

Mirroring of Women in *Manju Kapur's A Married Woman* and *Bharati Mukherjee's Wife*

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ABSTRACT: *Woman portrayed varied in several novels by different novelists. Manju Kapur and Bharati Mukherjee have come up with diversified aspects of Indian culture and scenario of current times. Their Women haven't been depicted as a slave but a prey of the society as well as the male atrocities and cultural conflicts. Victimization in literature related to female oriented works in pretext to the social and culture is quite evidential. The woman in her struggle is dealing with innumerable magnitude, getting embarked for everything, whether bold or submissive, beautiful or an average looking, career oriented or a home maker; everywhere she has been looked with the different mirror and perception. She is embarked with the terminology and people termed her with titles. Every moment of her has been registered and taken up on different terms. It states about the basic embankment or titles are depicting the personality of a woman. . In country like India, people wish to treat her as Goddess or the idol of sacrifice instead of treating her as a common human being. The Goddess has proved to be the best of the abilities, but she has no right to express herself and to follow her likes and dislikes Woman is physically, mentally and psychologically twined up in the end and could not enjoy the gift called life provided to her by God. She seems most vulnerable but gradually comes with the strong sense of liberty and determined personality. The paper will discuss various aspects of the woman in *A Married Woman* by Manju Kapur and *Wife* by Bharati Mukherjee. The novels of these authors have mirrored the female in Indian and Western set up entangled in different circumstances.*

Key Words:

1.1An Overview: Norms and Trends in Portraying Woman

Woman is a paramount character in literature epitomizes society and varied culture. Literature is responsible for setting trends and evocative from ages. Alteration and modification as per culture, norms, customs, and religion in different backgrounds and environments is quite evidential in various works posted by different authors in different era. Status of woman is shaped for the convenience of powerful and wealthy people for their own benefit is pen down by different authors with cliché. This process somewhere had butchered the status of female. The female portrayed over last four decades have been constantly shifting. The realm of Kamala Markandaya to Shashi Deshpande to Arundhati Roy to Jhumpa Lahiri all have stated gender discrimination and the silence of a woman overpowered it with the liberal or new woman trends. Suffering changed its name, but it is always the same as before. She has taken into different avatars and become certainly a diva. She is urbanized and is taken a new shape, new woman who is casual and professional woman. She has been under the pressure of self responsibly and social democratic aspect. Manju Kapur is a master narrator and keen in presenting details from the common Indian set up. She has created her woman characters well educated and aware of their own rights and duties. Her females are too much natural, ideal, assertive yet rebellious. Her female characters display prejudice, suppressed voices and atrocities of traditional patriarch traditions. It raises the plea against the mayhem of woman. She also added her desire of loving and converting into sexual and psychological needs but to remain culturally right. She also has the niche to raise other issues such as gender, class and religious clashes and carry the parallel story like a magician. Her language has simplicity yet diffusion to raise the issue and discuss the role of woman in contemporary situations. She very well presents the class clash such as middle- and upper-class society living and dwelling with the economic crisis.

Bharati Mukherjee has a complex structure yet simple concept. She understands the significance of language and communicating ideas with human psyche and straight forward speech. She has extreme and intense emotions to speak about the story and the protagonist. She has an art of notifying the intense cultural and domestic sensibility. Her protagonists take strange angle of crime to come out of their own cages and to be a free bird. She has often used Indian terms and Indian lexical in her works. She has not restricted the use of American slangs and her language explores different adjectives. Her writing portrays proficiently in

narrating the story with the concrete message and adopting various objectives as well as evocating the sense of existence and cultural concerns and details.

1.2 Mirroring females in A Married Woman and Wife

Manju Kapur always comes with two types of female mirroring, as the woman existing in homely situation and woman existing in outside situation. One can take out the inference that woman is balancing between work and life. *A Married Woman* comes out as a kind of work that is unconventional yet carrying the textual culture trends. The protagonist is dwelling in the conventional and contemporary contextual society. Customs deep rooted with the traditional system, Indianness and equality quotients going hand in hand. Astha is a married woman who is depicted as an idol of sacrifice and adjustment which makes her favorite in her family but diminishing her own status. She from her childhood is brought up in the conventional environment.

The girl is blossoming now. When the fruit is ripe it must be picked. Later she might get into the wrong company and we will be left wringing our hands, if she marries at this age, she will have no problem adjusting. We too are not so young that we can afford to wait. (A Married Woman Page 20)

This is a usual attitude of society towards the girl child from her birth and as she grows up, the more focus is given to the match making and marriage of the girl rather than giving importance to her career. Astha's mother thinks in the same direction. As a growing girl she goes through college day's friendship but ended up with marriage to take care of a family. Meeting with Rohan makes her blossom as a woman other than her love but growing her physical needs as well. Education makes her aware, but she cannot get the courage to take up her own decisions. She keeps on looking for a shoulder to hold her.

Where was the man whose arms were waiting to hold her? (A Married Woman Page 15)

Kapur's art of writing about the status of exhausted woman and medicating her emotive wounds through the narrative makes her stand with the great writers of the world. Kapur very brilliantly presents the character of Astha who is taught by her mother to give preference to household work. She feels discriminated due to customs she has to follow, which has only duties on her part but no respect of her ideas and feelings.

Her husband Hemant is a typical person who wishes her to serve at night as his entertainment, and she tries to please her husband after long day work. She before her marriage used to have a very ideal picture of the husband who would take care of her or pamper her but all her dreams gets shattered once she confronts the reality.

I had responsibilities to my parents. I am the only son, and I wanted someone who would fit in with our family life. American women are too demanding. Their men have catered to all their whims and fancies. (A Married Woman Page 40)

Hemant turns out to be the conventional husband who opines that the suitable partner for the marriage is a woman who looks after the parents and family. He never wanted a partner with demanding nature that's why he chooses Astha as a soul mate. Astha's mother is also emerged as a stereotyped female who gives more importance the male child as during Astha's pregnancy she prays that she should be blessed with a male child.

May it be a boy and carry your name forever. A great son of a great father. (A Married Woman Page 56)

Even Astha's Mother in Law becomes the epitome of conventional image of female as during Astha's second pregnancy, pooja was conducted by her to have a boy. Astha finds it strange but understands the aspiration of the society and significance to have a baby boy. She realizes that taking care of husband and raising kids makes her losing her own identity gradually which makes her more pain striking. Her husband treats her as a commodity and looks for other relationship. It breaks her from the core. She signifies her own desires and demand for the recognition which makes Hemant restless.

I need more space.

Hemant drew her close. The whole house is yours, AZ.

I was thinking of something more specific. You know a place to work in peace, spread my stuff about. (A Married Woman, Page 156)

You seem to forget that your place as a decent family woman is in the home, and not on the streets. (A Married Woman, page 172)

Her husband makes her feel neglected and insulted. Her visit to Ayodhya gives her wings to fly and carry a sense of liberation through Mukti Manch. She meets Pipeelika, a Brahmin widowed girl, and a liberated soul who was in love with Aijaz, a Muslim boy who died in accident.

Pipee took her education in Shiksha Kendra. It is considered as a school which emphasized harmony with nature, respect for every form of life, and the all-round development of body and mind. (A Married Woman,

Page 119)

Pipeelika works with the NGO named Ujala run by three women. She is a career oriented woman aspiring to pursue PhD from USA and a student of Delhi School of Economics. After her husband's death she is alone and Astha also longs for a companion in life as a result of which they both establish a bonding with each other. They feel a sense of satisfaction in company of each other but the relationship does not last long as Peeplika wishes to go to USA and Astha doesn't dare to leave her family and kids for Pipeelika. Ashta is left alone to come back home to look after her children and husband. She accepts the life and grows more mature and stronger. In her interview with Nivedita Mukherjee Kapur states about emotional coherence and artistic yet exposed feminist. She has taken up different traits personal, religious and socio-political levels. She presents the character that previously was dependent on others but takes the stride of her emotions in her life. Manju Kapur through the character of Astha has presented her woman fetching up the intense context and giving voice to in house woman.

Bharati Mukhrjee in her works states about the plight of a woman in an unfamiliar atmosphere. Her insecurity, fear and strength to work in odds of varied situation are predictable. Her strong feeling of being American with Indian soul is quite a new perspective. She seems too much impressed by the liberation of woman's soul in western culture. She has taken up the different scenario as racism, alienation, cultural conflicts and discrimination. She has taken up diasporic feeling well. She has created a sky for a woman who comes from the traditional and orthodox set of culture. Her craving for recognition and struggle to create something more native yet foreign is evident in her writings.

The art piece *Wife* was written in 1975 visible of her replicas. The protagonist Dimple Dasgupta migrates from Calcutta to New York. She is treated as expatriate. Her psychological state and traumatic condition are quite evident. She is from the patriarch family where father is supreme, alike would be the husband and could have similarity; and imagination of marriage is the ultimate dream of life. She has a fairy tale about marriage in her thoughts. She always fills herself up with incompleteness due to her physical structure and is abused by her father often. She is more conscious to the societal thoughts and luxuries. She suffers with acute depression and longing to satisfy her psychological needs and emotive state. She wishes to marry a Neurosurgeon and gets married to an Engineer. She has the thinking of getting groomed before marriage by learning cooking, getting dressed up and learning different art forms. She desires her fiancée or would be husband's behavior should be reciprocating like caring and paying attention to her own needs. She is very ambitious and tries to explore all the possibilities of living a luxurious life.

She thought of pre-marital life as a dress rehearsal for actual living". (Wife, Page 3)

Marriage in her imagination is an advertisement of an ideal man and her own aspiration is evident. She longs her husband to be an image like a superman. She herself is surrounded by inferiority and complexes due to her complexion and her parents made her realized about it.

She borrowed a forehead from an aspirin ad, the lips, eye and chin from the body builder and shoulder ad, the stomach and legs from the trouser ad and put the ideal man by herself in a restaurant on a Park Street or by the side of a pool at a five star hotel. He wore blue bathing trunks, there was no ugly black hair on his back and shoulder blades as he leaped first into the pool while she stood on the edge in a scarlet sari with a gold border, behind wraparound sunglasses, and trailed her toes in the water. (Wife, Page23)

She has the desire to enjoy life. She never wishes to stay at home and desires to have the luxuries of life. She never intends to extend her family. She is so desperate that she kills a mouse that she considered pregnant. It shows her internal urge to kill her own fetus. Her husband struggles for a decent life and a proper job. She gets angry with her pregnancy and her utter depression is evident with this act. She kills her own fetus and goes for a self-abortion. She cannot take it and adopts a self-traumatic situation as her defense mechanism. She is the one looking for the escapes and reason for her own deeds. She states about the transformation of anger into satisfaction after killing mouse. When she migrates to USA, she desires to lead an American way of life but her husband is not ready to do so. Even she betrays her husband by maintaining extra marital affair and feels satisfied doing so. She does not even lead a good life but any how tries to satisfy her psychological and physiological desires.

Amit had no idea how close she had come to betraying him completely and not just

paying the price for too much fear and loneliness. He never thought of such things, never thought how hard it was for her to keep quiet and smile though she was falling apart like a very old toy that been played with something quite roughly, by children who claimed to love her. (Wife, Page 211-212)

She develops an obsessive-compulsive disorder and her life becomes miserable. Her trauma reaches at the peak when she uses kitchen knife for killing her husband and stabs him seven times. This act symbolizes her revenge against society, people and rituals she follows throughout the life.

She stabs him seven times, symbolically, in apparent repudiation of the Hindu marriage bond signified by the seven ritual steps taken by the couple at the time of the marriage.

(Mukherjee 213-214)

Conclusion

Mirroring of woman in different set up and different cultures is the main characteristics of Bharati Mukherjee and Manju Kapur. The female characters are rebellious and look for identification. It can be said that their faith in institution like marriage have lost. It is difficult for both the protagonist to continue and tune their lives and identity. Protagonists Astha and Dimple look for respect and a respectable place in the society with quite luxurious life. We can say one thing that they are not able to adopt and understand the family situations and marriage as an institution in Indian set up like the male dominance, neglecting female's identity and getting atrocious towards them. The woman in current scenario is moving ahead, being educated and aware of their rights rather than surrendering submissively which has added the strength to their womanish characters and is displayed by authors with fine detail to understand the real state of the woman in the society. A woman perceives her self as per the image designed by the societal norms, people and family around. But with the bent of time and technology she has tried to make her own image, respect and urging to do something. She uplifted herself from amusement commodity to human being saving and creating her own says, ideologies and satisfying her psychological, emotive, physical needs and existence.

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