

A NEW AVATAR: A PORTRAYAL OF MODERN WOMAN IN MANJU KAPUR'S *HOME*

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This paper attempts to bring out the concept of liberated new woman in ManjuKapur's *Home*. The postmodern women writers have given ideas related to women empowerment in their writings. Modern women became aware of their own rights through their writings. So they did not want to be a silent sufferer in the patriarchal society rather they strove hard to attain their own position and gather guts to fight for her own aspiration without having concern about the societal norms and ethics which was devised against them. ManjuKapur is one among the best author who successfully portrays how her protagonist have bravely overcome the societal shackles against woman and also tried their best to break the image of woman as being submissive or being the rubber doll in hands of the male dominated society. The objective of this paper is to throw light on the emerging women who begins to shine like a star in every field around the world. The concept new woman has its influence on feminism during the twentieth century. ManjuKapur's protagonist Nisha strives to free herself from the shackles of male-dominance. She thought about the unwritten rules and laws made by the patriarchal society are not common for man and woman. She has the great hunger for knowledge and liberty. She is awaiting her marriage to take place with her lovable one. But the inner and outer space of her family place a major role for rift between their relationships because of the caste discrimination. Her physical sickness makes her to be avoided by everyone in the house. She was greatly depressed and dejected. She wants to prove herself and decides to shine like a star. She wants to break all the societal fences and bondages made for the women alone. So she manage to get a permission from her family members to run a business on her own and this was the first time in their family female could be allowed to take up the business. She attained success in her business. She starts to live a life of a liberated new woman by breaking all the social codes. Coming to her marital life it is not up to her belief and expectations but she was tends to be committed in the marital bond and because of that she was made to give up her business. Again she was forced to live like a traditional woman who does not have the interest to prove their ability and individuality. She was busy in her familial duties.

According to the American writer, Henry James, liberated woman can qualify herself to be socially, economically and politically independent, self-reliant and who has the self-esteem to face any critical situation. In the twentieth century women writers have the thematic outlook which creates the new dimension to Indian English Fiction. The idea of women empowerment is empowered women who can take part in the processes of decision making and development. ManjuKapur like many other women novelists presents women characters who deliberately mock the values of the existing societal norms and ideas. She rebels against the moral code which refuses the freedom for women. She has the fortitude to create woman as a stronger sex who can engaged in all kind of activities. In her she manages to speak out the need for women empowerment. Through her female characters ManjuKapur depicts the perception, aspirations and desires of Indian middle-class women. She portrays how her protagonist Nisha suffers from gender discrimination right from her infancy and also she depicts how gender plays a crucial role in her development.

ManjuKapur's *Home* deals about the family of Banwarilal's joint family. It explores the gender issues in the early stage of the novel through Nisha who falls a prey to the conjugal pleasures of her cousin Vicky, a fifteen year old boy. Vicky tries to seduce her which makes her restless as a result of that she could not eat and sleep as well often she get nightmares. Even at the phase of her infancy it affects her psychologically. So she is sent to her aunt Rupa's home for a change. In a short period of time Rupa and her husband are able to understand that Vicky is the cause for her condition but they could not do anything in the part of Vicky they sympathize Nisha and to provide a good education which helps her shape her future. They are highly concern about her empowerment. They rear her as a liberated woman. Right after her school Nisha is the first girl who steps out from her home to go college in the shop keeper family. This opportunity makes her to taste freedom and she realizes the

equality and rights for woman in the society. But Nisha's mother Sona seems to be a typical Indian woman; according to her education is useless and thought Nisha can be a good woman only she is well versed in the household chores. When she comes to know that Nisha is not interested to do the household chores she blames Rupa for her condition. Sona comments, "this the life of a woman, to look after her home, her husband, her children and give them food she has cooked with her own hands" (126). Sona insists Nisha to participate in the spiritual ceremonies and also she demands her to take part in the household chores. Nisha convinced her mother Sona to further her studies. When she joins the college she became aware of the gender equalities. She is ready to rebel against the discrimination against her within and out her family. She became modern with her traditional views. Though she loves her college mate Suresh, she does not allow him to violate her chastity. She is ready to face the storm after she cuts her hair and also change her style of wearing clothes from salwar kameez to jeans and T-Shirts. In her traditional bound family the changes of her attitude falls a thunder on them. But she becomes bold and sophisticated from time to time. Her family does not allow her to marry Suresh because of caste discrimination. On account of this Nisha says to her mother, "Who cares about castes these days? What you really want is to sell me in the market, she sobbed with indignant emotion. Sell me and be done with it what are you wasting for?" (200). At last Nisha tends to sacrifice her love for the sake of her family prestige. Nisha cannot bear the importance in the society for a particular gender, in all facets of life of a human being. The privilege given to men starts right from his home. Nisha's mother is not an exception and obviously she is partial towards her son, Raju when compared to her daughter. This hurts her deeply because of the partial treatment right from her birth at her home.

Nisha wants to prove her capability and tries to do something meaningful in her life. P.C. Pradhan analyses Nisha along with ManjuKapur's other protagonist, pointed out that, "Challenges the existing social- cultural patriarchal system. in the social... they ultimately return to the traditional mode of life most probably thinking the home is when they may get place and space" (108-122). She declares her desire to study fashion designing. At that time she was suffer from skin eczema which affects her skin condition, harms her beauty that leads to vitiating her marriage prospects and suppressed her mental agony. She starts going to nursery school but after a short period of time she is fed up with teaching and plans to start a business. When she declares to run a business on her own to her family they refuse to do so because the women in the family never entered into business in the society. Somehow she manage to convince her family and opens her shop of bridal suits called 'Nisha's Creations'. She shows her managing capacity as well. Her business attains a great success in the family and in the society. Nisha is modern enough to abandon the world for self-fulfillment, identity and self-realization. She is a new woman who wants to travel and experience the goodness of the world. She does not like the Indian traditions, customs and religious ceremonies which are humiliating women. Though she revolts against the old family system, she never crosses the morality and values. She does not want to yield herself to the trap of life into life. So she puts forth a condition to her groom that she will look after the business even after her marriage. Her groom gives her freedom to carry out her business after their marriage. As Clara Nubile has pointed out in *The Danger of Gender*, "Being a woman in modern India means to be entrapped into the inescapable cage of, 'being a woman-wife-mother'" (12). After her marriage she finds hard in balancing her business and home due to her pregnancy. So she decides to concentrate on her home, hopes to resurrect her shop someday. RadhaChakravathy in her review for readers avers, "unacquainted with the intricacies of family dynamics in India, this novel is in many ways an eye opener". (119) Nisha proves herself to take up the responsibilities of being wife, daughter-in-law, mother and business woman. Being an educated women she creates a new image of woman in which she refuse to be an object and establish her individuality to establish her own space in the society.

Nisha tries to liberate herself from the male-dominated society. In the process she is able to loosen herself completely from the shackles of social conventions. She is trying to break away from the ideals of Indian womanhood. She is the representative of new woman emerging in today's world. Nisha on her journey transformed from the timid, dependent and dumb person to a self-respecting, self-confident individual. She rejects the age old tradition and belief and she has created a path of her own. She transforms herself into a New Woman. She fulfilled her life time desires. From her childhood she was longing for a society which will treat her equally as men, a society which will make her achieve the deepest desires of her heart. In her life's journey she has certainly attained her soul's wishes. There is no doubt that ManjuKapur has succeeded in projecting a new liberated woman through the role of Nisha.

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