



The insightful metamorphosis aspects (or concept) of Post modern sensibility in ManjuKapur's novels

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Abstract:

This paper reflects ManjuKapur's postmodern sensibility, which is evident in all of her works, and it is, without a doubt, the product of a new socio-cultural and political scenario that has pushed women from the margins to the centre. It is found that all her novels hold up a very faithful mirror to the sad, deplorable condition of middle class educated urban women and the way she realistically deals with her female protagonists, who ultimately emerge as modern or post-modern women through their persistent struggle against oppressive forces, such as tradition, convention, custom, patriarchy, and male-chauvinism.

Key words: post-modern, tradition, education, economic independence, metamorphose

DOI Number: 10.14704/nq.2022.20.10.NQ55260

NeuroQuantology 2022; 20(10): 2894-2900

Introduction:

ManjuKapur was born on October 25, 1948, and is married to business person named, Gun NidhiDalmia. She is a wonderful hostess who is down-to-earth, welcoming, and caring. Katyayani, Amba, Maya, and Agatsaya are her four children. She was a lecturer at Miranda House, Delhi University, for fourteen years. She earned a master's degree in English from Halifax

University in Canada and a master's degree in philosophy from Delhi University. Distinguished Post modern Indian women novelists in English like Anitha Desai, ShashiDeshPande, Arundhitiroy and ManjuKapur to mention a few who have made a significant contribution to highlight the particular aspect of post modern sensibility through their literary works.

Referring to one prominent trait of her writings, Iyengar observes:

“As we remain mesmerized by Anita Desai's verbal artistry, and her uncanny evocation of atmosphere, her tale unfalteringly glides by and we force a rendition of the veil of a happening or a memory to gain entry into the realm of personal experience and attain the desired finale of acceptance” (Iyengar 745)



Career literary writing& works:

Difficult Daughters, ManjuKapur's first novel, won the Commonwealth Prize for the First Best Novel (Eurasia Section) in 1998. In 2006, her second novel, A Married Woman, was nominated for an Encore Award, and her first novel, Home, was nominated for a Hutch Crossword Book Award. She's also dabbled in a variety of genres, including Short Stories: Necklace in the Harper Collins Book of New Inventions. Essays and Press Articles: Contemporary Writing in English, edited by Khushwant Singh, The Power Behind Shameed, The Birth of a Baby in Birth and Birth Giving Janet Chawla, Speaking up for Inter-Community or Cross Marriages in Outlook (New Delhi), 14 January 2007. She is an ecologist. However, she experimented with poetry and drama, but found both to be too difficult, so she settled on the novel, and she is now a full-time novelist. She aspires to be a respected and forceful figure among the leading Indo-Anglican novelists. She is well-known all around the world. Difficult Daughters (1998), A Married Woman (2002), Home (2006), and The Immigrant (2007), Brothers (2016) are her six works to date.

Discussion: Post modern sensibility:

ManjuKapur's debut novel, 'Difficult Daughters' was published in 1998 and it won the commonwealth prize for the first best novel (Eurasia Section). It deals with the life of the protagonist, Virmati, the eldest daughter of Kasturi's thirteen children and a sixteen year old young maiden. Her mother, Kasturi, is steeped in tradition. The first priority on the agenda of a traditionally minded mother is the

marriage of her daughter as soon as she attains puberty. Accordingly, Kasturi, her mother arranges Virmati's marriage with a canal engineer of a respectable family. Arranged marriages are very common in traditional families. Education for girls is only a kind of 'pass time' until they get married. Virmati has played the role of a substitute - mother for her siblings and she has never known what it is to be loved by a mother. It is against this background, Virmati wants to go for higher studies. She has been mainly inspired by her first cousin, Shakuntula, who works as a teacher, having passed her M.S.C. Virmati sees in her cousin a model for her future life and at the same time, Virmati falls in love with a married English professor. In order to pursue her higher studies, Virmati refuses to marry the canal engineer, though Virmati's mother, Kasturi is dead against Virmati's further education. But Virmati, with her inflexible will and steely determination, rebels against her mother, and follows her own independent way. Thus, Virmatiemergesasamodernwoman.

In this process, she has to pass through many hardships. And at one stage, her marriage with the married professor seems doubtful and uncertain since the professor does not come forward to marry her and because of him, Virmati loses her job as a teacher. In a mood of frustration, she is determined to leave for Shantinikethan but fortunately for her, the old friend of the professor, happens to see her at the Calcutta station. Having come to know about Virmati's sad story, the professor's friend becomes instrumental in performing the marriage of Virmati with the professor.



Here the observation of Christopher Rollason deserves mention;

“Search for control over one's destiny, surely and the key theme of “Difficult Daughters” refers to the independence aspired to and obtained by a nation (despite its cruel division by fateful partition), but also to the independence yearned after (and finally not obtained) by a woman and members of that same nation or its rival communities,” (Rollason 45)

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In the second novel, *A Married Woman* (2003), Astha is a young educated protagonist of the novel, and the daughter of a traditional mother. She has been comfortably married to an American returned MBA and she leads a very happy married life for some time. She becomes mother of two children and her husband, Hemant, becomes too busy with his business and goes on long tours. She feels bored at home and, therefore, she wants to get engaged herself in some activity. And so she joins a school as a

teacher where she comes in contact with a secularist Muslim, by name, Aijaz but, unfortunately, he dies in an accident leaving his young widow, Pipeelika, a Brahmin woman. Astha happens to associate herself with Pipeelika and both of them indulge in the act of lesbianism. When Pipeelika goes to America to do her Ph.D., she insists that Astha should follow her but she bluntly refuses and returns to her family- her husband, Hemant and her two children.

Ishwar observes,

“She feels somewhat suffocated, exploited and unnoticed at home. It is Aijaz's trust which motivates her to think out of the house. He makes her think about the ongoing socio-political activities which become her future interest.” (Ishwar 2)

The novel, 'Home' which tells about the members of a joint family. It is out and out traditional family the patriarch of which is Lal Banwarilal. Here, one comes across members of three generations; Banwarilal and his wife belong to the first generation and Banwarilal's two sons, Yashpal and Pyarelal and his daughter, Sushila, Sona and Rupa belong to the second generation and their children, Nisha, Raju, Vicky belong to the third generation. The protagonist of this novel is Nisha, who by temperament, is against tradition. Much against the will of her mother, Sona, she goes for higher studies and here she falls in love with an engineering student who belongs to a lower caste. In traditional families, love marriages are not encouraged.

Nisha unconventionally gets into her family's traditional business of clothes and finally, she, being a Mangli, married a young widower of thirty four years of age, himself being a Mangli although Nisha is not happy with her husband who loves her mother so much that Nisha feels neglected. She gives birth to twins and feels fulfilled as a wife and as a mother and thus, she emerges as a new woman.



Nahanrightlyobserves:

"I define modern as a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the independence syndrome. There is a dependence syndrome, where it is the husband or the father or the community or whether it is a religion group, ethnic group when women free themselves of the dependence syndrome and lead a normal life, my idea of feminism materializes. (Nahal 30)

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The novel, entitled, The Immigrant. The protagonist of this novel is Nina, who works as a lecturer in English in Miranda college of Delhi. Her father dies very prematurely of cardiac attack and she and her widowed mother lead a life of an average middle class family. She has reached her 30th year and she marries a dentist-doctor who has settled in Canada for the last seven years. When the protagonist, Nina goes to Canada, she finds that there has been emotional

incompatibility between her husband and herself. Her husband, Ananda is a man of tradition, whereas Nina has seen life in Europe and studied there in Brusils international school and as such she imbibes the spirit of modernity. This creates a conflict between the doctor-husband and herself and finally, she leaves her home and her husband in quest of her own identity.

Ashokkumar observes:

"Compatibility between husband and wife is indispensable. But in the present novel sex overtakes other factors needed for compatibility between husband and wife. Nina and Ananda both want to join the band wagon of liberal sex. Nina gets a male white partner, Anton and Ananda gets a white female body of Mandy. Both deceive each other." (Kumar 65)

The novel, Custody (2011), the protagonist of this novel, Shagun is entirely different from any of the protagonists of ManjuKapur's previous novels. She has been married to an active, hardworking business executive by name, Raman. She has two children- the boy Arjun aged fourteen and a daughter, Roohi aged eight. But Shagun, being bored with the routine life at home, happens to

fall in love with Ashok Kanna, the wizard business man of 'Brand' and leaves her husband and children. And the novel ends with a bitter legal battle for the custody of their daughter, Roohi who is now brought up by Ishita, her stepmother, Raman's second wife. Finally, the verdict has been passed that Roohi must be under the custody of Raman and Shagun is deprived of her daughter and it is how the novel ends.



It is very apt to quote GajendraDutt Sharma in this context:

“Shagun’s act of sexual violation celebrates female sexual self-assertion embodied in a new feministic assumption that woman is desiring object with an intense longing for sexual expression, satisfaction and fulfillment. Shagun follows her heart and seeks a divorce from Raman and embarks on a new life with Ashok” (Gajendra 5)

ManjuKapur makes the reader feel the process of their transformation into modern woman both through their word and deed. The major theme in all her novels is how the younger generation of educated urban middle class women emerge out through their persistent struggle against outmoded traditional values and retrogressive clutches of patriarchal system into modernity; and a few of them go beyond this stage, vehemently flouting tradition, to the bent of their inclination, creating a wider space for an easy, unfettered life of economic independence, showing least regard for traditional values. And ‘chastity’, especially for women, traditionally held in highest esteem, by one and all, is just mere a sound signifying nothing for the postmodern women. But the reader finds an exception to this observation in the case of Nisha, the protagonist of *Home* who emerges as the new woman. She attaches a special importance to this aspect as her hypersensitive reaction to the incident of being molested by Vicky, her cousin, when she was a little girl and much later on her polite refusal to yield to her lover Suresh who

tried to seduce her in a private room of his friend.

These women wriggle out of the messy coils of tradition and ultimately emerge into new consciousness of modernity and in this process, they exhibit grit and gumption and, above all, unflinching courage of their conviction. They turn a deaf ear to what Mrs. Grundy says. And in this respect, they are a law unto themselves; they are prepared to face consequences, be they ever so dire. All this they do, when they think that their self-identity is at stake; and each of her novels from *Difficult Daughters*, her debut novel (1998) up to *Custody* her fifth novel powerfully illustrates the leitmotif through the protagonist’s perseverant struggle against traditional values until the protagonist emerges into a modern woman. There are other themes in her novels that are directly or indirectly related to the major theme. A few such themes that ManjuKapur discusses, for instance, are: incompatibility of marriage, education for women, early marriages (generally arranged ones), infertility, divorce, custody of children, re-marriage etc...



Simple, direct linear method:

ManjuKapur with her insightful exploration into the psyche of women has very clearly laid bare and armoured their protagonists to confront their problems successfully. ManjuKapur as a novelist, unlike other novelists, does not resort to any stultifying narrative techniques such as stream of consciousness, flashback or memorize techniques. Her only technique is simple, direct linear method. All her protagonists have inevitably confronted the patriarchal norms. Her protagonists have been cast against the rigid traditions and conventions. For instance, Virmati, the central character of *Difficult Daughters* belongs to 1940's just at the time of historical partition of India when women's voice was gagged and their will paralyzed under the tyranny of tradition. It was against this background Kapur's protagonists make a relentless struggle against all the deep-rooted, time-honoured conventions and customs throwing off their traditional slough to wear the garb of modernity. In this process of creating these new characters, ManjuKapur delineates the inner life and subtle interpersonal relationship as a matter of fact, the concept of feminism is quite alien to the Indian society.

Creative imagination:

Kapur has earned a reputation as a chronicler of the lives of educated urban middle-class women. She's a storyteller with a vivid imagination; the talks and happenings are so real and natural that there's no room for improbability. Authorial exegesis can appear to be quite lengthy at times, perhaps due to the tiniest of details that cramp the movement of her narrative; the author does not need to exaggerate the situation; the situation is dramatic in and of itself.

Conclusion:

ManjuKapur, as a staunch feminist writer, justly believes that education and economic independence are the prerequisites of every woman to elevate herself to the status of a man. Young educated girls who are born into this traditional background will certainly be enlightened by reading Kapur's novels and find themselves enlightened. These powerful writers, like ManjuKapur, are the real reformers of society. All contemporary women novelists unveil the hidden secrets which

enable young educated women of today to discover their own potential and thereby their self-identity. Certainly, these novels of ManjuKapur act like magic or mantra on the minds of all educated young women of urban society. They (her novels) pave the right way for the creation of potential women who can compete with men in any field of activity. As a chronicler of the lives of young educated middle class women, she has no second.

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