

Redefining a Woman's Journey from Self-Effacement to Self-Actualization in Manju Kapur's Novel *A Married Woman*

Dr. Athiya Sultana¹, Dr. Akram Mohammed Ali Alquzahy²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of English, Khaja Bandanawaz University, Kalaburagi, India.

²Assistant Professor, Alkhabt Community College Al-Mahweet, Yemen

Corresponding Author: Dr. Akram Mohammed Ali Alquzahy, E-mail: akramalquzahy@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 28 March

Accepted: 21 July

Volume: 1

Issue: 2

ABSTRACT

The present paper throws light on woman's journey from self-effacement to self-actualization in Manju Kapur's second novel *A Married Woman*. Manju Kapur is one of the modern woman novelist like Arundhati Roy, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Kamala Markhandaya, Anita Desai and so on open the way for woman's feelings in the traditional society of this world, where they raised voices against the male-domination in their works. The novels of these authors have mirrored the female in Indian and Western set up entangled in different circumstances.

KEYWORDS

Self-Effacement, Self-Actualization, representation,

1. Introduction

Manju Kapur has enriched the Indian English fictional world with her great creations of write ups. Her writings reflected the realistic struggle of Indian women life. It's a simple designed Indian storyline. A woman who is married struggles to keep her image and identity intact while seeking equal opportunities within and without the familial threshold. Here the struggle is destined to be unavailing and the quest a disaster.

In her second novel *A Married Woman* deals with the inner turmoil of a woman because she feels that her life is fully changed after she got married, she started seeing the differences in her life and later in which she struggled for her basic rights of equality, identity and self-satisfaction. Kapur's protagonists are mostly educated, so they are conscious for their individuality. She brings out the feministic views for identity & status in a family & society. A woman like Astha, the protagonist of Kapur's novel *A Married Woman*. Astha is called as a modern woman because the way she tackles the problems of her life without any violence by being sincere towards her responsibilities in the family. The protagonists realized about her image in the society that made her to break all the norms of traditional society where male domination is in power to satisfy them to be a free bird in the society for which she desired it.

Astha is one of the important figures who tried to change her own life to awaken the awareness about domination and marginality. Astha is unusual even from Virmati of Manju Kapur's first novel *Difficult Daughters* who transgresses social code having married the man of her choice against the desires of her mother like Ammu of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Saru of Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terror*. Being cheated and dominated by their husbands these women fight and rebel against their suppression. In their emotional upheavals they don't bend down to surmount rather break the rules of society. But Astha here in this novel takes a secure, diverse and protected path of rebellion against male chauvinism. She neither breaks herself nor becomes violent in the violation of conventional notion of society rather she turns into more severe in her attack on the traditional customs of socio-cultural set up of established patriarchal system in turning herself to lesbianism. She defies male chauvinism of her husband on the one hand while on the other she pleases the emotions of womanhood in her lesbian relationship with Pipeelika.

“Slowly Pipee, put her arms around her. She could feel her hands on the narrowness of her back [...] feeling her back with the palm. They were enclosed in a circle of silence, the only sound, the sound of their breaths, close together and mingles” (AMW 230-31).

In this novel Manju Kapur has openly rebelled against social code of marriage in which women are forced to play a passive role in their in-laws house. The females have to accept the customary views of male members of the family whether they like them or not.

She reflects the middle class values and seems to enjoy her mental bliss for a long time but gradually experiences that there is something certainly lacking in her life. She suffers from a sense of incompleteness, suppression & agony which is further provoked by her involvement into the outer world of upheaval & protest. But the substitute she seeks temporarily is also hollow from within and fails eventually compelling her heaving a sigh of relief.

“As Astha had a substitute husband in Pipee, she didn’t create a scene at all in the condom-episode. Rather she thought that if her husband had an extra ‘other’, a kind of Old Testament tit for tat attitude”. (Rationale 110).

Finding herself trapped in traditional socio-political & cultural system & chained up in inhospitable & antagonistic behavior of her husband & in laws, she starts seeking for her fulfillment & more meaningful life turning to lesbian relationship with Pipeelika who eases her mind from emotional hassle & gives pleasure which she does not acquire in relationship with her husband in the state of a married woman.

A Married Woman comes out as a kind of work that is unconventional yet carrying the textual culture trends. The protagonist is dwelling in the conventional and contemporary contextual society. Customs deep rooted with the traditional system and equality quotients going hand in hand. Astha is a married woman who is depicted as an idol of sacrifice and adjustment which makes her favorite in her family but diminishing her own status. She from her childhood is brought up in the conventional environment.

“The girl is blossoming now. When the fruit is ripe it must be picked. Later she might get into the wrong company and we will be left wringing our hands, if she marries at this age, she will have no problem adjusting. We too are not so young that we can afford to wait”. (AMW 20).

This is a usual attitude of society towards the girl child from her birth and as she grows up, the more focus is given to the match making and marriage of the girl rather than giving importance to her career. Astha’s mother thinks in the same direction. As a growing girl she goes through college day’s friendship but ended up with marriage to take care of a family. Meeting with Rohan makes her blossom as a woman other than her love but growing her physical needs as well. Education makes her aware, but she cannot get the courage to take up her own decisions. She keeps on looking for a shoulder to hold her.

“Where was the man whose arms were waiting to hold her?” (AMW 15).

Kapur’s art of writing about the status of exhausted woman and medicating her emotive wounds through the narrative makes her stand with the great writers of the world. Kapur very brilliantly presents the character of Astha who is taught by her mother to give preference to household work. She feels discriminated due to customs she has to follow, which has only duties on her part but no respect of her ideas and feelings.

Hemant is a typical Indian husband who turns out to be the conventional husband who opines that the suitable partner for the marriage is a woman who looks after the parents and family. He never wanted a partner with demanding nature that’s why he chooses Astha as a soul mate. Astha’s mother is also emerged as a stereotyped female who gives more importance the male child as during Astha’s pregnancy she prays that she should be blessed with a male child.

“May it be a boy and carry your name forever. A great son of a great father”. (AMW 56)

Manju Kapur through the character of Astha has presented her woman fetching up the intense context and giving voice to in house woman.

Conclusion:

Woman’s journey from self-effacement to self-actualization in Manju Kapoor’s female characters is rebellious and looks for identification. It can be said that their faith in institution like marriage have lost. It is difficult for the

protagonist to continue and tune the lives and identity. Protagonists Astha look for respect and a respectable place in the society with quite luxurious life. We can say one thing that they are not able to adopt and understand the family situations and marriage as an institution in Indian set up like the male dominance, neglecting female's identity and getting atrocious towards them. The woman in current scenario is moving ahead, being educated and aware of their rights rather than surrendering submissively which has added the strength to their womanish characters and is displayed by authors with fine detail to understand the real state of the woman in the society. A woman perceives herself as per the image designed by the societal norms, people and family around. But with the bent of time and technology she has tried to make her own image, respect and urging to do something. She uplifted herself from amusement commodity to human being saving and creating her own ideologies and satisfying her psychological, emotive, physical needs and existence.

References:

1. Kapur, Manju. *A Married Woman*. New Delhi: Roli Books, 2002
2. Dhawan, R.K. Ed. *Feminism and Recent Indian Literature*. Volume 2, New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2009.
3. Prasad, Amar Nath. *Indian Writings in English: Critical Ruminations*, Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2005.
4. Joshi Nidhi, Barche Akhilesh, Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife-A Tragedy of Unfulfilled Dreams*. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, Volume 2, Issue 9, ISSN 2347-3126 (Print) & ISSN 2347-3134 (Online) PP 118-121 September 2014.