



EMERGENCE OF NEW WOMAN AS A RESULT OF VICTIMIZATION IN MARRIAGE WITH REFERENCE TO THE SELECT NOVELS OF MANJU KAPUR AND BHARATHI MUKHERJEE

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ABSTRACT

The woman today has her own quest for self-discovery and self-fulfillment. The male, as representative of the patriarchal society has been jerked off the centre of woman's gravitation. Woman is preparing now to be her own gravitational force, beyond the pull of patriarchy. They have revolted against their exploitation, victimization and marginalization. They are questioning the sexual politics in which they are always victimized. They are busy reshaping themselves in a more humanistic mould, emphasizing thereby the need for a thorough in depth re-examination of marriage and man-woman relationship for a better understanding and sharing of mutual love and respect. A woman is 'new' if her basic concerns are deeper than merely seeking equality with men, asserting her own personality and insisting upon her own rights as a woman and as a human being. Novelists like Manju Kapur and Bharati Mukherjee have succeeded in affirming the emergence of new woman through the portrayal of Virmati and Jasmine in their remarkable aspects.

Keywords: Woman- quest for self-discovery and self-fulfillment, questions the sexual politics, Manju Kapur and Bharati Mukherjee- affirm emergence of new woman.

INTRODUCTION

The present day feminist thought is not anti-men but seeks to destroy the traditional masculine hierarchy because the concept of completeness is in both men and women and the two, understanding and supporting each other. The woman today has her own quest for self-discovery and self-fulfillment. The male, as representative of the patriarchal society has, at last, been jerked off the centre of woman's gravitation. Woman is preparing now to be her own gravitational force, beyond the pull of patriarchy. Women in contemporary society have become aware of the fact that the inferior position accorded to them is not pre-ordained. Women are trying to emancipate themselves from subordination. In this rapidly progressing world they are redefining their proper place. They have revolted against their exploitation, victimization and marginalization. They are questioning the sexual politics in which they are always victimized. They are busy reshaping themselves in a more humanistic mould, emphasizing thereby the need for a thorough in depth re-examination of marriage and man-woman relationship for a better understanding and sharing of mutual love and respect. A woman is 'new' if her basic concerns are deeper than merely

seeking equality with men, asserting her own personality and insisting upon her own rights as a woman. Seen from this angle, even a rebel or a revolutionary woman cannot be called a 'New Woman' on this account alone. The woman is 'new' when she analyses and reflects upon her position essentially as a woman in the scheme of things which includes the social, moral and spiritual fields. The emergence of the 'New Woman' in Indian society and its concept in the Indian English novel has to be seen as a noticeable one. The significance of the woman awakening into a new world around her has not really made much difference in her realization of her place and position, in Indian society. But then, it is at least a new realization of her place and position, her individuality and a sense of urgency about her rights as a human being. Novelists like Manju Kapur and Bharati Mukherjee have succeeded in affirming their position and identity.

WOMEN IN THE NOVEL OF MANJU KAPUR

The budding new women in Manju Kapur's heroines never want to be rubber dolls for others to move as they will. Defying patriarchal notions that enforce women towards domesticity, they assert their individuality and aspire self-reliance

through education. They nurture the desire of being independent and leading lives of their own. They want to shoulder responsibilities that go beyond a husband and children. They are not silent rebels but are bold, outspoken, determined and action-oriented. All protagonists know that they cannot depend on others to sort out the domestic situation and proceed to tackle it on their own. Though they dare to cross one patriarchal threshold, they are caught into another, where their free spirits are curbed but they adjust, compromise and adapt. The conflict between the roots of imagination and sensibility is brought out well in the novels.

EMERGENCE OF VIRMATI AS A NEW WOMAN

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* is the story of a young woman, named Virmati born in Amritsar into an austere and high minded household. The story tells how she is torn between family duties, the desire for education and elicit love. This is a story of sorrow, love and compromise. The major portion deals with Virmati's love affairs with professor and her emerging as a new woman. The story is full of Virmati's assertion against her mother and other family members. This is a simple story,

movingly told. Kapur sets the scene in pre partition Amritsar and Lahore, and she recreates that time and the locales beautifully. The whole novel shows Virmati emerging as a New Woman who opposes all her family and continues her study against the wishes of her family. Here the Professor Harish who loves Virmati could not marry her due to the social boundaries. But at last Harish's friend poet performs the essential marriage rituals. Thus Harish eventually marries Virmati, installs her in his home (alongside his furious first wife) and helps her towards further studies in Lahore, is a small consolation to her scandalized family or even to Virmati, who finds that the battle for her own independence has created irrevocable lines of partition and pain around her. *Difficult Daughters* is a skilful, enticing first novel by an Indian writer who prefers reality to magic realism. The whole story shows a traditional girl growing into a New Woman.

Kapur's fiction stresses on the women's need for self fulfillment autonomy, self-realization, independence, individuality and self-actualization. "I am interested", says Kapur,

"In the lives of women, whether in the political arena or in domestic spaces.

One of the main pre occupations in all

my books is how women manage to negotiate both inner and outer spaces in their lives-what sacrifices do they have to make in order to keep the home fires burning and at what cost to their personal lives do they find some kind of fulfillment outside the home” (Kapur).

It is against this background the fictional world of Kapur needs to be studied. She does not want her protagonists to be solitary weepers but to take decisions and face the consequences. Her ‘new woman’ is silent no more and refuses to be a victim but in the process of refusal she still has to face indignities and complaints. Virmati holds the conventional view of the purity and chastity of woman’s body. “She was his for life, whether she ever married or not. She could never look elsewhere, never entertain another choice” (*Difficult Daughters* 177). Thus, Virmati dares to cross one patriarchal threshold, she is caught into another, where her free spirit is curbed and all she does is adjust, compromise and adapt. She is a loser whose acts totally alienate her from her family and she fails to create a space for herself for which she had been striving all alone. Perhaps it is this inability of Virmati to strike independent roots and grow and forces Ida to remark, ‘the one thing I had

wanted was not to be like my mother’ (*Difficult Daughters* 1). The concluding lines of the novel reiterate Ida’s rejection of Virmati not as a mother but as a woman. Ida who grew up struggling to be a model daughter, does not have the heart to reject Virmati, the mother but her head, the rational, rejects her as a woman, after having an insight into Virmati’s past.

WOMEN IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE

In her creative career of more than thirty years, Mukherjee has been engaged in redefining the idea of feminism and the diaspora as a process of gain, contrary to conventional perspective that depicts immigration and displacement as a condition of terminal loss and the condition becomes worse in terms of female immigrants. But in her fiction woman is always strong, determined, and assertive. Her fiction convinces that gender is a category open to variation and changes according to place time and situation. Most of her novels present the issues related to women and their identity in the society. They are typical representatives of young women particularly of the Third World countries, who cherish their dreams of immigration to America in pursuit of higher education, higher wages and finally to settle down there permanently.

Mukherjee's depiction of women and their different relationship portrays the dominance of patriarchal practices of traditional society and their liberation and empowerment from this set status.

TRANSFORMATION OF JASMINE AS NEW WOMAN

In *Jasmine*, the protagonist not only breaks the older social taboos related to women and society but also rebels against the old patriarchal values. She is able to maintain a proper balance between the traditionalism and modernism. Her various transformations and incarnation present her strong feminist spirit/soul. Through the main character, Jasmine, the attempt is made to give a picture of women who suffer from man-made cultural and traditional prescriptions as well as sanctions which do not allow them live a life free from such constraints. The social issues that the protagonist raises are of cosmopolitan significance. The picture that emerges from the study of the novel is not only that of female being victimized by male but also that of female coming out as strong character to combat the challenges that come on her way. This is the story of Jyoti, an Indian immigrant who is a village girl of Hasanpur in Punjab. Jyoti's childhood was spent in a small village. She being the

seventh child of her parents is undesirable and a curse for them. It is observed that Jyoti is a very smart, bold and intelligent girl. In fact, the novel *Jasmine* is an account of the protagonist's various transformations from Jyoti to Jasmine, from Jase to Jane- and each time we encounter a different woman in her. She is a fighter, a survivor, and an adapter. In the midst of her traditional village, Hasanpur, Jasmine is in quest for freedom. Her soul longs to fly high in the sky without having any bondage. She rebels against the blind beliefs and superstitions prevailing in her small village and argues against the fate which is adumbrated by the astrologer. This assumption of Jyoti definitely reveals the stronger and modern side and also shackles the older rotten notion of Hindu tradition where the fate of a child, from birth till death, dances to the tune of astrologers. Not only this but *Jasmine* also withdraws all the notions set for the marriage by the society. She marries a Christian boy Prakash in the court and from there Jyoti becomes Jasmine- a city woman and wife of a modern man.

The heroine's problems do not culminate in the resolution of tying a knot of marriage or walking out of it but to combat the challenges. The emphasis is on the passion for life and an establishment of a woman's right to live and love. The collapse

of the heroine's submission to convention, aims to establish her independence. But, unfortunately, Jasmine's husband, Prakash's life proves to be very short and he falls a prey to the Khalsa Lions, the rebel demanding a separate land of Khalistan for Sikhs. Jasmine decides to go to America, on forged papers and documents, to burn her as 'sati' in the campus of the same engineering college where her husband was admitted for study, as it becomes clear from the following statement: "A village girl going alone to America without job, husband or papers?" (*Jasmine* 97). She does not want to live the life of a widow and suffer all those that a widow in the society is subjected to. Here we can see the strength of a woman who has decided to move on a perilous journey to the new world to fulfill her husband's dream. She travels to New York on a ship, where the captain of the ship, an ugly fellow, half-faced (a nickname as one side of the face was badly damaged in war) who had lost an eye, ear and most of his cheek, remorselessly rapes Jasmine and this outrage is too much for an Indian widow to tolerate. She decides to finish her life but before she could do so, the woman inside her realizes that actually she wants to live and her personal dishonor cannot disrupt her mission. She decides that in spite of ending

her life she will destroy the devil that has outraged her chastity. She transforms herself into the image of vengeful goddess Kali. Her decision to kill herself first is a decision of a woman who lives for her deceased husband but the woman who kills half faced is prompted by her will to live and continue her life facing the challenges that come on her way. She is reborned by the act of killing; to punish the monster in disguise she begins her journey. Now she marches on in quest of new identity. Mrs. Gordon, another strong willed woman who supports and helps her to rehabilitate, transforms her totally. Within a week Jasmine gives up her shy side of personality and dresses up on a jazzy T-shirt, tight cords and running shoes. With this change she moves from being a 'visible minority' to being just another immigrant. She becomes Jazzy from Jasmine. This adoption of different names and personality is another part of her feminine sensibility. At Vadhera's place, the freedom loving spirit of Jasmine finds it very difficult to cope with the conservative and artificially maintained Indianness. After spending a few frustrating months she moves to Manhattan and becomes day mummy, a caregiver of Duff, Taylor and Wylie's adopted son. Here she becomes more Americanized. Jasmine in spite of

many transformations remains an Indian woman from heart and is never bifurcated from her till the last. The stories which she uses to tell Duff were about Indian Gods, demons and mortals and it supports her Indianness. She felt that there was no concept of feeling of shame in this society and comes to realize the liquidity of relationship in America. She is outwitted at Wylie's decision of leaving Taylor for another man in search of real happiness. Here the woman of Jasmine is unable to have an empathy with the women of Wylie. In fact, here her thinking is like that of an Indian woman in American milieu.

But in the later part of the novel we see the woman of Jasmine comprehending this course of action of Wylie. During this course of action Jasmine falls in love with Taylor and tells him everything about her past. She is now happy in her family with Taylor and Duff but again her past comes in front of her in the form of Sukhi (her husband's murderer) and she has to run to Iowa. Jasmine's life in Iowa begins with her chance of meeting with Bud Ripplemayer, who not only gives her a new identity but also a new name - Jane Ripplemayer. Here the change in name is again symbolic. As clay molds according to the hands in which it goes, so is the nature

of a woman who willingly or unwillingly imbibes herself according to the place, society and culture. When Jane first met Bud- he was a tall, handsome, fifty years old banker, a husband, and father of two children. But after six months he is a crippled divorcee living with an illegal immigrant and an adopted son Du, whom he had brought from the Vietnamese refugee camp. Bud courts her because of her mysterious Indian beauty. She identifies her dreams and wishes with Bud's and sacrifices all her individuality to prove herself to be perfect. But somewhere she was not happy with all this and Taylor's arrival at this is a welcome relief to her. She walks out of Bud's life and now the woman inside her could understand Wylie's course of action of leaving Taylor. This is the final affirmation of a true feminist. Her walking out of Bud's life symbolizes that her free spirited woman wants to fulfill all her unfulfilled dreams. She says: "I am not choosing between men. I am caught between the promise of America and old-world dutifulness" (*Jasmine* 240). Here we encounter a changed Jasmine who appears to be a chance taker who moves with her former lover breaking all the silent promises that she had made with Bud, in order to enjoy all the world of new hopes and excitements.

Thus, in the end, her powerful feminist convictions win and the synthesis between the traditional India and contemporary America, very perfectly brings out the feminist side of the protagonist. She, in the end, thinks about herself and chooses the path where she will find real happiness: "It isn't the guilt that I feel its relief. I realize I have already stopped thinking of myself as Jane" (*Jasmine* 240). The story does not become a pathetic story of an immigrant but explores the 'state-of-the-art expatriation' where the woman aggressively waits for the future without regretting the past. The novel seeks to highlight the human needs which are essential for life and which can be realized only by rising above the cultural conditioning.

The novel supports Bharati Mukherjee's assertion. In totality the novel projects the strength of a woman to fight and adapt to a brave New World and not the damaging effects of immigration. The tale from Jyoti to Jasmine, Kali to Jazzy-Jase and Jane is a long and arduous, eventful and uneven odyssey. The protagonist's name changes according to her geographical shifts. The process of continuous uprooting and re-rooting goes on, and the image is that of the celebration of the feminist protagonist who comes out as a fighter, adapter, and

survivor. Thus, through the analysis of Bharati Mukherjee's present novel is observed that the women seek to be emancipated even though poor and independent though bound by age customs and traditions. In short, what is wanted by women everywhere -Indian or otherwise-is the same emancipation for the female as for the male. The aim is to be a whole human being, regardless of difference in sex, color, caste, creed, and country.

CONCLUSION

Thus novelists like Manju Kapur and Bharati Mukherjee have succeeded in affirming the emergence of new woman through the portrayal of Virmati and Jasmine in their remarkable aspects.

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