

Balancing Perspective of The Woman Protagonist Between Traditional Approach and Economic Independence in Manju Kapur's Novel: *Home*.

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ABSTRACT

The place of women in her household and within her society has always been persisted a matter of conflict not only in Indian environment but throughout the world civilization since the very primitive times of human enlightenment. The spiritual ideologies of every religion and the constitution of India inspired by the different religions generally advocates that every person must have the equality in every sphere of life and some essential rights of their own to live their respective lives with self-respect and self-reputation, being a member of his/her corresponding community. But the social construct of every civilization has ever been dominated by the customary rituals of every socio-cultural phenomenon as well as the mind set-up of people belonged to every conventional society. These socio-cultural constructs may vary from one community to the another. With the impact of education, advancement and modernization prevailed in most of the societies, the outlook of the community has been changed for the reputation and place of the women resulted to their growth in every domain of life but some orthodox communities are still there and these do not want to confer the freedom and equal rights to women of their community for which they actually deserve. These women of the said communities have been victimized to their exploitation and in their miserable predicament. They are not only harassed in the previous past historical context of the society but are being dominated and prosecuted in the present civilization also. These women are still expected to lead their lives as slaves to their traditional households and to work or to dance like the puppets according to the directions of their male-counterparts of orthodox patriarchal system of the civilization being continued as the custom of the conventional society. Even though, these women of the society might be well-educated, might be employed in different professions, such as; successful teachers, administrators and business-women etc., who are showing their dexterity in every walk of life as no any field has been left behind where they have not shown and proved their effective contribution to society for its growth, development and welfare etc. But still, they are lacking to establish their own independent identity within

their household and their distinctive communities. They are educated enough, who have been come out of the thick darkness of their illiteracy, stupefaction and ignorance by piercing the rays of hope through education and economic growth towards their upliftment. These women have made their sincere endeavours towards their well-being but unfortunately, they are still a failure category to secure for themselves a respectable and reputable place within the male members of their own households. There they are still considered as an essential usable asset to run the households skillfully without raising their voice even a little. In short, they have been freed from illiteracy but they are still in the bound of the traditional patriarchal; system of the society. These women have become an earning member for their families, who are working inside and outside of their homes to serve and feed their families but still they are the part of their humiliation, exploitation and oppression under the mental set-up of the traditional patriarchal system of society. Hence, there is no any other way by which they may escape themselves from the clutch of traditional bounds over them. Subsequently, they have to make balance between their little economic independence with the traditional outlook of the society and of their familial households.

KEY WORDS: Traditional, Socio-Cultural, Conventional, Oppression, Customary, Exploitation, Predicament and Orthodox.

INTRODUCTION

The present paper is written to reveal the conditions of Indian women struggling to establish their own independent identity through the economic independence but these are unable to do so because of the influence of the ideology of traditional customary rituals of the society and the domination of the male-dominated patriarchal set-up of their households being established by the socio-cultural construct around them which does not allow them to be separated from customary rituals of the civilization. Correspondingly, some women of Indian civilization have been chosen the mid-way, through which they might be able to have their economic independence by making balance with the traditional approach of their surrounding community. Because, while working outside of their homes to earn money, they have also to pay their household duties by constituting equitable and acceptable balance between the modern concept of economic independence and at the same time, by becoming the followers of the orthodox traditional approach of the primitive ideology of the socio-cultural phenomenon. Manju Kapur, an Indian English feminist writer, has understood deeply the socio-cultural construct of the Indian male-dominated patriarchal society and has then artistically been portrayed her female protagonist; Nisha, as a women who has been tried her best to change the viewpoint of the society towards the suffering and humiliation of women, her endeavours towards the upliftment of women in economic independence through the educational advancement and finally when social construct is not favourable with regard to the independent identity of women of society, then to find the midway to meet the demand of the society on one side and the steady efforts for their own progress and upgradation on the other side, by making a substantial balance between these two essential aspects.

NISHA; THE FEMALE PROTAGONIST IS BALANCING HER ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE WITH TRADITIONAL APPROACH IN THE NOVEL: *HOME*

The female protagonist; Nisha is appeared in the novel; *Home* of Manju Kapur as a female child of an ordinary middle class joint family, running a cloth business in Karol Bagh at Delhi. The head of the family is Lala Banwari Lal, who is the staunch follower of the traditional socio-cultural rituals of society wherein

a common conception is endorsed about the job profile of men and women of the family, that the men is meant to work and look after outside affairs of the home and the role of women is contemplated to be played skillfully inside the thresholds of their respective families. In correspondence to this very ideology of such traditional societies, Deshpande has discovered appropriately:

The man went out to work and earn money, the woman stayed at home, looked after it, the man and their children. It was not perfect pattern nor the best but it was there complete, not gnawed into bits by doubts and uncertainties. (Deshpande, 146)

Contrary to this customary traditional perspective, Nisha gets the golden opportunity to free herself from the hard bounds of her patriarchal lineage and to flourish her inner capacities through the love and care of her aunt Rupa and Uncle Prem Nath, who both honestly are being committed towards the education and every well-being of their loving adopted child Nisha, which further causes to have her economic independence. Her parental family reluctantly help her for her economic independence at the time, when after getting education, she expresses her will to start her own business. Consequently, she gains huge success through her sincere endeavours. But after her marriage, the family of her in-laws come across her recently gained economic independence. Hence, she has to choose a midway to make balance between these two; the traditional approach and economic independence while living with her parents' as well as her in-laws' family after her marriage. Being the female child of an austere male-dominated patriarchal traditional household, Nisha possesses the belief and respect for the norms of the family and society as well at the very beginning course of her life. But with the influence of education and the individual freedom she does enjoy while living with her aunt Rupa and uncle Prem Nath, she consistently succeeds to change her outlook from traditionality to modernity, from her submissiveness to her independent identity, family dominion to her own economic independence and personal freedom as well. But unfortunately, for the sake of her family welfare in respect of its honour and reputation, Nisha has to compromise with her traditional roles to be played for her parental family and the family of her in-laws pressured under the age-old traditions where the women have not their own voice, as Rosalind Miles observes:

They have continuously turned and returned to it for the vital task of making sense of their experience as women and harmonizing the often unbearably painful conflicts of their lives and all this they have achieved in the face of long-standing, deep-rooted hostility and denial.

(Rosalind, 19)

Indian traditional civilization has firm faith in spirituality as well as in the mythology of different religions which have enacted some norms according to the religious texts and manuscripts such as suggested in Hindu astrology, popularly known as Jyotisha which explains planetary motions and positions with respect to time and its effect on the life of human being as well as on the different functioning of the earth surface. Consistent with Hindu mythology, Nisha is "Mangli" by birth according to her horoscope as per the astrological calculations of the Hindu astrologists, which would be resulted in the obstruction in marriage and needed a suiter for marriage having same stars to be calculated according to the horoscope. Otherwise, a great disaster may happen in married life according to this astrological calculation of stars. Subsequently, it is stunning news for an orthodox Indian conventional family. resulted to this revelation, the customary family of Nisha is worried about her future life because as per mythology, it is an uphill battle to detect a

perfect suitor boy for her marriage. As per this very convention of such traditional outlook, it is highly been contemplated that:

A mangali, destined to marry unfortunately, destined for misery, unless a similar manglik could be found with a similar fate and horoscope. (139)

As enforced by the traditional conventionality of her household and due to her own submissive nature, Nisha is unable to reveal her sufferings towards any member of her family at that time, when her cousin brother Vicky makes a sexual climax with her during the playtime with her, at the age of her childhood period. It is one another trait of an Indian conventional social set up, that a woman has to bear all her humiliation because of the fact that the family reputation is much higher than the harassment of women as a human being. For such traditional households, their family honour is uppermost than all the sufferings and humiliations of the women of the households. Such traditional values-oriented families want the female members of family to learn patience, to be remain silent and submissive even if these are being suppressed or victimized by the male members of the family or society. Nisha acts the same as per the aspirations of her family. Subsequently, she becomes mentally disturbed by this dreadful traumatic experience as most of the girls are being sexually harassed by the male-dominance of the society, but instead of taking some firm steps against such criminal activities, even the mature persons of the community consider to suppress such matter for the sake of family and social reputation of the family. Moreover, there is one another contemplation of the society that such females might bear the stigma of their sexual harassment throughout their whole lives. Nisha is so much frightened with the experience of her sexual abuse, that she finds herself unable to reveal her sufferings to anybody in the home. Nobody is there in her home to understand her restlessness and traumatic situation. She has no way to ease her burden with anyone, instead of crying helplessly and to throw herself into her:

Grandmother's lap, and pulled the palla over her head, once in that safe, filtered world she wept and wept. (65)

Her journey from her humiliation to her self-respect, her insecurity to her security, her subjugation to her liberation, her harassment to her happiness and contentment starts with this dreadful event which proves a turning point in the course of her life's journey. She is sent to the house of her aunt Rupa and uncle Prem Nath, where Nisha finds herself socially and emotionally secure and at the same time, she is able to escape herself from the menace of her cousin brother, Vicky. They both play the role of ideal independent broad-minded parents for her rather than of uncle and aunt. They both are educated, liberal and being a childless couple; genuinely are worried about Nisha's education and her overall well-being. Here she succeeds to develop her personality as a courageous and confident girl as Hiranandani has addressed her:

"A Fairless and courageous individual." (Hiranandani,75)

Nisha's arrival to her parental home after spending pleasant time with her uncle and aunt up to eleven years, becomes the cause of her subordination and humiliation again. She comes across the traditional rules and values of her patriarchal family persistently. Her mother, Sona is not in the favour of her daughter's further higher education. She wants her daughter to be dexter in the household tasks beyond all other activities. But protagonist, Nisha on the other hand, struggles

hard for her further higher education. She succeeds in her struggle for getting her right to education but this right is granted to her only on the assumption of her family members that she might be able to win the better and prosperous prestigious in-laws' household for her. In this connection Nair says:

“The education obtained is used only as a means to win her husband who is equal to the family prestige.”
(Nair, 22)

The elements of modernity behind traditionalistic approach seem to foster within the mind of young protagonist of the novel when she enters the college for her higher studies. She tastes the fruit of independence by making balance with her familial traditional values. While leading towards the path of modernization, she becomes a fashionable girl against the aspiration of her family. She involves in love relationship and wants to marry with her lover named Suresh but is unable to meet her desire due to the barrier of caste as well as the traditional values. Suresh belongs to a low caste Paswan family and even his family reputation is too low than that of the family of Nisha. Murdoch says in this association of idea:

“The barrier between them was as absolute as if he had been her servant.” (Murdoch 45)

For the purpose of establishing a balanced approach between traditional values and economic independence, she sets aside the idea of marrying with Suresh and as per the desire of her family she gets ready to marry a boy selected by her family. Undeniably, Nisha crosses all the narrow lines of traditionality and enjoys the freedom as well as love affair with Suresh and on no any cost she is ready to consider the guidelines of her family at the beginning, but afterwards she has to make compromise with the rituals of her conventional family as her father helps her for her economic independence by uplifting her to start a new business. Her father suggests her with the remarks:

“Beti”, “Business is not an easy thing” “I will help you in the beginning, but the responsibility, profit and loss all are yours. In teaching, no matter what you do, you get your salary. This is different.” (290).

She becomes a successful business-woman, but this economic independence does not bother her to make equilibrium with her traditional approach. She wants to proceed her further life with the same equilibrium even after her life but the barriers of traditional values again come across her way to economic independence. Her mother-in-law occupies very outdated stereotyped opinion for Nisha’s independent career. This revelation comes forward when she says:

When a girl earns her own living, she gets the wrong ideas about life. (311)

This very outdated philosophical ideology of Nisha’s mother-in-law discloses her innermost desire which would certainly going to be a great hurdle in the path of Nisha towards her economic independence. Nisha herself is desirous to maintain the decorum of her family as per the traditional needs. This old-fashioned comprehension of customary people is unveiled by Hiranandani:

“A woman’s maternal instincts, her attachment to the members of her family, her respect for her husband, her innate abilities to manage her house are exploited in such a way that she is virtually made a slave of the man!”
(Hiranandani, 73)

Nisha’s out of touch from her business after her marriage proves great loss to her business as her brother’s wife Pooja transfers all her business dishonestly by her own name. But confident and determined Nisha decides to play a creative role in her upcoming course of life; a role of business-woman as a role of home maker. Her familial duties and her inner self are now completed almost as she has given birth to her baby.

Being an intelligent business-woman, Nisha knows to make investment and to get the best outcome from business. Therefore, she starts her business again with a great enthusiasm. She proves that a woman is not inferior to man of the society if she is determined to establish her own independent identity within her community. With this approach she becomes successful to make a balance between her economic independence and traditional values of her family and society as well. Her aunt Rupa is well aware with Nisha's capabilities. She confidently persuades her to start her business once again by saying:

You have your whole life ahead of you. You can start your business on your own terms and conditions. (325)

Manju Kapur's confident heroine, Nisha proves here a strong will powered and a woman with perfect mixture of a modern woman who successfully and positively establishes equanimity between the traditional approach with the modern perspective. She starts her life with her austere traditional family background without any adjustment problem and considering as well as following the rules of the family deliberately. She gets new environment and freedom in the house of her aunt Rupa and learns the modern values of the civilization. She not only optimistic enough to dream about her career but she thrivingly gives a real shape to her dreams. She dreams to make her own independent identity and she make her dream come true by becoming an economically independent woman in the house of her parents and after that as a housewife also.

SUMMERISATION

The struggle of women for their respect, reputation, freedom and identity has been continued by the women of different civilizations because every civilization has produced with some handful of aware and bold women who do not want to live anymore under the burdensome influence of the tyrannical male dominated traditional rules of the society which always have been caused to their humiliation, predicament and devaluation of women category of the civilization. The orthodox dogmas of every civilization have tried to exploit and suppress the desires and sincere endeavours of women towards their freedom and upliftment. Such social backgrounds have given the title of non-conformists to the women who have raise their voices against their discrimination, humiliation and exploitation within their male-dominated patriarchal society.

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