

Gender Discrimination in Manju Kapur's *Home*

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Abstract: Gender discrimination is one of biggest evils that mankind had ever endured and this exists for a very long time. Most of the women writers deal with the issue of gender discrimination in different ways and Manju Kapur is one among them. This research paper focuses on gender discrimination endured by the women in the family, where she is treated as an object that can be altered by the family members and explores how the female protagonists of the select novels struggle to get freedom from the male patriarchal society to get individuality. The issue of gender discrimination revolves around the lives of the female characters in the novel. The comparison of ideas between the male and the female regarding the differences in gender is discussed in this paper. Women undergo a lot of endurances to exhibit their ability till their end. This paper analyses Manju Kapur's *Home* in order to portray the issue of gender discrimination and state of men and women.

Key words: Gender discrimination, Patriarchy, Ideas, endurance.

The society that we are part of have pre destined roles for each gender and the individuals are forced to follow this. Adichie in her *Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* suggests that women are forced to believe certain norms of the society assigning them certain roles and habits forcing them to do certain things and imposing marriage as an achievement and so on and dislocated by all means and if the women does not follow and question the norms of the society she is considered as a rebel to the woman community. The most fascinating thing is that, these roles assigned to the women is mostly by men acknowledged by the women. In accordance to this, the Indian society assign roles to be imposed or forced upon the women, while the men enjoy the privilege of the society.

Women's oppression begins with gender and hence analyzing gender issues becomes critical in studying any text with a feminist approach. Analyzing gender begins with identifying how gender is not god given, natural or innate but socially constructed. Though each society has its own way of marking, depicting or manifesting gender according to their conveniences and benefits, it is universal. Mary Klages points out in her *Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed* that gender is constructed through "binary oppositions that...divide the world into male and female and valuing male over female" (12)

Manju Kapur in her novel *Home* deals with the sufferings and crisis of Indian women in a Patriarchal, in particular the joint family system, where the women is restricted with no freedom. Kapur skilfully portrays how the various issues of gender are inbuilt within our culture and how gender issues are a result of the existing Indian tradition and cultural norms. According to Radha Chakravarthy in her *Home: Review by Radha Chakravarthy* states:

Gender issues are Kapur's worldview in the lines of the female figures; we encounter questions about marriage, motherhood, women's education, women's

work in and out of the home, the body, the sexuality, the different forms of violence against women ranging from emotional blackmail to dowry deaths and sexual abuse (119)

In a joint family system, the priority of the gender is valued more than the wish of the woman. The women in the family are not allowed to suggest any ideas or oppose any ideas even though they may turn out wrong. The idea of partiality among the men and women belonging to the same household is exposed in *Home* through the protagonist, Nisha. When Nisha wants to pay with her brother, Raju she is restricted stating that she would get darker and look like a maid in the family and she wouldn't be married. While the male members in the family is allowed to go outside and do what he wishes, the female members in the family are forced to sit inside the house and brought up hearing stories from grandmother on how to be a better women. In other words, on how to serve the husband.

In Indian society, there exists a traditional notion valuing beauty over education and marriage as an achievement. The novel, *Home* starts with the distinction and comparison between the two sisters, Sona and Rupa and how they are differentiated on the basis of colour. Sona is bewitchingly beautiful while Rupa is plain and dark. While Sona is married to a rich cloth merchant, Rupa is marries to a junior government officer who earns less and is placed in a lesser hemisphere than Sona, where her education is not valued.

Dowry system is one of the social evils that exists in out society. Women is treated as a society in which she is forced to provide certain things in order to get married. Dowry becomes an integral part in our weddings and valued as a quality of living together. In the novel, *Home* when Yashpal presents his lover Sona to his family, his family demands large dowry in order to marry and to run the family business.

Gender discrimination occurs even at the time when a girl is married because of the patriarchal dominance. The Indian society values marriage as an achievement. Marriage becomes the most important thing in the life of a girl, with her only focus upon marriage and the man she is going to get married, and from a very young age the Indian custom teaches her to accustom herself to the well-being of her future anonymous husband. The society conditions women to think of getting married while the boys are not suggested to do so. In any society, a woman after she gets married the title changes from 'Miss' to 'Mrs', whereas the man is always given the title as 'Mr'. The girl is considered as a burden and if the girl attains the so called age of marriage, the attitude of the family members of the girl, forcing her to get married at the earliest is explained in detail in *Home*:

It was necessary for marriageable girls to blossom during... occasions (like marriages), it being likely that among the guests a boy or better still, his parents would cast a glance and hold it steadily upon her person that it was hoped subsequent enquiries would yield results. (2)

The patriarchal or the male dominated society in every possible way rests on the opinions of the men in the family and in no way treats women to be equal to them. In such a society, women is always under the control of a man in the form of father, husband and son. The woman is just a liability and a burden upon her family and once married the burden is off the shoulders onto the boy's family where she is forced to endure happiness or sorrow or other emotions at all times. Fertility is considered as a way to retain the dignity and recognition of a woman in the family and the birth of a boy child is considered as blessing and the birth of a girl child is considered as a sign of bad luck. In the novel, *Home* when one of the daughter in law, Sona fails to conceive, she is subjugated and oppressed at the highest level. She is not only the

victim of physical suffering but also undergoes psychological oppression in the hands of the family members. Every gesture of her mother-in-law suggested that, “the daughter in law had no right to exist, and if she had to live, why in their house? Only when the men came home at night was there the semblance of a caring family” (11).

Gender discrimination not only affect the women, but also the men. Men are forced by certain customs in the society. For instance, if a man cries he is refereed and told ‘Don’t cry like a women’, as crying is a quality attributed to women. Kapur effectively depicts that the Gender stereotypes not only affect the women who is forced to follow the rules and norms of the society, but also the men who get oppressed by the existing norms of the society, which tend to ridicule their talents and suppress their individuality. If the women suffered from physical, economic and socio cultural disadvantages, the men suffered from the existing norms which in most of the times resulted in curtailing their originality. Both the men and women are reduced to the position of mere puppets in the hands of the policies and the so called words of the elders in the society. Both the man and the women were deprived of, “ their aspirations to their individuality and self reliance” (Warake 269).

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