



Psychical Sensitivity of Female Psyche in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman*

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Abstract

This paper focuses on Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman*'s female protagonist's psychological consciousness. The holocaust of India serves as the backdrop for this novel. After the partition, a large number of individuals in her neighbourhood moved from Lahore to either Amritsar or Delhi. The research sheds significant light on how oppressed and underprivileged women achieve their freedom and emancipation through insurrection. They are now aware of their goal to liberate themselves from the shackles of unfair taboos and traditions that the male-dominated society has imposed on them. The contemporary women portrayed in the chapter do not rely on their husbands, dads, or sons to sustain them. They are capable of making their own financial decisions and possess the necessary strength to deal with life's ups and downs. Manju Kapur has fought for women's complete liberation. She has emitted the ideas of an awakening woman who is releasing herself.

Keywords: Woman, Psychology, Emancipation, Psyche, Liberation, Tradition

Among the modern feminist novelists, Manju Kapur is the one who has risen to celebrity and won global recognition in Indian Writing in English. She has joined the growing group of Indian female writers who have significantly influenced the image of the suffering but stoic woman who is finally challenging social norms. They gave the English language the freedom to respond to narratives and representations of how they perceived women and their lives in postmodern India. Through her writings, she has aimed to rescue women from the sexism that has plagued them for so long.

The women of India have made progress in their 50 years of independence, but much work needs to be done if real women's independence is to be attained as well. The fight for women's autonomy is still ongoing, and Manju Kapur approaches the story of women's difficulties in her second novel, *A Married Woman*, which

was published five years later, in a way that is both uniquely Indian yet universal at the same time. And that is also a remarkable accomplishment. The protagonist of this novel is Astha, a working-class, educated woman from New Delhi's upper middle class.

A Married Woman's Delhi setting contrasts the divisive Ram Janma Bhoomi and Babri Masjid. The story follows Astha as she studies life from childhood to adulthood while experiencing many dreams and disappointments, compliments and rejections, and feelings of admiration and annoyance. She discusses middle-class ideas and seems to savour her feelings of happiness for a while, but she unmistakably feels that something is missing from her life. She experiences depression and a sense of despair over being incomplete, which are made worse by her participation in the outside world of uprising and protest. However, she discovers that the temporary solution is also hollow inside of her, which causes her to sigh in relief.

Astha is raised in a regular middle-class family's conventional, cosy surroundings. She parents have only one child, her. And they believe that her character, marriage, health, and education are a burden to them. Though she does not want them to protect their priceless treasure with such care, she is their hope for the future. Particularly her orthodox mother made the decision to instil religious piety practised through appropriate rites in her heritage. Astha doesn't give a damn about her dad, a bureaucrat. He is highly concerned about her education and desires to instil in her positive values, preferences, and manners. She has had romantic love in her heart since she was a teenager, and she expresses this to Bunty, an Army cadet at NDA, Kharagwasla. They write to one another, and this acts as a treasured object to display and a source of respect among friends for her. Astha's mother is aware of this relationship, and she complains to Bunty's parents before the show comes to a close. When she is in her final year of graduating, she meets Rohan. At shady intersections of the streets, she starts to run into Rohan in his automobile. Young people who lack patience frequently overstep modest boundaries due to their boiled-up youth passion. Astha and Rohan press against one another, kiss, and touch each other while they feel pleasure in doing so. No resistance is encountered by his probing hands. She is prepared to flog all rules in order to feed her body in the same frenzied manner as the river. The words "all she wanted was for him to start, so that the world could fall away and she be lost" illustrate this. She thought to herself, "This is love, no wonder people talk about it so much" (24-25). They stay inside the boundaries and she retains her virginity. Girls at this age are particularly interested in knowing if someone is staring at them, and if a boy proposes, she feels safe in his arms. This kind of circumstance can be attributed to a variety of factors. However, this relationship comes to an end when Rohan leaves for Oxford to continue his studies, which comes as a shock and compels her love to call it

quits. Astha is accustomed to keeping a diary, where she records her feelings. As she reads a diary, her mother learns of this.

Astha's mother appears to be expressing her sentiments, imaginations, and rendezvous ways, but she conceals the truth by claiming that it is just a part of her fiction. However, her mother believes that a young girl's imagination has been damaged by the Convent education. Before he leaves the Indian Civil Service, her father is more than prepared to marry his daughter. However, she declines to show her house to anyone. Astha's mother hastily arranges for Astha to meet an army man after learning about Astha and Bunty's relationship. But she claims she never met him. Every mother, like Astha's mother, has an unfounded fear of her daughter. Instead of receiving affection from her mother, fear turns into a threat to the daughter. Parents should be kind to their daughters. Since girls bear the majority of parental responsibilities in this situation, changing parental behaviour toward their daughters is unavoidable as they grow up and become closer to and cherished by their fathers. Astha's parents are in charge of her in this novel, but she is not a child who can be linked to anybody so easily. A proposal was made to her when she completed her M.A. by the commerce ministry bureaucrat's son.

Hemant holds an MBA from the United States and works as an assistant manager in a Delhi-based bank. At first of their marriage, he looks to join her life of an ideal and honest spouse. He frequently refers to her as "my baby" and acts in the paternalistic, adoring, and thoughtful manner of the typical traditional Indian spouse. He does a good job helping Astha in his room. It is vital to read a sex manual to learn the many types and poses to do his sex longer. He agrees with the notion that the woman's bleeding on the first night is evidence of her virginity. Astha believes that, on the contrary, she saw Rohan's face bending hers before her eyes. "Had she been a virgin? Unlike Hemant, she was not sure. She decided to forget the whole business, after all now she was definitely not one, and what was the point of thinking about the past?" (41) According to her, every boy desires a virgin girl. But even they are so in their hearts and minds. Hindu traditions hold that marriage is a union of the body, intellect, and heart of both parties. As the days go by, Astha begins to feel like a woman in a world that is shrouded in her desire and their sex fluids. A few months after they got married, her new life started to get tainted. She decides to work as a teacher and her in-laws approve of her decision, describing it as a fun way to pass the time. She believes that since the job fell into her lap, teaching must be her destiny.

From the firmament of romance, one must descend to the realm of reality. After retiring, Astha's father moves into an affordable property in the Lodhi community. But a few months later, her father passes away, and her mother turns listless and distant. In order to lift her mother's spirits, she spends her evenings with her. She

also makes an effort to draw Hemant's attention to her mother's issues. Astha keeps herself occupied with her schoolwork since Hemant continues to be quite busy with his workplace duties. She first dislikes her job as a teacher, but as time passes, happiness comes into their lives and into this hectic schedule when she learns she is pregnant. Her mother wishes if it may be a son, but Hemant denies this statement and says, "In America there is no difference between boys and girls. How can this country get anywhere if we go on treating our women this way?" (57)

In this way, it is evident that a woman wants a boy, not a girl, in her life as a child, and if this is the case, she accepts the girl as a laxmi. Anuradha, a lovely young woman, is born to Astha. Hemant's attitude has since changed as a result of the birth of her, and he now desires another son. He transitions from being an all-American father to an all-Indian father after having a daughter. He states outright that they will have a third child if the second is a girl. According to an Indian tradition, people think that boys, not girls, carry the family name. Here, Hemant shares this opinion. The only child of our former prime minister, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, became the inheritor of his lineage. The only girl child of Nehru is Indira Gandhi. People praise him for becoming orthodox whenever it comes to following tradition. And because of rituals and traditions, they particularly want a son, especially women. However, Hemant, a returning American, is here and wants a son. Himanshu is the name of Astha's other son, who is a boy. Hemant, Astha's mother, and her mother-in-law all hope that Astha's second pregnancy will result in a son. They all offer prayers and various other offerings. Here, Astha becomes agitated. She can't help herself. She does meditation and focuses on peaceful thoughts in an effort to maintain her composure for the benefit of the baby. She must remember that everyone agrees that the heir and son will be a son, including her coworkers, in-laws, the women of her husband's acquaintances, her mother, the chef, and the gardener.

A youngster finally finds himself in the hands of his destiny. Astha frequently considers her spouse, daughter, and son. She has all of them. She feels content. Her in-laws often remark that a woman is like the land, and it's true that she feels abundant, living a life of giving and receiving amidst plenty. Visitors would often utter things like "a mother's love" before tripping over their words and falling silent. This gave Astha the impression that she had shared the archetypal experiences reserved for women.

Manju Kapur is a well-known author with a strong feminism. Her novels highlight the sociocultural plight of Indian women, who are trapped in a patriarchal society dominated by men. Her female heroines are well-equipped, highly educated, and middle-class Indian wives who must fight for what is rightfully theirs. They are

seeking equality with males and their own sense of identity. Her works blatantly depict their sorrows and suffocation within marriage and family constraints. According to her;

I am interested in the lives of women whether in the political arena or in the domestic spaces. One of the main preoccupations in all my books is how women manage to negotiate both the 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 fulfilment outside the home. (145)

As with every woman after marriage, Astha wishes to spend time with Hemant. But he consistently arrives late, complains about his employer, and shows his unhappiness with everything, never making an effort to understand her state of mind, her emotions, or her needs. She then makes the decision to become a teacher.

Her life alters gradually as a result of her employment. It offers a chance to interact with the outside world. She got involved in outside activities and learned about the restrictions and boundaries imposed on her. She has a strong need for sex and a physical relationship right away, but Hemant never seems to be particularly conscious of this. Her in-laws admired her for being a resilient and selfless woman. She always appears worn out from the strain of work and choked by her obligations to meet everyone's needs. She gives birth to two children in the interim. Hemant declines her offer to assist in raising children since he is focused on building his career as a businessman. In this sense, he must make four international trips each year. Astha is now left to handle her problems—children, a job, and a house—on her own. She is occupied with her family, job, and home.

Hemant left his job and launched his own business, which has made him even busier and farther away. In this regard, she creates poetry to communicate her suffering and alienation, but Hemant views the poems as nothing more than a waste of time. Astha is greatly impacted by it, giving up poetry in favour of painting, although she encounters a lot of obstacles in the process: "There were too many interruptions, the servant, the children, the phone, the kitchen, and her own restless thoughts" (155). She is deprived of the personal space she requires. Even her mother gives her money to Hemant to be safely invested for her children, which makes her feel even more alienated and subordinate.

After some time passes, she meets Aijaz, who inspires, wakes, and socialises her thinking. She attempts to compose the script for the street play about the Babri Masjid and Ram Janmabhoomi controversy as a result of his encouragement. She feels infatuated with him and honoured for her talent. In this regard, in "Women's Suffocation and Struggle for Independence in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman*," Wakde Ishwar comments,

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. (2)

She starts comparing her husband with Aijaz, and she discovers that Aijaz is the man who values her activities, prioritises her, is constantly giving, praises what she accomplished, and motivates her to take on new endeavours, whereas Hemant is completely the opposite. She is accused of poor administration, incompetence, and wastefulness by Hemant as well. Hemant portrayed her with the claim that her place as a respectable woman is at home. Instead of offering comfort for his passing, Hemant views even Aijaz's death as insignificant. She can only be understood by one person, and that person is no longer alive. Astha decided to use painting as a means of expressing her suppression as a result. She requires pity and gratitude for what she done. She is unable to discuss her concerns with Hemant. She believes that a married woman is just another object for a man to mind-fuck. In "Feminism Assertion in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman: A Socio-Ethical Perspective*," Bhagabat Nayak says that through Astha, "Manju Kapur offers a frontal challenge to patriarchal thought, social organization and control mechanism by her inner potential as an individual and her desire to attain personal recognition" (137) demanding equality for all. However, the logic of equality transcends the conventional bounds of socialism, secularism, and democracy. The only feasible way to resolve issues is through communism, which is a Utopian state that would result from the logic of equality, democracy, and secularism.

A Married Woman continues Manju Kapur's fascination with the female uprising against ingrained family ethics and norms and the marriage system. Astha consents to an arranged union and at first revels in passionate sexuality within the confines of matrimony. She may appear content in her roles as a teacher and a mother of two kids, but behind there is anger at being considered as a member of the underprivileged sex. Hemant shares the responsibility of raising his first child and gains freedom of thought. The outside lustre gradually fades, and he begins to resemble an ordinary Indian spouse. Her mother still trusts Hemant more than her to handle the finances, even after her father passed away.

Astha put her trust in Aijaz before drifting towards lesbianism, where Pipeelika emerged as her main crush. Unfortunately, when he went to Ayodhya to keep an awareness of the proper attitude, the rebids burn alive. When Astha has sex with her spouse, Pipee resets, which suggests that their relationship is robust. Hemant drives his wife away while becoming furious and irate. The silently suffering woman gains strength. In "Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman: A Study of Woman's Struggle*," Satendra Kumar says that Astha is shocked "at the growth of

fundamentalism and the rise of religious zealots to uplift and elevate the country by a crusade and establish paranoia by presenting evil as a historical necessity” (28).

Manju Kapur has ingrained writing as a resist, a method of mapping from the perspective of a woman's experience, before coming to a conclusion with the novel. She bargains over several difficulties arising from her nation's sociopolitical unrest. The novel is a real woman's confession about her personality cult and an intimate allegory of a poor marriage. She has defined the Indian male perspective of women as a holy cow, which is reasonable given that women are not particularly interested in history and that individuals in positions of power frequently distort historical facts to fit their own agendas. In a time of socio-political upheaval in the country, she has captured the truth in her fictional story as a writer of a younger generation. She portrays the traumas that her female protagonists endure from and die in for their victory in an effort to transform how Indian men view women.

In the current setting, *A Married Woman* deals with women's difficulties. It is a sincere and alluring tale of love, passion, and attachment that takes place in India during a period of political and religious unrest. The main character of the tale runs the risk of losing the possessions she has amassed via her traditional marriage and secure family because of a strong physical relationship with a much younger woman.

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