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Gender Dynamics in Manju Kapur's Home

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Abstract: Manju Kapur is not an exception to the rule that Indian women novelists are concerned about gender discrimination. She has established herself as one of the most well-known English authors of works on women and their issues. She is speaking out against the patriarchal Indian society's current standards of living for women. Nisha's rebellion, which is the result of gender discrimination, is the subject of her book Home. In her book Home, she introduces the rebellious female lead, Nisha. In addition to fighting against gender discrimination, Nisha also opposes her family's rejection of her real love, Suresh, because he is a boy from a lower caste. Manju Kapur has shown women's struggles with the most significant topics of the day, such as love, sex, and marriage, and her book is filled with various facets of discrimination based on gender, caste, and race. Through her heroes, she has demonstrated the unique qualities of adaptation, compromise, and adjustment. This paper seeks to understand how Nisha, the female lead in Home, rebels against patriarchy and eventually returns to her home—the site of social confinement.

Keywords: Gender Bias, Suffering, Patriarchal Structures, New Identity, Caste



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Manju Kapur is widely regarded as the finest Indian author of her generation to write in English. She is renowned for sharing the inner struggles of a woman who quietly emerges from patriarchy's shadow to examine herself. Like any other significant work of art, her works were not produced in a vacuum; rather, they are the product of the author's efforts, who is acutely aware of her social surroundings and responds to its many facets in an artistic way. Her paintings focus on the immense and sometimes incomprehensible force of family and society, while also offering criticism on the realities faced by women.

Difficult Daughters, A Married Woman, The Immigrant, Home, Custody, and Brothers are among her most well-known books. Her primary focus is on the study of human existence and the human condition; her investigation is an introspective journey.

Globally, gender discrimination has a major effect on both mental and physical health. It can reduce life expectancy, raise rates of illness, and restrict access to treatment. Women do, on average, live longer than males, but during their lives, they are more likely to suffer from illness. This is probably a result of gender inequality and prejudice. Any action that disadvantages or excludes persons due to their gender is considered gender discrimination. It encompasses both planned and inadvertent unfair behaviour.

Gender discrimination can be experienced by anyone who identifies with a gender that their culture views as less important since gender is based on feelings rather than biological traits.

The gender prejudice that Nisha, the book's female protagonist, experiences is depicted in Manju Kapur's *Home*. In the Indian patriarchal joint family of Lala Banwari Lal of Karol Bagh, Delhi, she is a captivated woman.

She is denied social justice and subjected to discrimination as because she is considered as a weaker sex. She uses rebellion to protest the standards of behaviour established by the patriarchy in India's societal structure. She fights for independence and self-identity. The traditional Indian family members deny her justice and discriminate against her based on her gender. Simon De Beauvoir accurately remarks, "humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being," in reference to the prejudice against women in the family (*The Second Sex* 44).

The life of Sona, the oldest daughter-in-law of the Banwarilal family, is the starting point of the book *Home*. Her awful condition is primarily caused by her infertility. After ten years of marriage, she gives birth to a daughter named Nisha. Because she is a manglik, Nisha must endure a lot in the novel from an early age simply because she is a girl. When she exhibits signs of emotional distress as a result of covert sexual abuse by Vicky, one of her cousins in the large joint family, she is sent to Rupa's home at a young age.

The woman's desire is secondary in a shared household. In the home, women are always treated differently than males. Gender inequality occurs even when it comes to children in the household. In addition to being constrained, Nisha's mother prevents her at home when she requests to go out and play like her brother Raju. In addition, Nisha becomes irritated when her mother warns her that if she goes out to play, her complexion will turn black and she would resemble the maid in the home. Nisha angrily enquires about her brother Raju, whose skin tone is already dark, but her mother's reply pertains to the superstitious beliefs of traditional Indian society, which are discriminatory in and of themselves. She appeared to be angry, yet her eyes were dreamy.

Her eyes were dreamy she seemed to have her anger. 'I also want to be the color of Krishna. I am going to play cricket in the sun'. 'Krishna is God. You, you will look like the sweeper woman who comes to our house. You want to look like a kali bhainsi?' (Home, 51)

While the boys played outside, Nisha was forced to sit and play inside the home while her grandma told her stories. If the focus is on gender, the boy child is free to enjoy life, while the girl child is required by tradition to listen to prayers and mantras from their elders at home.

Nisha's fervent desire to continue her education is thought to be a complete waste of time. Instead of studying, Sona's mother advises her to learn how to cook since it will help her in the future. Sona is less interested in Nisha's identity and more focused on her married life. Her daughter's qualifications are unknown to her, but she is aware of the groom's. Gender discrimination is also practiced in the field of education. Men are free to select the level of education they want, while women are not allowed to pursue higher education even if they want to. A woman's desires are not just repressed in the name of her gender. In the book, Nisha experiences discrimination from both the same gender and the other gender. In this sense, Sona's statement, "People are suspicious of brides who are very educated. Too many ideas make it difficult to adjust" (Home, 139)," is really suggestive.

Her later goal in life is to earn a B.A. with honours in English. She is resented for trying to find her place in a society ruled by men while acknowledging the potential of her gifts. "Her family's attitude to college proved sustaining. Higher studies were just a time pass; it was not as though she was going to use her education. Working was out of the question and marriage was around the corner." (Home, 141)

Since Nisha was freed from the confines of her household, her time in college was filled with joy. She chooses to transform herself away from the conventional way of thinking. Despite all the constraints at home, she even cuts her hair. In addition to altering her wardrobe, she also transforms herself in an effort to find love. Nisha transforms her traditional life into a modern one. She starts to represent change in her life in a way. She begins dressing according to her own preferences rather than those of her mother. She developed into a forward-thinking girl in addition to her outward looks. She confronts the male-dominated Indian society head-on and establishes her identity.

The novel tells the story of Nisha, the main character, looking for a place to call home—that is, a place to stay safe and secure. In order to break free from the male-dominated Indian society and institution of marriage, she rebels. She makes every effort to get the desired outcomes. Her romantic relationship with Suresh, a boy from a lower caste, is an illustration of how she fully comprehends the concept of modern marriage. Nisha tossed her head "I am not a fool" she announced as she thought of the love that had driven her own parents to marry, of all the films she had seen, with, myriad combinations of unequal background between boy and girl: rich-poor, Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Christian, high class- low class, educated-uneducated. Love was the bridge over the great divide. Personal worth was all. The pure mind and the feelings of the heart (Home, 148). Nisha must rebel against the traditional Lal Banwarilal Family of Karol Bagh because of her grievances, annoyances, and disappointments. She wants everything to be transparent. After eleven years, Nisha goes back to her own house. She undoubtedly enjoys some freedom in college, but she must pay for it by ending her romance with Suresh, a boy from a lower caste.

Her whole outdoor movement is prohibited, and her activities are closely monitored, giving the impression that she is confined to her house. Her quest for freedom begins. Her goal is to accomplish something important. "Why should I sit at home every day waiting for proposals?" she laments. She wishes to enrol in a course on clothes design. She aspires to financial independence. It is the first step toward her empowerment.

She marries Arvind, the second groom, when her future is chosen. For Nisha, the marriage was a necessity rather than a result of love or personal desire. Ten months into her marriage to Arvind, she gives birth to twins. Gender prejudice is also apparent when it comes to marriage. If a woman is Manglik, she must fast and pray in order to find a suitable husband, but if a guy is Manglik by birth, it is just considered a birth symbol. This also applies to Nisha. In her family, she received the same treatment.

In addition to losing her position as a decision-maker and entrepreneur, she also loses her financial independence and her own company after the marriage. Because she is the family's daughter-in-law, she is only given home chores and is not permitted to operate her own business. Even though Nisha did her best to battle for her own identity and live her life as a wife, mother, and daughter-in-law, she ultimately gives up all of her goals for the sake of family harmony.

The author has the colourful transformation of Nisha, as 'a new woman'. Nisha is the ideal example of every quality that makes a lady modern or post-modern. Her unwavering resolve to forge her own identity and follow her daring career allows her to live a financially independent existence. Nisha has the highest level of self-assurance, pragmatism, and stoicism. Nisha thus exemplifies each of these qualities in spades. Even from Nisha's early years, Manju Kapur skillfully crafts intricate events in her life, allowing her to escape the maze-like environment until she demonstrates her abilities as a transformed lady.

Kapur has captured the truth in her fictional story with the intention of altering Indian perceptions. She detailed the horrors that her female protagonists endure, which ultimately lead to their demise. Manju Kapur's book shows how women's stereotypes are evolving from conventional depictions of strong, selfless women to confident, ambitious women who raise awareness of their needs and give themselves a platform.

Manju Kapur has been successful in exposing the prejudice that permeates traditional Indian society. Through the female lead in the book *Home*, she vehemently condemns society for treating women unfairly and labeling them as being of an inferior sex. The book tells the story of a lady being discriminated against because of her gender, caste, and race.

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