@gmail.com](mailto:deepakdharne@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

It is very hard to decipher the intentions of ambitions and aspirations of an individual, especially one's approach towards life. In terms of woman this interpretation makes understanding blurring due to the traditionally set up and defined role dictated by patriarchal societal norms. The status of woman in society has varied and different from culture to culture and country to country, yet one shred all-pervasive in all societies is that woman has never been regarded as equal to man. Right from pregnancy to birth, a woman is trampled with societal rituals and patriarchal customs, and stringent covertly punishments that are carefully adopted as threaten to make sure she does not nurse the rights and privileges associated with men since ages.

Key words: Feminism, patriarchy, conjugal, turbulence, individuality

Despite with the propagation of higher education and awakening amongst women, the plight of women has positively changed to some degree. Several of the writers have delineated the 'new' woman as protagonist who tends to take "the road not taken." The present study traces the female protagonists of Manju Kapur in the novel of *A Married Woman* who raise their indignation and grievances and embarks on to secure their autonomous rightful freedom in spousal relationship, family and society. Nayak remarks: "There is a man within every woman and a woman in every man when manhood is questioned, and womanhood is fragmented" (134). In the name of tradition, hegemonic masculinity has made the condition of women deplorable and degenerative. The cardinal feature of the socio-cultural set-up in India has been stark inequalities in gender relations. This type of indignity and subservient treatment meted out to them has increased the intensity of the problem. This discriminatory

treatment has led them gradually from silent resentment to reactionary yet revolutionary rebellion.

Astha, protagonist, becomes victim of ritualistic obligations. Initially, she fulfills duties as a devoted wife to her husband, obedient and docile daughter-in-law and a child-rearing and caring mother. But being an educated woman, she aspires for freedom of expression of decision-making too. Societal obligations compel her to subjugate her innermost and instinctive aspirations and reactions that explicitly demand an access, and thus getting trapped in her turbulent and pent-up feelings. She regards her husband to be the man of her dreams who would shower affection on her eternally. But with the passage of time Astha gets disenchanted that it is a most irrational and impractical thought to nurse the hope that a 'man' (whether foreign returned or educated abroad) would give in his machismo, his inflated superiority complex and his prejudiced frame of mind. She boldly defies and

voices her grievances for autonomy and self-pride at every moment, but she too is afraid of traditional norms and get confined herself to the imposed bondage by patriarchy.

Ashtha is unsatisfied with her conjugal relationship and the only solace she gets in is her complex types of taboo relations, either in her passion for paintings or in ongoing heated politics. For, she realizes she doesn't get enough attention from her husband and craves for love and affection from in-laws. She is transformed into a lady demanding independence and self-recognition. "Between her marriage and her birth of children, she too had changed from being a woman who only wanted love to a woman who valued independence. Besides, there was a pleasure of interacting with minds instead of needs" (MW: 231). Thus, Astha on one hand tries to be revolutionary and on the other she tries to be reconciliatory with her husband and in laws. She asserts her identity and is also not able to slough off the bonds of familial ties. Her quest for identity and autonomy compels her to move towards individuality.

Pipee, another protagonist, exercises a high level of social as well as financial independence and prompted Astha to exert her being like her. "She lived alone in Delhi, sufficiently, isolated from conventional society to believe her choice of partner concerned only herself" (MW: 117). Astha wonders at the carefree way in which Pipee lived. "Pipee lived on a grander, more open scale than she did" (MW: 234). Indu Swamy says:

Astha gloats herself in flirting by just feeling lesbianism as a component of larger human rage, as pleasure is an important element in sexual activity. In her shattered life she prefers this is an antidote to masochism offering homage to her conventional morality. (168)

Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1928) says that in order for women to come into their own, two things are needed – space and opportunity – both economic and social. The question of a woman becoming independent – socially as well as financially lies with the consent of her husband. If the husband earns enough, it is

expected that the wife should just take care of the family and the kids. Career is insignificant thing, and a woman may be compelled to quit it at any juncture. Astha was told to quit the job by her husband as she could not cope with the responsibilities of the household as well as her career. But Astha was not prepared to quit the job as, "It represented security, not perhaps of money, but of her own life, of a place where she could be herself" (MW: 165).

It is true that the novelists today produced a plethora of characters that deviate from the cultural biases and restructure for them a new world of their own choice. It is world of their own free will, wherein they exercise freedom of expression and choice in their bid to be modern, autonomous and individual being. A. S. Dasan brilliantly articulates:

In the Indian English novel then, the portrayal of the angst was a straightforward one with the awareness of the tumults and the changes of the time, and in the post-colonial Indian English novel now, writers have tried to reconstruct received legacies with the help of the knowledge of the contemporaneous or tried to transcend the traditional legacies with a drift towards 'cultural rootlessness'. (11)

Astha desperately attempts to realize that she has given up her own individual identity while trying to fulfill that conventional and ritualistic family values. She feels suffocated in her family affair and her sexual life hopelessly disappointing. Her husband had diametrically metamorphosed into foe from a lover. The fulfillment of sexual lust is their rendezvous; otherwise, they live in armed truce. The forthright rejection of dignity and the accusation of being free willed against family's reputation compel her to remain perpetually stagnated in mental agonies, which simultaneously goes parallel to the political and religious nationwide. Astha tends to establish deviated relationship with different people, all the while searching for her identity. Her thirst for identity is a "Whole new looks at woman – not as the property of father,

husband or son, and dependent on their bounty, but as valuable human material to be brought to 'full flower and full participation her life and events' (Nayak: 59).

Through the characters of Astha, Kapur highlights the factors which curb the freedom of the female to live, grow and actualize herself the way men do. Married to a busy businessman who finds insufficient time and energy for her, she crosses the threshold of tradition and enters the domain of modernity to quench the thirst of her suppressed aspirations. The worth, time and attention that Pipee gives her draws her towards a relationship which has no recognition or approval in the Indian social structure. Perhaps the education and learning of Astha paves the way for her desire to be more valued as an autonomous human being. Their education leads them to independent thinking for which their family and society becomes intolerant of them. They struggle between tradition and modernity. It is their individual struggle with family and society through which they plunge into a dedicated effort to carve an identity for themselves as qualified woman with faultless background.

Thus, as protagonists have succeeded to gain self-recognition and assertion only when they walk out of their tradition bound roles to modern individualistic ones to establish self-identity, self-actualization with dignity and pride. The rigidity mooring of society and dynamics of power, controlled and manipulated by male-dominated society, makes women more difficult to get their 'voice' heard.

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