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Editor-In-Chief
Prof. K.N. Shelke

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A detailed still-life composition featuring a white quill pen resting on a scroll of aged parchment. The scroll is secured with a red wax seal and a red ribbon. In the background, a lit candle in a brass holder casts a warm glow. In the foreground, a glass inkwell with a quill inside sits on a wooden surface, alongside a red wax seal and a wooden gavel.

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Manju Kapur's Home: Tradition Battles with Transition**Ms. D. Anushiya Devi***Ph.D. Scholar, Rajah Serfoji Government College (Autonomous), Thanjavur, (T.N.) India***Dr. L. Baskaran***Research Advisor, Asst. Professor, Dept. of English, Rajah Serfoji Government College (Autonomous), Thanjavur, (T.N.) India***Abstract**

The paper is on "Manju Kapur's Home: Tradition battles with Transition". It is a Subgenre. Kapur considers the appearance of a woman's varied roles in India. She probes in to the complex terrain of the Indian family in all her novels. Manju Kapur reveal many issues deeply rooted within a family, the subsequent struggle of the protagonists against stage-old traditions, their quest for identity, familial expectations and their dilemma in their search for space at 'home'. The novel, Home, forward through the conflicting polarities of tradition and modernity, and presents the picture of joint family. The paper mainly focused on tradition battles with transition and characters, who are craving for their Survival in different notions such as identity, economic, education and so on. The protagonist, Nisha's, struggle for survival of some sort, throughout her life in various occasion and she refuses to reconcile with the patriarchal and male dominated family structure and strives to her own individuality. In earlier stage, as a child, Nisha was affected psychologically and mentally by sexual abuse by her cousin, Vicky, and protest against it and longs for change and she wants to go away from her own home. Nisha is send to aunt Rupa's house for a change and to erase frustrated atmosphere of her own home. In all stages, she was pushed to change her mentality beyond her struggle. At the end, Nisha strives to establish her individuality and becomes an entrepreneur.

Key Words: Battle, Tradition, Transition, Modernity, Survival, Home, Family, Identity, Individuality, Expectation, Barrenness

The situation of woman is that she – a free and autonomous being like all creatures – nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the others. (Simon De Beauvior ,1986:167)

Introduction:

Manju Kapur is most eminent celebrity among Indian Woman Writers. She was born and brought up in Amritsar in 1948. She has produced five novels to her credit. Her works are another feather in the cap of Indian fictional narratives which continue to focus on women issues. Home, in 2006, is

the third novel and it was shortlisted for Hutch - Crossword Prize. Manju Kapur, in her novels, presents women, who try to establish their own quest for identity and battles over the age old tradition.

Home explores the complex terrain of the Indian family, illustrates the ways in which joint families function, how they can be

restrictive and supportive, conflicting and secure and reveals many issues that are deep rooted within the family that revolt against the age-old traditions, quest for identity, the problems of marriage, and lastly the woman's struggle for her survival.

The image of women in Indian fiction has undergone a sea change during the last four decades, from traditional self-sacrificing women characters to characters that introspect and search for identity. The conflict for autonomy and separate identity remains unfinished combat. The life women lived and struggle under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society were reflected in the novels of Manju Kapur. The narration begins with Sona and Rupa: two sisters, one is good looking and the other merely plain. The beautiful elder Sona is married to the elder son of Banwari Lal, to whom their family tradition is flesh and blood. Yashpal gives them sentimental threat and so Banwari Lal deviate from their tradition to ensure the family harmony and his son's only wish. 'It was our son's happiness we have to think about', said her husband severely.' If he wants a love marriage, he shall have it. He worked sincerely all these years. He has never had holiday, never taken one paisa. His younger brother travels with me, spends what he can, while the elder one is simple and retiring. Who knows what he might do if he is thwarted in the only thing he ask for?'(Home,7)

The younger one, Rupa's husband is just a junior Government officer. Through, Rupa, Manju Kapur portrays the change that is seeping in our social and familial values. Longing for her own child, "Nothing, and

with a dry and barren womb there would continue to be nothing. She sighed," (Home,37). Rupa accepts stoically her barrenness or infertility and is happy with the help rendered by her husband to his sister's children and later to her own niece. The business started by her fulfills her. Barring indications of slight prick and passing pain, Rupa as well as her husband have no regrets for not having children, nor do they feel themselves misfits in a society which treats women with hostility for being childless.

Sona and her obsession to become a mother makes her to feel, "please I am growing old, bless us with a child, girl or boy, I do not care, but I cannot bear the emptiness in my heart." (Home,19) and the humiliation she faces frequently by her mother -in -law pictures through the line "the old woman glared at Sona and spat out, "you think sleep is possible? What can you know of a mother's feeling? All you do is enjoy life, no children, no sorrow, only a husband to dance around you." (Home,18)

Nisha was born to wipe Sona's barrenness, after ten years. Banwari Lal family jumps in joy and they believe goddess Lakshmi stepped on their home. "And now the womb has opened, " expressed Rupa, a baby brother will come soon." (Home, 36) Sona's delivery of her next progeny, a son is enjoyed and welcomed more than the first. Sona's mother-in-law declared, "Now I can die in peace". (Home,41) As both of her sons now have their sons and they can hold their head high in the society. When Sona holds her son, she feels expiated as she had done her duty towards the family by giving birth to a much awaited son. Sona feels the

disgrace gone, "with appearance of little Raju, dark and plain featured like his father, but a boy, a boy." (Home,48)

Nisha, granddaughter of Lala Banwari Lal, since childhood, faces the evil of gender discrimination when like her brother, she is not allowed to ride a tricycle and go out.

"Nisha set up a wail. "I want to go too". "You can't", said her mother shortly. "Why? Why can't I?" "It is better for girls to remain inside". "Why?" "You will get black and dirty". "So what? Raju is black. Blacker than Vicky" (Home, 52) . In this conversation, Sona very vividly explains to her daughter about the adverse affects of being dark, she mentions, "You, you will look like the sweeper woman who comes to the house, you want to look like a Kali bhainsi?" (Home, 52) At this tender age, Nisha gets her first lesson about the duties of a woman. Sona wants her daughter to be grounded in the tradition that would make her a wife worth living. She wants that "the art of service and domesticity should shine in her daughter so brightly that she would overcome her negative karma to be a beacon in her married home" (Home,128). She tells her daughter that a girl's real education is in the kitchen. Sona states clearly, "what is there in happiness? A girl has to be happy everywhere" (Home, 135). Manju has described the tumultuous growing up years of Nisha in a heart rending manner as Nisha is abused by her cousin, Vicky and though the family elders have an inkling of Vicky's incestuous behavior, they do nothing. She is too young to know what is happening to her. Kapur traces the trajectory of these only too familiar childhood sexual explorations between close members of a joint family

with a delicacy that is compelling. It does not ruin Nisha's life. She survives. Kapur seems to suggest that this is all that really matters. After the incidence Nisha is sent to her aunt Rupa Masi where she blossoms as good student.

Manju Kapur's female protagonists are mostly educated, aspiring individual caged within the confines of a conservative society. Their education leads them to independent thinking for which their family and society become intolerant of them. They struggle between tradition and modernity. It is their individual struggle with family and society through which they plunged into a dedicated effort to carve an identity for themselves as qualified women with faultless backgrounds. The novelist has portrayed her protagonists as a woman caught in the conflict and struggle for survival of livelihood.

Nisha tries to violate the family traditions through her passion for a low caste boy, Suresh, during her college life. She suddenly sees herself revolting to the old traditions of the family; she gets her hair cut on the persistent demand of Suresh, a Paswan boy whom she is in love with. "Now, in this minute, he was forcing her to choose between an outsider and her family, modernity and custom, independence and community."(Home,149) "Before she could delight in her changed appearance, she needed to face her family." Sona's reaction, "Who gave you permission to cut your hair, suddenly you have become so independent, you decide things on your own, where did you find the money, the time, the beauty parlour, where did you find all these things?" (Home, 150) Nisha resists by

saying: "I am not a fool, she announced as she thought of the love that has driven her own parents to marry, of all the films she had seen with myriad combination of unequal background between boy and girl: rich-poor, Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Christian, highclass-lowclass, educated-uneducated. Love was the bridge over the great divide." (Home,149). High-quality fiction can give the insights into lives that are built on value systems completely different from their own. It can make empathies with those lives and their foundations; understand the long process, spread over many generations, that has made these people what they are. Home had that effect in places. At one point Nisha ask Rupa Masi: "what do you think of love marriages?" and Rupa replies, matter of – factly and without missing a beat, "They are very bad. Require too much adjustment." For that one moment, and in spite of everything I personally believe in, I could see the lady's point –founding a marriage on a single passion that might easily ebb with time can be an imprudent thing to do in a situation where the couple is married as much to the family as each other. But Nisha faces failure that results in external and internal tribulations. After that drastic result, she becomes restless. Her mental suffering affects her health too. She suffers from an acute skin disease. The family takes efforts to cure her physical illness. She loses dignity and respect in her own home as Pooja, her brother's wife, does not want her to touch her baby. Nisha finds herself unwanted and undesirous. She tells her aunt Rupa-"You see, Masi, 'said Nisha the minute her mother was out of earshot, 'there is no place for me in this house" (Home, 280). Later she tells her father, "I want to leave this house. There

is nothing for me here" (Home, 282). She wants to go to an ashram and devote herself to homeless widows. At least there she can live with dignity and respect. Kapur points out various pressure points in the joint family system as well as men dominated society after that, she is forced to get married. Nisha accepts. By horoscope Nisha is declared as mangli. This again is a torture by fate. Nisha is also forced to observe her first fast for her future husband.

However, her passion for doing independent business continues to haunt her. There is no adequate support to her emancipated spirit. The external beauty is bargained with the internal strength and confidence of Nisha and she becomes an independent business woman. To kill her time Nisha starts her own business as a dress designer. Kapur reveals through Yash Pal's words that they understand the life of their daughter: "If she wants to work she should be allowed to, Yash pal said stubbornly. My first duty is to her not to her future family. Otherwise, the karmas on our head will too much. Too-too much.(Home, 297)

At last, the search for a new home ended with the discovery of a manglik widower. This time, she has no emotions, no curiosity, nothing about the boy. She even not wants to see him. Therefore she says; "Why does he want to see me? I don't want to see him. You have chosen, it is enough." (Home, 298). The only daughter of the house is getting married because she wants to do anything for her father. This marriage brings relief to the family. Even after marriage Nisha does not give up her business. She bears the four-fold responsibilities of being wife, daughter-in-law, mother and business-

woman. When she becomes pregnant, her mother does not allow her to do the business. This disturbs her equilibrium. With this, her Creations get shifted to Pooja's Creations and she is left for the welfare of the prospective child, she sacrifices her business for a while. Later she gives twins to Arvind- one girl and one boy. Her duty is over. She looks satisfied with her role as mother and daughter-in-law. Ultimately she realizes that family is more important than business.

Conclusion:

Home does not remain a simple story of a Karol Bagh Sari seller, but gets a more universal colour and makes an invigorating family saga. The portrayal of woman in Indian English fiction as the silent victim and up holder of the tradition and traditional values of family and society has undergone a tremendous change and is no longer presented as a passive character. Manu Kapur addresses many issues that are related to the middle class women. Whether or not a girl has the right to make her own choices in

life is an issue dragged this way and that, for a long time in our country. 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. Nisha is a confident, self-reliant, bold and determined person, who defies patriarchal notions. Towards the end of the novel Nisha excels in establishing herself as a designer. She had to fall in the same trap of matrimony ascribed by the patriarchy. But she was ready for the same, that is, to shoulder responsibility not only of husband and children but beyond that. After a lot of ups and downs, however, she married to a thirty six year old widower who can hardly respond to her passions. It is in marriage and childbearing that she is forced to find ultimate happiness and fulfillment as the society refuses to give her achievement in profession, recognition and identity. She at last marries a widower and gets settled into a home and continues to survive for survival of her motherhood. Thus tradition battles with transition.

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