

POST COLONIAL ISSUES IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF MANJU KAPUR'S—A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the issues that are prominently found in postcolonial India. The Indian novelist Manju Kapur has skilfully captured these issues as naturally as possible. Issues such as female independence, Immigration, Diaspora, breakdown of family values, and women empowerment are dealt with. Her novels deal with pre-independent and post independent India. The major issues that stuck the country as well as the Individual are dealt with. The Bildungsroman of the country is also well captured through her novels which spans from 1940's to the present day. Her novel vividly traces historically, the nature and growth of Indian society until the modern era

KEYWORDS: *Bildungsroman, Diaspora, Women Education and Empowerment*

INTRODUCTION

The tectonic culture shifts from colonized India to the post-colonized India is best captured by Manju Kapur through her string of five novels written from 1998 till date. Her debut novel, *Difficult Daughters*, which was shortlisted for the Commonwealth writers Prize deals with a biography of Virmati, before and after Independence of India. Manju Kapur has lucidly captured the life of Virmati from which we see the post-colonial issues which are involved within the novel. The novel is a Bildungsroman capturing a naïve Virmati growing into a mature educated, self-accultured woman. There is a radical growth in the nation from a colonized country to an emerging and independent country. Young Virmati is duty bound to her younger siblings in colonized India, and emerges as an independent woman as India emerges. She too emerges as an assertive young woman.

We see the protagonist taking strutting steps, not a bold and firm step. This is one of the important post-colonial issues learning to be independent after being under the supreme commanding and an authoritative power of the British. The colonized country has the problem of handling their freedom. Most of the British colonies are either completely or partially dependent upon the developed nations. The colonized lost their originality. The influence of the colonized was so strong that even after independence socially and politically the colonized imitated the colonizer, striving for perfection.

The old values were ripping apart. Socially, we see India as a country with joint family system. Virmati's grandfather Lala Diwan Chand is a generous old man who provided space for his sister, two sons, daughter-in-laws and ten grandchildren. They were more than fifteen people in the same house. Very slowly a family ripped apart. The two sons were given separate houses. We see the drift in not only the houses but also values. Harish, a married neighbour took a liking for Virmati while she was focusing on her studies and just emerging as an independent woman trying to voice out her hopes to the family. Harish who was educated was symbol of hope to her. But Harish's mean intentions

broke the female value system that just emerged in Virmati leaving her helpless and defiant before her family. She lost her loving family. She meekly surrendered to her offender and tried to look victorious after devastating his former family. The anguish with which she lived in the opening lines of the novel as said by her daughter Ida, “the one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother”. Virmati has become a symbol of emergence, emergence of free will thought and action.

Manju Kapur’s next novel *Immigrant* goes on to the next issue of educated modern Indians in a foreign land. The natural ability to adapt to a new place is so placidly dealt. The urge to fly beyond countries and create a new home is seen as escapism. This results in diasporic sentiments of loneliness, loss of identity, searching for roots, and striving for survival. We also see the best is procured by the developed nations and the secondary to developing issues. Nina who crosses her marriageable age is chosen by Ananda to hide his dysfunctional condition. The major issues of immigrants are food and culture shock. It is seen as a major issue affecting immigrant. Food, cloth and socializing, though seems adoptable takes quite a long time to settle in a new land. Even the names are changed. The psychological turmoil faced by Diasporas is one major post-colonial issue. The trauma lies in shirking the culture with which they have grown so stringently to a more liberal and entirely different culture. Adaptations to different climatic conditions also play an important role. Manju Kapur’s characters emerge successfully breathing an air of confidence and freedom which would never be thought of in their homeland. Break down of Indian values is presented. When in Rome be a Roman. As a saying goes, we see Ananda and Nina breaking down the Indian family system. The small nuclear family of two is broken and they are gripped strongly by loneliness and desperation. A strong sense of loss and anguish pushes them further and further until they find a ray of hope. Characters like Ananda tend to lose their Indianness in total and are carried away by the new world’s culture. On reading the novels, one can see the characters evolve from naive, innocent personality to a stronger and assertive character. Individualism here means assertive of the general will if an individual in a collective, culturally strong society in which the individual is present. Jean Jacques Roseau says ‘general will in the society contract’. All the protagonists emerge in a novel style to assert themselves. There is a birth of assertion from naivety. The warmth of kind and trending society gives birth to new spirited individuals who search for suitable space to take tools. How they assert themselves in a culturally strong society and produce a space is well analyzed in her novel. In ‘difficult daughters’ we see Virmati in a British controlled India, as India gets liberated from British, we see the Virmati liberated from ignorance intelligent, innocent to assertion from configuration to freedom.

In home we see Nisha emerging from sweet sticky bond of familiar ties to a successful entrepreneur. She emerges from a dependent weak personality to a financial independent woman. A beautiful young woman with the dreams of settling with a young boy Paswan is ripped off from her world forced to adjust with a mechanically existing family. She tries to take root from there as the family couldn’t find a ‘mangalic’ as directed by astrologer. She lost her vivacity by then. When the family built a new home she managed to get a small space in the basement and began her own boutique. she took roots and was successful. But the long-awaited day of marriage arrived. Though she was married to a person next street the established boutique was taken away by her sister-in-law’s. We see Nisha was physically abused by Vikram when she was an infant, this shocks the readers of gross negligence in a joint family of ten and more. Manju Kapur has thread bared the unsafe familial condition in a so thought safe haven. Kapur’s new emblematic novel is an intricate story of joint family life. Lala Banwari Lal – the patriarch of the family believes in the old ways. Anupama Chowdhury elaborates:

“Home reveals a disturbing home truth that joint families can both destroy and preserve our maturity, individuality and mental progress.” (Chowdhury, 33).

With the advent of technology, the family in “Home” witnesses a series of new beginnings; to have newly viewed generation, education and above all to find peace. She is affected by an allergic condition after her family prevented her from marrying Paswan. In spite of the psychological and physical difficulties she succeeded as an entrepreneur in which she took pride and found her self-esteem.

In immigrant we see Nina, a professor who had to face the brunt of shame for not having married at the right age. The taboo around an unmarried, young and independent woman was quite unbearable for Nina, she found a new place for herself in America after her marriage. When she got married, she evolved as a self-respecting woman but when her marital bonds broke loose she took courage to shirk her marital bond and to find her own roots in the new soil.

Manju Kapur's *Custody*, is a mild parody saves the story from humourless legal drama. Yet the lightness does not take away from the heartbreak. The two children, Arjun and Roohi, become the pawns through which their parents unleash their fury on each other. Kapur gives us effective glimmers of insight into their young, confused minds. The battle lines are drawn early and both parties fight to its end. The cycle of rage between Shagun and Raman not only fuels itself but is complicated by the new stepmothers and fathers acquired through second marriages. Kapur is adept at dealing with this complicated family reconfiguration, and the insecurity it brings to the step-parents as well as children. The plight of Ishita as a second wife is desperate. Her struggle to replace the biological mother moves the readers, while Ashok presents a more ambiguous kind of care. We see Shagun who shrugs a culturally strong familial bond to realize her dream, she activated a space for herself forgoing the welfare of her kids. We see space created for each one for their survival after divorce and remarriage. A widely adapted novel became the talk of the town. A woman completely shrugs her well settled family in favour of an extramarital affair. A woman from culturally strong family with a steady domestic life drifts away with an affluent boss of her husband. We are presented with a more acceptable Ishita childless and thrown away from her family for being childless. Manju Kapur twists the story by placing Ishita in Sahagun's place for which she is thankful. The term 'hybridity' has been most recently associated with the work of Homi K. Bhabha, whose analysis of colonizer/colonized relations stresses their interdependence and the mutual construction of their subjectivities Bhabha contends that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space that he calls the 'Third Space of enunciation' Cultural identity always emerges in this contradictory and ambivalent space, which for Bhabha makes the claim to a hierarchical 'purity' of cultures untenable. For him, the recognition of this ambivalent space of cultural identity may help us to overcome the exoticism of cultural diversity in favour of the recognition of an empowering hybridity within which cultural difference may operate.

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