Representation of Self and Identity in Manju Kapur's Home

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Abstract

A woman's existence is defined by a specific male principle. They must act by society's established norms. When we strive to unearth the deep-rooted causes of women oppression outside of India, we must think of feminine consciousness as a philosophy of life. Manju Kapur in her novels depicts how women are coming out of their houses and are getting actively involved in social issues. She presents how the life of these women becomes a pendulum vacillating between two ends i.e. family and social life. Her novels are a pragmatic portrayal of the torment and the strife of the modern educated middle-class women. This paper attempts to examine Manju Kapur's *Home* and draw inferences about self and identity, to provide a new perspective on the subject. It also aids in comprehending gender's many meanings, as well as its many and varied local manifestations, with a focus on the nexus from which local circumstances and resistance emerge.

*Keywords***:** Family, Self, Society, Identity, Womanhood**,** Feminism

Introduction

Even though women make up more than half of the world's population, they are not treated equally to men despite numerous evolutions and revolutions. Even though she possesses the same mental and moral strength as him, she is not considered an equal. In such circumstances, it is reasonable to inquire about her identification. She is a wife, mother, sister, and homemaker in a male-dominated culture. She is required to serve, sacrifice, submit, and gently tolerate each affliction directed at her. In a patriarchal society, her individuality is rarely acknowledged, thus she lives a life of self-obfuscation [1].

Kapur's notions of women's freedom and independence are heavily emphasised in the country's social-social and monetary areas and ideal models. Rather than any collective shared efforts to secure people, her technique emphasises each woman's self-improvement for the growth of her community. Kapur's female champions are embodiments of a new lady struggling to remove the burdens she has carried for a long time. They yearn for independence and a distinct personality. Despite being enchanted by their hobbies, they endeavour to be a part of the political and scholastic advancements of the day. The heroes in

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Kapur's stories are given instructions regularly. They develop independent reasoning as a result of their education, which their family and society regard as evil.

Nisha is portrayed as a new woman in Home, one who is more assertive, optimistic, and self-assured. Nisha is depicted by Kapur as a powerful, intelligent, and well-balanced woman. Patriarchy has silenced her feminist consciousness to a significant degree, but it has not been eradicated. Despite her struggles, Nisha has grown into a powerful woman. Her feminist identity has not been extinguished, considering her family's and Suresh's betrayal. She can understand the incredible potentialities of a woman and her special role in the family and community because of her courage to face obstacles and her passion for independence.

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Manju Kapur is a well-known Indian English novelist who writes in English. Her novels dig into India's social and cultural landscape in the twentieth century. Her novels depict women's struggle for economic, political, and social independence. As a result, her novels make an important contribution to the increasing tradition of Indian women's literature in English. Her novels try to have several minutes of silence, ruptures, and multi-narratives. A look at the fundamentals of narrative fiction will assist in a deeper understanding of the text's various narratives as well as the historical and cultural specificity of Indian people.

Home, Kapur's third novel, is the first step in the direction of vigilance to the politics of place, as it portrays the lives of women who are ensconced in their domestic spaces. *Home,* set in Delhi in the 1990s, highlights many of the issues that women face. While the novel's narrative style appears to be regressive and straightforward at first glance, a closer examination reveals numerous expressions of dissent. Looking at specific aspects of the story can help you understand them better. Nisha, one of the many daughters of the Banwari Lal family in Delhi's Karol Baugh, is portrayed in her childhood, adulthood, and marriage in *Home.* Sona and Rupa's story is told first, followed by Nisha's story [2]. Nisha spent her childhood at Auntie Rupa's, where she was scarred by her cousin's incestuous rape. Nisha's life goals are the central theme of the novel. Manju Kapur presents a credible picture of the power struggle in a joint family and the inherent gender bias.

The self that she imagines in her story is a concept, and it is not the persona that she is supposed to project to the outside world. Since, unlike their self-representation, women's social roles are formed by dominant masculine systems. For such women authors, the process of unmasking their selves entails a journey from silence to speech to reclaim that which has been suppressed or expelled, allowing them to create a realm of possibilities out of the experience of the displacement of their true selves.

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By breaking or doubling the into myself and her, the tale of Home unravels the nexus between social identity and self-representation, and this split becomes the symbol of feminist striving to transcend patriarchal powers both within and beyond, allowing the masks to be removed from the faces. *Home* is a novel about women who live in the shadows, almost as if they are comers. Nisha is one of these women, who, despite her family's harsh criticism, refuses to live in seclusion. Nisha's self-representation seems to be fictitious at times and thus does not accurately reflect her identity in an Indian patriarchal household. In feminist terms, however, the family's hostility toward Nisha demonstrates that women living in patriarchal cultures must continue to be subjected to discursive and social practices that demand their submission and silence [3]. Nisha also puts herself on the fringe of the patriarchal system as the only defiant woman in the house, placing her on the brink of exile. Nisha's marginalisation is transformed into liberation as she identifies with her self-representation, disrupting the normative representation of heterogeneous people as homogeneous women.

Nisha's empowering marginality contrasts with the other women in the family who are marginalised. Rupa and Sona's lives are hampered by their inability to procreate, and Kapur starts the story with a thorough summary of their lives. "Mrs Sona Lai and Mrs Rupa Gupta, sisters both, were childless". Rupa was exceptionally fortunate in that she just had to contend with her husband and in-laws.

"She was not subjected to sneers and taunts; she was not the only barren woman amongst myriad sisters-in-law whose wombs were bursting with perpetual pride".

The women of this home are bound by gender ideologies, but the callousness with which they are attached to the home's comer places them on the patriarchal culture's periphery at the same time. In comparison to Nisha's self-chosen exiled marginality, which she articulates through dissent, patriarchal marginality fractures these women's subjectivity. Five episodes make up the story, as previously mentioned. The first group of women, Sona, Rupa, and Sushila, and their struggle for power, which is further dependent on their ability to produce children, wear it as a mask of power that is a façade because it belongs not only to the woman but also to the man she is married to. This dichotomy is further symbolised by their physical enslavement in the form of the train of goods that each owns, which all become subtexts that convey servitude, obedience, and misery while ostensibly connoting opulence, strength, and rank. Nisha's unhappiness and frustration highlight the internalised state of feeling dominant even amid an obscured life. Nisha's efforts to live an unmasked life haunt her to the point of serious physical problems, possibly due to a lack of fulfilment.

Nisha's physical distress resulting from a sense of inner barrenness serves as a counterpoint to the narrative's other female characters' psychological deaths. Nisha's

experience as a self-sufficient woman, ironically, weakens and ultimately kills her [4]. Her situation may be an indication that when a woman's uninterrupted independence is cut off from social institutions and dialogue, she loses her ability to be positive.

"Now that she was imprisoned at home, she used to play chess as the king. She needed to be safeguarded because the game would be impossible to play without her. The steps against her were meticulously prepared, but she was helpless, quiescent, deafeningly silent, and waiting".

Her liberation comes at the cost of perpetual alienation and the suffocation of her impulses, and it fails to deconstruct the patriarchal order and imagine the prospect of change in socially gendered relations. Her liberty becomes a mask of desolation and misery, ironically. Her status as a single independent woman crumbles as her desire for social inclusion triumphs.

The illness of Nisha is a significant part of the plot, which is the physical representation of her pent-up psychological pains and anxieties that she has been carrying inside herself in her desire for liberation, as the narrative of her life script shows. Nisha's scarred, shrivelled, and the shrunken body becomes the text on which a life is engraved that kills her rather than producing or rejuvenating her in any way. Nisha's nights had turned into a tumult. Her hands drifted aimlessly across the itchy patches on her skin as she tossed and turned in bed. To investigate the cold, prickly

region behind her knee, then next to her ankle bone to soothe the greater uneasiness that lurked beneath the surface. She drew her foot up to her shin and gently rubbed it.

"I rubbed and rubbed, but my skin was unsatisfied"

Even as it exposes her pain, her explanation of her raging skin problems serves as revolutionary language, a transgressive language that seeks to undo patriarchal hegemony.

Throughout the story, Nisha emerges from her masked persona on numerous occasions. This helps her to see herself as a woman who has been forced to comply with the patriarchal structure's self-negating demands to find acceptance, to the point that her power has been sapped. At the end of the story, her only solace is to find a way to persuade herself, because she refuses to acknowledge that these dark and hidden feelings are the source of her imagination, intelligence, and resilience, allowing her to overcome and possibly change existing gendered structures.

Unmasking herself creates a tension between an established social identity and an unknown individual identity, even as it liberates her. Unmasked life for women like Nisha, as is typical in Indian society, is fraught with tensions, as it has the potential to isolate and depress the topic, but it also holds the potential for vital creativity and female power. The small comers of the home, which women hang on to as a supposed source of strength, are depicted as an obstacle that women must overcome to shed their traditionally gendered identities and discover their own unique individual

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identities.

Nisha's story, set against the backdrop of married women exiled and displaced selves, reveals the struggle of a young unmarried woman's need to be herself in the face of her parents' counterproductive efforts. The dissatisfaction she feels as a result of this struggle manifests itself in her company, which attempts to project herself as she is by disrupting culture's master narratives. By choosing a solitary life that symbolically is a self-chosen exile, she at least briefly subverts the parental influence. Despite her father's best efforts to save her life, the parental home is a hotbed of misogyny and other negative social norms that no one can alter. As a result, exile becomes a metaphor in women's reflections on their true identities, from which they hope to question and dislodge patriarchal codes of womanly life.

As a result, a self-chosen exile represents a desire to feel at home, and Nisha's tale delves into the meanings of comfort and contentment that such an exile can offer. Her father, in his capacity as a guardian, projects her image to the world as an ideal daughter and future wife, a mask that Nisha eventually wears to fit into the patriarchal mould [5]. The male subject creates and circulates the female object to maintain control over the discursive space. But the mask she knowingly wears Burys physical and emotional impulses that she has been told are surprisingly unacceptable to declare to the world underneath it. She starts to rob herself of her own, true self as her need for acceptance grows.

Nisha's depiction as a result of her relationships with the people around her hints at an imperial move that Nisha challenges by living her life on her terms. As a consequence, she can be seen sifting through exiled and enclosed spaces all the time. The boundaries of home and exile become very complex as a result of these oscillating cycles of life, and the repressed self finally finds a home in a solitary existence created temporarily. These self-imposed exiles, however, are short-lived, and her remonstration is only half-hearted. Since patriarchy and patriarchal social customs have such a dominating and subaltern zing influence on her, she finally succumbs to them because she knows she is powerless to change them.

Images of women giving birth are used to start and end the story. If they do not, it would be a source of embarrassment for them. Sona's self-congratulatory mood after Raju's birth shows this. In this case, the home is the unit of study, and the occupation of the head, in this case, the patriarch and his sons, decides the class status of that unit. Some people's class position in the home is determined by their occupation, while others are determined by the occupation of someone with whom they share a home. This is where the majority of Indian women end up. Even if they are helping, it is considered a waste of time. Sona's opposition to her daughter's business reflects her dissatisfaction with Nisha's new situation.

Surprisingly, the majority of the women in *Home* do not regret their oppression as a result of class and colonial

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oppression, and as a result, they are constantly in a power struggle with other women. In the story, the vast chasm that separates the two sisters, Sona and Rupa, can be explained similarly. The roles of women in the family, as well as their social and economic prospects, are influenced by their husband's socioeconomic status. The reason for Sona's big airs, her condescending attitude toward her sister, and her sister's occasional discomfort with her better-destined sibling are the same. Aside from that, Sona thinks her sister is ugly because she has dark skin [6]. It appears that a woman's fate and worth are proportional to her skin tone. It appears that their complexion has its destiny. It has the potential to change their lives for the better or the worse. The story is full of references to various women's perceived fairness or lack thereof.

Kapur depicts its many ramifications with absolute fidelity to fact, a truly Indian fixation on fair skin. "Given Rupa's dark skin, she was considered to have married as advantageously as her circumstances allowed"**.** Sona thinks to herself. When Sona's daughter develops a skin problem later in life, she bitterly remarks,

"Your skin will become s black as a buffalo's, then nobody will ever marry you".

As a result, it's no surprise that the story provides us with a thorough understanding of the difficulties faced by Indian women. The picture that emerges is of a class of women whose lives are shaped by a variety of factors ranging from strict patriarchal codes to the degree of fairness. Without mentioning the big monster that threatens every Indian woman's life, the portrayal of their identity would have been incomplete. The dowry system, which is prevalent in India, is mentioned frequently.

Home's singular accomplishment is its accurate portrayal of what happens to an Indian woman who isolates herself from society or is isolated by it. When Nisha first meets Suresh, she has no idea how much culture shapes a woman and how much she relies on it. She is then confined to her house, without society or relatives, and she is finally choked by the clash of wills that inevitably occurs. Ironically, freedom breeds servitude.

Despite the novel's efforts to enshrine women's self-identity, it struggles to do so, except for a few brief subversions. As a consequence, there is a fierce fight for space in the house, which prevents *Home* from being a metaphor. That's just what they'll get as well. Just literal space that deconstructs themselves rather than builds them. It's no surprise that Nisha wants to leave Karol Bagh Home, which she considers oppressive. The enormous home, with its hostile rooms and demarcations, holds little hope for survival. No real happiness can be enshrined by it. As a consequence, her life remains a prisoner inside her own home, even as one wishes she had at least attempted to regenerate herself. At the novel's conclusion, she finds salvation in the image of a woman awaiting motherhood. It's hard to tell if it would bring happiness to Nisha or her offspring [7]. After all, the motherhood depicted in

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the book, whether it be Sunita's or Nisha's, is that of someone who can only guide her daughter up to matrimony and not beyond. In most other Indian contexts, on the other hand, motherhood is associated with sacrifice. Such a woman must ride strange and winding roads and battle the social order on occasion. She is still on the outskirts, not fully at home nor fully exiled.

Kapur's *Home* is not traditionally feminine in the sense that women never publicly complain and men never mistreat them; instead, the author depicts the characters as being so thoroughly indoctrinated in patriarchal ideas that they talk and think the way men want them to. Closer analysis shows that Kapur's characters, situations, and narrative structure, all focused on familiar feminine archetypes, tend to subvert the surface acceptance.

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