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WOMEN ON THE MARGINS: REFLECTIONS ON MANJU KAPUR'S "HOME"

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of women writers in the beginning of the 19th century is the milestone in the history of the world literature. The 21st century Indian English novel is extremely nervous, if not passionate, with the family and the personal life or interior world of individuals-man and women. The modern Indian women English novelists have taken a lead in depiction of the situation of women who living beneath patriarchy, have to endure trials and troubles under the impact of contradictory influences of tradition and modernity. "Feminism is light in the darkness of patriarchy"

Manju kapur is one of the most talked about and cherished modern English novelists, with the brightness of a precious stone clear narrative and perceptiveness awareness. In post- independence India, the archetypal image of woman is altering hastily and now she is annoying to put down claims for more space within the ancestral attachment. My paper is endeavors to learn the dilemma of women in a patriarchal structure where men are the dominant sex; the cultural construction and social mechanism bring about gender dissimilarity with reference to Manju kapur's third novel HOME. It reflects diverse facets of the struggle of women's sovereignty. Kapur has brilliantly highlighted the sufferings of women in middle class families.

KEYWORDS: *Feminism, gender dissimilarity, traditional ideals*

DISCUSSION

Home focuses on three female characters **Sona**, (daughter-in-law of Banwari Lal), **Rupa**, (sona's sister) and **Nisha**(sona's daughter) who claim their identity in their own ways. Like many other Indian woman writers, Kapur voices the trials and troubles of her female protagonist, NISHA who, undoubtedly, recognize the primal essence of family

bond but is aware of her individuality. While living in the suffocating environment of the traditional values of middle-class constraints, kapur's female protagonist struggles to declare herself. Social structure states one's thoughts. A person becomes that, under which situation he or she lives. The two authentic sisters- Sona and Rupa, born in the same house, are completely different in their thoughts after

their marriage. It is consequence of the atmosphere of their new families. Rupa considers a working woman as liberated individual, while for the other it is disgrace. Rupa declare, "Times are different now" while Sona says "we are traditional people, tradition is physically powerful with us. So is responsibility." Generally, in pre-independence and even in the post independence era, joint families in India had peaceful world where the head of the family, clearly a patriarch, adhered to the traditional ideals and believed that "Men work out of the home, women within," where women were supposed to follow the old ways unthinkingly. But progressively spread of education and the light of the new world made these women conscious of their rights and they began to elevate their voice against this inequitable setup. This novel resonates with such intricate themes. HOME is about the Indian family life spans three generations whose fortune and thoughts are glued to the Banwari Lal cloth shop. The family of Banwari Lal is conventional and patriarchal. His two sons pursue the ways of their father. Sona's childless and later Nisha's empowerment is also measured as disgraceful. She declines to resolve with the patriarchal and male governed society and tries to institute her own individual identity. This novel is around the story of Nisha, the young daughter of Yashpal and Sona. Kapur raises numerous issues which often raise the eyebrows of modern woman. HOME is usually believed to be a place where people peaceful and comfortable but *Nisha* in her own home is physically abused by her own cousin, Vicky. The pious bond of brother and sister is shattered. It affects the child psychologically and evinces perplexed growing up years of Nisha from her childhood. *Home, the place of relaxation turns out the most insecure place for her and she begins to have nightmares.* Anupama Chowdhury says, "Home reveals a disturbing home truth that joint families can both destroy and preserve our maturity, individuality and mental progress"². NISHA, since childhood, faces the evil of gender discrimination who like her brother, is not allowed to ride a tricycle and go out. She spends a congested childhood where she is not permitted to play or go out by her own option. The following passage from the text bears evidence to this discrimination, observed by most of the middle class families in India.

'Nisha set up 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 back and dirty.'

'Sowhat? Raju is black, blacker than Vicky.'⁽⁵¹⁾

She insists on her mother to permit her to go out and play cricket. But Nisha's mother reminds her of the duties a woman has to execute. She comments, "This is the life of a woman to look after her home, her husband, and her children and give them food she has cooked with her own hands. Sona wants her daughter to be stuck in the tradition that would make her a wife significance living. She wants that "the art of service and domestically should shine in her daughter so brightly the she would overcome her negative karma to be a symbol of hope in her married home." **She believes that a girl's real education is in the kitchen. Moreover, a girl has no right to choose her place of happiness.** Sona states clearly, "what is there in happiness? A girl has to be happy all over the place." Nisha feels uncomfortable in her own home then she goes to live with her aunt Rupa. Nisha sees her adviser in her aunt and wants to lead a life like her. Her mother does not understand Nisha very much. The main distress of sona is Nisha's marriage Nisha always protests her mother. For instance, *she says "Masi says there is always time to learn cooking, but only one time to study."* The girl always tries to protect herself and her aunt. This clash between Nisha and Sona is a clash between tradition and modernity. The mother wants her daughter to be deep-rooted in the tradition that would make her life worth living. The author has depicted through the character of Nisha that it is not easy for a woman to choose the career of her own choice. In order to do so, she has to struggle a lot in her life. Society deprives her of this right just because of her being a woman. Tradition bound society has made certain boundaries and laws which she is not permitted to cross over. Working in shop was not considered a good profession for Nisha. She is a sufferer of gender discrimination when she feels that she can't work outside like her brothers. This reveals her inner quest for self-governance survival and self-identity. She counts herself equal as her brothers. She denies the patriarchal system. Malti Agarwal observes, "Manju Kapur's depiction of her heroine, her traveling the labyrinth of rules and regulations of traditional middle class milieu and stepping out to start earning for her existence are superb. A girl in Indian family is whining under the burden of patriarchy. She while living in her home feels herself homeless-shelter less. She strives to explore space for herself. She tries to be self-reliant in order to survive."³

Nisha's voyage towards liberation begins. She wants to do something important. She complains, "Why should I sit at home every day waiting for proposals?" she further wants to do fashion designing course. She wants to be economically sovereign. It is her first step towards empowerment. Her idea of working and earning is sourly opposed by her

mother. With the help of her father, she starts her own business, a boutique; named 'Nisha's creations' first time in her life she feels proud of her self. Manju kapur seeks liberty for the Indian woman but within the Indian socio-cultural values.

To sum up, it would be correct to say that Nisha as an individual could create separate room for herself in home and society. She, as an educated and brave new woman, could decline to be treated as a thing instead that tried to establish her own identity.

Though Manju kapur has portrayed the character of Nisha as an educated, confident, self-assured, bold and independent spirited new woman, she maintains the character of Nisha, to create

consciousness of women's liberation and equality along with men, not fully bloomed but at least up to mark. Kapur paying honor to Indian tradition, like Ezekiel, believe "HOME IS WHERE WE HAVE TO GATHER GRACE"

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