

## Quest for Self in Manju Kapur's Home

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### Abstract

This paper focuses on the theme of quest for self in Manju Kapur's Home. Manju Kapur is a famous Indian English Novelist. Kapur's fiction stresses on the woman's need for self-fulfillment, autonomy, self-realization, independence, individuality and self-actualization. One of the main preoccupations in all her novel is show woman manage to negotiate both inner and outer spaces in their lives. She has written five novels; Difficult Daughters, A Married Woman, Home, The Immigrant, and The Custody. The present study is about her third novel Home. The novel exposes the upbringing of the girl child in India. She traces the painful voyage of the protagonist Nisha who was born in the traditional Indian joint family. Home is a moving story of three generations whose destiny and dreams are glued to the Banwarilal cloth shop. Though the protagonist was born in traditional Indian family she doesn't want to sit inside her home like other women. She wants to stand on her own identity. After a lots of suffering Nisha starts a business, 'Nisha's Creation' and she succeed in her business and get her new identity. She has to struggle for establishing her identity and to survive in this male-dominated society. Manju Kapur is one of the promising writers of the twenty-first century who writes about the condition of women since pre-independence and to present time. She writes to uplift the women by giving them voice to speak and to be successful in finding their identity. This paper highlights yhe protagonist Nisha's quest for self in the traditional male dominated world.

**KEYWORDS;** Self-realization, suffering, struggle, new identity.

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The present paper entitled Quest for self in Manju Kapur's Home. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, there are many transformations noticed, especially in the field of the questions related to the consolidation of woman's position in the fast-growing and fast changing society. The questions of identity, liberty, economic independence these are the basic elements in their works. The problem of search for identity is very much related to the problem of existence. It has been a popular theme with the women writers of Indian fiction in English. They have tried to depict this theme in their works in one way or the other. On one hand we have early novelists like Kamala Markandeya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande dealing with the theme of crisis of identity, while on the other we have novelists like Manju Kapur, Bharati Mukherjee, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, Anita Nair and some other writers. The role of women writers in India, especially the role of Indian women novelists is quite significant in any respects. Right from the beginning of Indian English Literature, so many Indian women literary figures have shown their stronghold and grip.

Manju Kapur, who occupies an important place in the world of Indian English literature. She is a well-known novelist of great reputation and her teaching experience and ability

are clearly visible in her novels. She has written five novels and all her novels have received ample appreciation from the readers, reviewers and the critical experts of the literature. She presents everything in her novel hopes and aspirations, failures and frustrations, conflict between two generations and self-realization. She seems to be a wonderful in the presentation of various types of human relations in the novel. In her novels, Manju Kapur seems to be always dealing with family as the central issue. Family teaches them to understand human relationship which is the essence of the continuity of human existence. Her first novel *Difficult Daughters*, published in 1998, attracted the readers from all sides. This novel received the prestigious Commonwealth Writer's Prize in 1999 for the best first book in South Asia. Her second novel *A Married Woman* was published in 2003 and this novel brought much attention for her. The third novel *Home* was published in 2006. This novel is clear epitome of her deep-rooted understanding of Indian women in the traditional society. Her fourth novel *The Immigrant* was published in 2009. Her fifth and last novel *Custody* was published in 2012.

Manju kapur's *Home* deals with the lives of different generations of women. It looks at women from the traditional way and reading this fiction one is deluded to believe that women are born just to marry, cook for their in-laws home and deliver forth children especially sons. In *Home*, Manju kapur is in search of new alternative in her presentation of the character of Nisha. The struggle of the protagonists between tradition and modernity and their need for an identity in the society forms the theme of the novel. The novel *Home* presents Nisha, the protagonist as bold, educated and balanced.

Manju Kapur's novel, *Home* takes us through a brisk and strangely captivating account of three generations i.e., the first generation of Lala Banwarilal, the second of his two sons, and the third of his grand children. The first generation of Lala Banwari Lal, head of the family, runs a sari business in Karol Bagh, Delhi, where he settles after partition of India. Banwari Lal has two sons – Yeshpal and Pyarelal and a daughter Sunita, who already married and has a son Vicky. Yeshpal marries with Sona and Pyarelal marries with Sushila. Sona's sister Rupa is the wife of an educated but badly paid government servant, Premnath. Banwari Lal is a believer in the old ways. Men work out of the home, women within. Men carry forward the family line, women enable their mission. His two sons Yashpal and Pyare Lal unquestioningly follow their father in business and in life but their wives do not. Neither does his granddaughter Nisha who makes her choices considered unavailable to the women of the family.

Both the sisters are hard workers, good at heart and live with their in-laws in the same area. All are the members of the next generation to Banwari Lal. After an accidental death of Sunita her only son Vicky is taken to Karol Bagh, Delhi from Bareilly. As Sona does not conceive for a long time, her mother-in-law assigns to her the responsibility of Vicky. Meanwhile Sushila gives birth to Ajay. Sona feels her life has been misery and she is always taunted by Maji for not bearing a child. She keeps fasting for a long time for the want of a child but it helps her in no way. So Yashpal plans to visit a shrine at Chitai near Almora. It is believed that the Goddess of this mountain is very powerful. Rupa and Premnath also accompany them.

After two months Sona comes to know that she has conceived. Soon she gives birth to a girl 'Nisha'. When her horoscope is matched, she is declared as Mangli. After Nisha, Sona gives birth to a son Raju. Meanwhile Sushila gives birth to her second son

Vijay. So including Vicky, Ajay, Vijay and Raju are the representatives of the third generation. In the early part of the novel Nisha, in her infancy phase, falls a prey to the carnal desires of Vicky, a fifteen year boy and her kin. Vicky tries to seduce her. It affects her psychologically and mentally. She is sent to Rupa's home for a change.

In Rupa's house Nisha has no problem at all. Rupa and Premnath understand all that there is a hand of Vicky behind Nisha's miserable condition. Here, she felt comfortable and ore concerning. Rupa was also childless. Premnath and Rupa looked after Nisha very carefully: "Nisha now finds herself in an atmosphere very different from the one she had lived in. As the only child she was the centre of intrest, concern and attention"(24)

After a long illness Banwari Lal dies and the whole burdens comes to Yashpal, being the elder one. Nisha also returns home to accompany her grandmother. Soon Ajay's marriage takes place and then Vijay's. Nisha was a mangli. A mangli destined to marry unfortunately, destined for misery, unless a similar mangli could be found, with a similar fate and horoscope. She should wait unless a mangli could find. Ultimately Nisha is at the centre of interest with an issue of her college education. Her parents thought that it would take time and during that time educating her would be a good thing.

Nisha decided to do English Honours from Durga Bai College. While studying she came in contact with Suresh, a student of Khalsa College of Engineering. She fell in love with him. But her parents were reluctant to get her married to him. This caused a lot of mental agony to her resulting in skin disease eckzeema to her. Her parents could not be able to marry her on time. Her younger brother's marriage took place before her marriage. Nisha's condition was very pitiable. Like a prisoner at her home. Her brother's wife Pooja brought much complexity to Nisha. Each arrogant breath Pooja took, each possessive gesture she made towards her husband added to the sore in Nisha's heart. "Pooja was a snake in the house, a legitimate snake. From the site of marital bliss she crept, to sit next to Nisha....Sitting idle was a great problem for Nisha" (263).

After that Nisha got the job of a teacher in Kid Play Way School. Her father was very anxious about his daughter thinking that the women of this house had never worked and he was sending his beloved daughter out into the world because she did not have her own 'Home' to occuoy herself with. Nisha opened her heart to her aunt Rupa; "There is no place for me in this house. If it is only marriage that will get me out, then marry off to anybody, I don't care" (281).

When her aunt reacted at this statement of Nisha she retorted, "I am fed up, I will go to ashram and devote myself to homeless widows. Should I kill myself and make everybody happy. (281-282).

Later Nisha starts a business, 'Nisha's creation'. Her father trusted her as he trusted his son. His father realized that she was more intelligent, methodical and independent than Raju. It was her father's duty to get her married. Her parents searched a good match for her, a 'manglik' widower named Aravind and got her married to him. After marriage, she tried her best to maintain a balance between married life and her professional life. The novelist shuts the curtain of the novel happily with these words:

Ten months after Nisha's marriage, twins were born. One girl, one boy.  
Her duty was over-God has been kind, however hard it was to believe.  
Forty days later, during the naming ceremony, Nisha sat in front of the

heaven, and through the smoke gazed at her tiny babies. Their color was the way hers had been before blemishes had come upon her. The mother-in-law sitting next to her held the fragile boy in her lap. Just like her grandfather, she murmured as she caressed his cheek, a statement she made every day, to the approval of all. The more robust girl lay balanced on her mother's knees, eyes shut, cradle cap stuck on her scalp. Her milk began to spurt and strain her blouse. She quickly adjusted her palla and looked up. Surroundings her were friends, relatives, husband, babies. All mine, she thought, all mine. (336-337).

This paper analyses Nisha's quest for self in Manju Kapur's *Home*. It explores the complex terrain of the Indian family and reveals many issues that are deep rooted within the family. Nisha reveals her inner quest for independent existence. As a business woman, Nisha worked for last years. It brings to her sense of achievement in life helping her to create her own identity, her own voice, and her own place in the society and in home. She belongs to middle class family. Her quest for self-identity, struggle for economic independent existence, and her equality with man depend upon Indian social ethos. From her birth she suffers a lot to achieve her identity. Nisha's childhood is scarred by incestuous abuse, the victimized girl is sent to stay at Aunt Rupa's home in order to preserve the honour of the family. After eleven years of stay there she was back to her house to accompany her grandmother. Everyone think of her future though she was born as mangli she was destined to marry the similar horoscope.

According to Indian tradition, a woman must defer to her husband in every possible respect. She must make the marital home pleasant for him. She must cook the meals, wash the dishes and take care of the children. She must never enquire about money and she must acquiesce to her husband's every demand. But Nisha break the rules with the changing social equations. Thus the paper studies about the Quest for self in Nisha's childhood to motherhood. Her journey was not easy and smooth. Her study, her life in Rupa's house, her association with Vicky and Suresh, her skin disease which ruined her fate and finally she succeed her own identity.

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