



Gender Discrimination in ManjuKapur’s Novel: “Home”.

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Abstract

This article explores the issue of gender discrimination in Manju Kapur’s novel “Home” Discrimination against girls and women in the developing world is a highly destructive reality. Most of the Indian writers deal with the issues of gender discrimination in distinct ways. Manju Kapur is the famous Indian writer deal with this issue in her novel “Home”. The gender discrimination spring up mostly among the joint family as shows in the novel “Home”. The issue of gender discrimination revolves around the life of the female protagonist Nisha. Her life has been ruled and dominated because of her gender. Being a woman she is asked to obey her parents decision by getting married. Nisha is repressed by her family because she is doing effort to prove her own identity after facing many obstacles. At last, Nisha has to find an alternative occupation, putting to use her entrepreneurial genres and proved herself as entrepreneur.

Key Words: discrimination, developing, protagonist, gender, entrepreneur.

Introduction

ManjuKapur was born in Amriatsar the capital of Punjab State. Unlike millions of other women of her age and time, she was fortunate to have firm and continuous parental support to obtain her post graduation in English from Dalhousie University, Canada. According to Cambridge Dictionary-“a situation in which someone is treated less well because of their sex, usually when a women is treated less well than a man.” This paper focuses on the gender discrimination of the women the family. They are being suppressed by their family members. The comparison of ideas between the male and the female regarding the differences in gender is the main issue discussed in this paper with the analysis of the female protagonist Nisha. Nisha, the central character of Home, claims her space halfway through the novel when she demands an education. More



significantly, she has a concealed romance with the boy who acquires them. But Nisha belongs to a joint family in India and all members of family think that the boy is not suitable for Nisha because he belongs to low caste. Nisha, grand-daughter of Lala BanwariLal, since childhood faces the evil of gender discrimination when like her brother, she is not allowed to ride a bicycle and not allowed to go out for playing games.” Freedom can not be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression.”Nelson Mandela.

This paper makes a humble attempt to discuss gender discrimination in the novel “Home”by Manju Kapur. Manju Kapur moulds her woman characters to stand against the age old traditions, social as well as family restrictions which are created on the basis of gender. Kapur protests against the injustice that women are subjected to in terms of social customs, beliefs and superstitions. The narrative is about middle class Punjabi family from Pakistan, uprooted by the partition. Kapur writes in the prologue, “The BanwariLal’s family belonged to a class whose skills had been honed over generations to ensure prosperity in the market-place. Their marriage augmented their habits conserved. From an early age children were trained to maintain the foundation on which these homes rested. The education they received, the values they imbibed, the alliances they made had everything to do with protecting the steady stream of gold and silver that burnished their lives. Those who fell against the grain found in their home knives that wounded and once the damage had been done, gesture that reconciled (Home-I).

The narrative begins with Sona and Rupa- two sisters, one is good looking and the other merely plain. Sona is married to the elder son of BanwariLal while the younger one, Rupa’s husband is just a junior Government officer. Sona is not able to conceive even after two years of her marriage. Her mother-in-law comments her occasionally, “what can you know of a mother’s feelings? All you do is enjoying life, no sorrow, only a husband to dance around you”. (Home-18).Sona performs every duty as a wife and daughter-in-law, as she was trained from an early age.Meanwhile, Yashpal’s younger brother, Pyarelal gets married to Sushila, who belongs to a well todo business family of Karol Bagh. Their marriage is appreciated by all the family because it is arranged by the parents and Sushila brings a huge dowry. Sona finally gives birth to a baby girl.Everybody in the family is happy because “It is good to have a girl in the house” (Home-35).Sona’s delivery of her next pregnancy, a son is enjoyed and welcomed more than the first. Sona’s mother in-law declared. “Now I can die in peace” (Home-41). These lines shows that a boy is very important instead of a baby girl. Mother-in-law thinks that her sons hold their head high in the society because they are the father of sons.



In a joint family, the priority for the gender speaks a lot than the wish of the woman. There is always a partiality among male and female members of a family. 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 bicycle and go out. Nisha set up a wail. I want to go too. You cannot, said her mother shortly. Why? Why cannot I? "It is better for girls to remain inside." 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) In these line, Sona favours his son and rebukes her daughter and create gender discrimination between her children. 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 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)

There is a discrimination between children who belong to same family. A girl child is taught to remain silent even if the things around her is right or wrong. Nisha is being discriminated in every aspect when compared to her real brother Raju and her cousins. When her brother enjoyed playing outside, her mother instruct her to sit inside the house and play with her grandmother. The woman in the family is not allowed to take her decisions and give opinion. Man can suggest idea even if it is wrong and woman cannot suggest idea even if it is right. The gender discrimination is very clearly seen through the characters of the novel as Manju Kapur has shown the plight of the woman who follows the man blindly without putting any question. The man is allowed to choose his educational qualification of his own choice, whereas anyone ask a woman if you are willing for study or not.

When Nisha started going to college she attracted towards a boy, Suresh. She spends most of her time with Suresh. Nisha becomes a bold girl and she even cuts her hair forgetting all restrictions. Soon her family found Nisha's affair with Suresh. Nisha refused to follow the traditional arranged marriage. She was really made a prisoner in her own home, her family not allowed to go out because her affair with a lower-caste boy Suresh. After this, Nisha feels loneliness in her own home. She was the daughter of businessman and wanted to open her own business. Nisha finds herself unwanted and undesirous. She tells her aunt Rupa- "You see Masi..... there is no place for me in this house" (Home-281). Later she tells her father, "I want to leave this house. There is nothing for me here". (Home-282) Kapur points out various pressure points in the joint family system as well as man dominated society.



Nisha starts her small business with great enthusiasm and establishes it within a year through her hard work. Business of Nisha became a popular shop as Nisha's creations when her brother Raju appreciated her hard work, she proud felt him. Though the woman in the family wasnot agreed to Nisha's decision, later they have also started helping in business work. When Nisha's business becomes a good source of earning, meanwhile her marriage was also fixed. After making her presence felt in primarily a male dominated profession she had to fall in the same trap of matrimony ascribed by the patriarchy. But she was ready for the same i.e. to shoulder responsibility not only of husband and children beyond that. Nisha is a self-confident, self reliant, bold and determined person, who defies patriarchal notions. Nisha is married to a widower, Arvind who takes her to her real home, "Now you are home," said Arvind as they climbed the stairs. Marriage becomes a displacement for Nisha from where she was at peace to a situation of resettlement. In ten months time, she accomplishes the purpose behind her marriage, she gives birth to twins. In consequence to which she loses her economic freedom as well as status in society as a decision maker.

Nisha is a feminist in the sense that she does not accept her plight easily. She opposes the dominate of society and shows courage to go against old traditions. She tries to persuade her family to give their assent for her marriage with Suresh. When they do not allow it she wants to run away with him. But Suresh steps back and betrays her. When she is cramped to her house after college, she wants to do the work which will give her the opportunity to utilize her full potential. So she starts her own business with great enthusiasm.

Conclusion

After reading the novel of Manju Kapur's Home we find that the family members create discrimination among their children on base of gender. This research paper studies how Manju Kapur in her novel "Home" portrays the picture of middle class family and delineate the character of female protagonist Nisha. She faces many obstacles in her own home. After facing these difficulties, she proves her identity with great intelligence and hard work. In Indian society all the important decisions concerning a girl's life are taken by her family. Kapur shows how a girl if given the opportunity can be successful in fields considered exclusive for boy. Nisha's father also takes pride and pleasure in her success and how she has proved herself with nothing beyond a small loan. He thinks that it is his duty to see that she is married. Nisha though her initiative not only creates a path for herself but also opens avenues outside the home for other girls. All the female protagonists of her novel protest against male dominated and peripheral of



women. Manhas subjugated women to her will, used to promote his sexual gratification but never has hedesired to elevate her to genuine rank.

He has done all he could do to depress and enslave hermind. Nisha proved abilities very well and continuous her business after marriage. But when shegets pregnant she feels relieved from the hectic schedule and to hand over her business to hersister-in-law Pooja. But she can rebuild her business after the birth of child. She manages businesswork as well as household work very well.

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