

## **REPRESENTATION OF INDIAN MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN IN MANJU KAPUR'S NOVELS**

**Prof. Shinde Sampada Laxman**

Smt.A R Patil Kanya Mahavidyalaya,Ichalkranji (Maharashtra) PIN-416115 Cell: 98608268

**ABSTRACT:** India writing in English has now very important existence in the field of fiction. Many women writers have tried to contribute in the field of novels. The earlier novels were about the social and political issues of the society. The male novelists mostly produced the women characters and their roles. It was only the reflections of the opinions and experiences of male. But this scenario has changed after some time. The novelists desire to expose not only the society but they expressed the psychology of people. The purpose of this paper is to date the issues related to the middle class or upper middle class women. This study is based on the widely read novels of a famous Indian English novelist Manju Kapur, entitled 'Difficult Daughters' and 'Married Woman' the woman's questions today' are therefore no longer an issue to the position of woman within the family or their rights for total direction of change that our society is taking economic political, social and intellectual perception. In this context the role of woman is discussed in the novels of Manju Kapur have to get married and be submissive to their husbands was given a second look when we read her novels. Her first novel 'Difficult Daughters' (1998) has won the commonwealth prize and was a number one best seller in India. It is about the historical backdrop of partition. Her second novel 'Married Woman' (2002) is a work of investigative on the most political issues of the demolition of Babri Masjid and woman's obsession with love. Manju Kapur's protagonists struggle between tradition and modernity, family and society. In this way, Manju Kapur in these two novels presents woman who try to establish their own identity.

### **1- Difficult Daughters'**

Manju Kapoor's *Difficult Daughters* is a feminist discourse not because she is a woman writing about women but because, as Jaidev puts it she "has understood a woman both as a woman and as person pressurized by all kinds of visible and invisible. Contexts" 2. *Difficult Daughters'* is a skilful, enticing first novel by an Indian writer who prefers reality to magic realism. Manju Kapur's sensuous pages re-create an intimate world where family groups sleep in the open air on their roof and wash themselves in the yard in the dewy cool. Of morning. Where love making is furtive and urgent because another wife may be listening, and women's lives move to a complex choreography of cooking, washing, weaving and mending, growing, picking, chopping and blending. This book offers a completely imagined, aromatic, complex world, a rare thing in the first novel. Manju Kapur presents the yearning for autonomy and separate identity in her women protagonists in this post-modern novel in a traditional thread. It is impossible for Vimati to accept a physical relationship. She is haunted by a deep sense of guilt. The formal marriage, a social and public statement, is a must for her. It is this which will establish her identity even if it is as the professor's second wife. Marriage

thus for her means deliverance from her fear of being socially condemned, a possibility which will perhaps bring her back into the fold and relieve her from the sense of insecurity and uncertainty. The earlier generation of her mother saw no reason to rebel. There was complete acceptance in life. Kasturi is an example of the typical feminine attitude to procreate in order to bring about life and pleasure. To run her home first a joint family and later her own, is happiness for her. Like Kasturi, for Ganga the professor's wife, marriage is a religious and a social institution, where love is not the basis of marriage. She too has superb domestic sensibility. Her cooking is enjoyed by her educated husband anglicized to a point, and who is otherwise very aloof. Just living with him, and bearing his children is enough for her. However in Vimati, there is a struggle between the head and the heart, the physical and moral Vimati gives way to her heart and body.

Vimati's daughter Ida, who belongs to the post independence generation, is strong and clearheaded. She breaks up her marriage as she is denied maternity by her husband. The forced abortion is also the termination of her marriage. Ida by severing the marriage bond frees herself from male domination and power and also from conventional social structures which bind women. She has that strength which Vimati lacks. Swarna Lata, Vimati's friend, is also a clearheaded, strong woman. She too experiences tension with her parents over the issue of marriage but unlike

Virmati she channelizes here energy into a new direction which gives her a sense of group identity. It also breeds ideas of radicalism and militancy but what is admirable is the fact that she can build these ideas of independence into here marriage without destroying the structure of the family. Her marriage rests on the condition that it would not hamper her work.

The fight for autonomy and separate identity remains unfinished combat and a million dollar question. Throughout this novel ida's declaration echoes that she doesn't want to be like her mother and wants to assert her autonomy and separate identity. Ida wants liberty and doesn't want to compromise as did her mother. This idea of the novel can be summed up in the utterance of angry ida: 'this book weaves a connection between my mother and me, each a word-brik in a mansion with my head and my heart. Now live in it' mama and leave me be. Do not haunt me anymore.' Perhaps it is this inability of virmati to strike independent roots and grow that makes ida remark like this. The search is that of virmati's daughter, ida, as she seeks to reconstitute her mother's history. Ida, an educated woman, divorced and childless, apparently leads a freer life than her mother's in external terms, yet inside her she feels, even if not quite so acutely, some of the same anxieties as has plagued her mother no matter how I might rationalize desolately.

Trampling patriarchal norms virmati defies societal expectation to assert her individuality and hopes to achieve self fulfillment. But what does she really get she is a loser whose acts totally alienate her own family and she fails to create a space for herself for which she had been striving all along. Rollason (2004) comments, 'in the micro- state to which her destiny leads her, she has no family or close friends. She attains a near exemplary level of female. For the first and only time, she has her own place to live, Virginia Woolf's famous room of one's own: and yet she falls. Today is but the day following yesterday. Things might have changed but how much really. Even today thousands of girls sit within the four walls of their houses and wonder why they do not have the right to choose their own lives. They decide for themselves whether they want to be homemakers or more. Marriage is still the reason for their birth. Freedom is more than just being allowed out for shopping with friends. Manju Kapur presented woman's emancipation and striving for some space in such a manner that we read not just with our eyes but also with our heart. Kapur never permits virmati any assertion of power or freedom because even as she breaks free from old prisons she is locked into newer ones. Her relationship with the professor for instance --- Even years of studying and working alone do not give her the confidence to strike.

## **II- 'A Married Woman'**

In her novel a married woman Manju Kapur has taken writing as a protest a way of mapping from the point of a woman's experience. Kapur negotiates different issues emerging out of a socio-political upheaval in her country. The novel is a sincere confession of a woman about her personality cult in the personal allegory of a bad marriage. In a realistic way she has described the Indian male perception of woman as a holy cow even though women are not year interested in history and those in power trying to twist and turn historical facts to serve their own purposes. As a writer of new generation in an atmosphere of the nation's socio-political flux Kapur has recorded the truth in her fictive narrative with zeal to change the Indian male perception. She describes the traumas of her female protagonists from which they suffer and perish in for their triumph. A married woman seals with woman's issues in the present context it is an honest and seductive story of love, passion and attachment set at the time of political and religious turmoil in India. Driven by a powerful physical relationship with a much younger woman, the main character of the novel risks losing the acquisitions of her conventional marriage and safe family. The novel raises the controversial issue of homosexual relationship in a challenging way. After all gay and lesbian relationships are not mere fancies. This is getting more and more visible in modern societies though we may or may not accept it.

As a married woman Astha, the protagonist, becomes an enduring wife and sacrificing mother. Her temperamental incompatibility with her corporate thinking husband compels her to play the role of mother and father for her children. This denies her self fulfillment and leads to the collapse of the institution of marriage. Discontentment leads her to defiance and restlessness. Her anxiety, discomfort, loneliness and isolation do not encourage her to give voice to her unhappiness over her troubled relationship, rather it prompts her to develop the feelings of guilt, negativity and lack of self-esteem in facing the challenges of her life. Restlessness drives her to enjoy absolute

loneliness, a sort of entrapment by the family, its commitments, its subtle oppression and she yearns for freedom. In the midst of a family and its vast minefield of income, expenditure, rights, responsibilities, knowledge, discontent, restlessness and dependency, Astha enjoys the fate of the poorest. She is suffocated with the growing needs of her family and always adjusting to everybody's needs" (227) Astha understands a married woman's place in the family to be that of an unpaid servant or a slave and the thought of divorce brings social and economic death in her Indian status. She feels for herself that 'A willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day and an obedient mouth" (231) are the necessary prerequisites of a married woman. She contemplates marriage a terrible decision as it puts her in a lot to enjoy bouts of rage, pain and indecision. Judging the male impression of woman she thinks that a married woman is an object of mind fucking" (218) she does not think 'marriage is just sex" (275) rather it provides interest, togetherness and respect. Being torn between her duty and responsibility, faith and fact, public ethos and personal ethics she thinks "a tried woman cannot make good wives". (154) and struggles for an emotional freedom from the scourge of the nation.

In *A Married Woman* (2002), the second of her three novels, Manju kapur frankly depicts the love affair between two women, but less attention has been paid to the historical and political context in which that relationship develops. The tale that thus unfolds powerfully explores how, in a still-traditionalist India entering the age of globalization, evolving personal relations on the micro social level are shaped by wider historical forces, yet can in their turn reshape that same history in an adumbration, potentially utopian even if partial and temporary, of new and more diverse forms of human relationship. In her interview with Nivedita Mukherjee, kapur says, "it an attempt to inject an element of artistic and emotional coherence. Actually a relationship with a woman does not threaten a marriage as much as a relationship with a man." The novel exposes the domestic relationship. Kapur has remained very truthful in presenting the women and the challenges they face in their personal, religious and socio-political levels. Manju Kapur present in her novel the changing image of women moving away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self sacrificing women towards self assured assertive and ambitious women making society aware of their demands and in this way providing a medium for self expression.

**Conclusion :**

Afterreading these two novels. I may say that the representation of woman in Indian English fiction appeared as a silent victim of the tradition, traditional values of family and society has undergone a tremendous change and is no longer presented as a passive character. I see the emergence of new women in Manju kapur's heroines. They nurture the desire of being independent and leading lives of their own. They want to shoulder all the responsibilities going beyond a husband and children. Though they dare to cross the patriarchal threshold. They are caught into another, where their free spirits are curbed and all they do is adjust and compromise.

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