



# Manju Kapur's Voice for the Second Sex of Society

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## ABSTRACT

Manju Kapur is a renowned post-colonial writer. Her novels signify the dominant societal functions, the day to day problems of common people, and the masculine clutches against women in general. She has written six novels and the core neutral of her novels is to throw light on the difficulties of Indian women. Her novels are majorly compact with the Indian society that has a very old untouched history. It is obviously appreciated in the novels of Manju Kapur that she efforts to mirror the lives of Indian women as they actually are. Feminism materializes as a notion based on the critical self-examination of a man's absolute sovereignty and coercion towards the woman. Gender difference in the vault of a structural disparity between men and women where women are subject to suffer. For feminists, a text is a battlefield that deals with power relations between the two genders. Manju Kapur practices text for showcasing the social imbalances against women. Her novels focus on enormous issues like sexual abuse, sterility, sexual dysfunction, and portion, and so on. She has confined down the novel describing the mental representation of the difficulties through well-spoken and remarkable elucidations.

**Key Words:** masculine, obviously, materializes, sovereignty, dysfunction.

## INTRODUCTION

Indian English literature had women writers who concentrated on a man's world where the presence of a woman was only incidental. There were writers who selected women protagonists. But their representation was to compare with the real-life woman. The travail wife, widow, mother were the only images found in fiction. Outdated and social perspective dominated this story. All the women novelists write from their personal experiences almost all of them end up in one or other form of feminism. Some of them provide us their lifestyle in fiction and all uniqueness with their female characters. Manju Kapur's writing mirrors the experience of a woman in a factual world. She writes about personal experiences complications spaces and

identity crises. She composes what today's women can relate to easily and see her novels as of their own life. She contracts with the traditional and modernist ethos, women trying to find their identity. Her women characters Virmati and Astha argue for the values like freedom of thought and expression, liberty from oppression, and marginalization. The search for control over one's destiny constitutes the key theme of the novel and refers to the Independence aspired to and obtained by a nation as well as by a woman residing in the same nation at the same time.

## SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Amritsar into an austere Punjabi family, who did not wish to live her mother's life and went to study in Lahore rejecting the confinement of her mother's world which revolved around domesticity, marriage, and childbearing. Virmatis's history is reconstructed in retrospect by her daughter Ida who undertakes a journey to know her mother's past. Although her mother constantly reminded her that „it is the duty of every girl to get married, Virmati's dreams were influenced by her cousin sister Shakuntala who was a rebel and a liberated woman in her own regard. Virmati's mother Kasturi was brought up upon the conventional principles of a patriarchal society where the marriage was the ultimate destiny of a girl's life and marriage implied that a girl had to work tirelessly to please her in-laws. During Kasturi's formal schooling it was never forgotten that marriage was her destiny. After she graduated, her education continued at home. Her mother tried to ensure her future happiness by the impeccable nature of her daughter's qualifications. She was going to please her in-laws.

Commenting on her parental expectations, Virmati remarked, „They want nothing from me but an agreement to marry. (Kapur, 100) The women were compelled to think of nothing else and it seemed to Virmati that her family could talk of nothing but her wedding. They had no knowledge about her inner life and her mental turmoil but unlike other repressive patriarchal families, her father was more liberated in his outlook and thinking. She refused to accept the groom chosen by her family and attempted suicide. Her sister was married off to the groom instead of her. Virmati expressed her desire to pursue higher studies and follow the lines of her cousin Shakuntala. For Virmati, education signified an escape from the reproaches of her family and freedom from her mother's control. Virmati and Shakuntala, the so-called „difficult daughters" of the family, represent the evolving consciousness of the modern Indian woman of the forties. But unlike Shakuntala, Virmati was not serious about securing education and professional independence for her own sake. She sought it as a respite to escape from the pressures of the illicit love relationship she had entered into with her married professor. When she informed her mother that she would like to go to Lahore to pursue further education, Kasturi reproached her daughter „When I was your age, girls only left their house when they married. And beyond a certain age. (Kapur, 111).

Kasturi felt that Virmati had been sent to her as a punishment that she had to bear for life. She castigated her daughter for nurturing dreams which were unconventional and improper for a girl to cherish. She reminded her how „a woman without her own home and family is a woman without moorings, and

implored her to settle down into domestic life like other girls of her age did. (Kapur, p 111) Virmati rebelled against her mother's expectations and left for Lahore. Although she said to the world that she left to study in Lahore, yet in reality, it was an attempt to find a respite from the professor. In an attempt to forget the man who had never acknowledged or recognized their relationship she wanted to explore life beyond the mundane domestic sphere which no woman in the family except her cousin Shakuntala had access to. Shakuntala had described her liberated lifestyle in Lahore to her cousin, „We travel, entertain ourselves in the evenings; follow each other's work, read papers, attend seminars." The words enthralled and inspired Virmati, she blurted out in excitement, „I want to be like you Behnji..."Virmati desperately sought an escape from her meaningless life and thought that pursuit of higher education might enable her to do so. She coveted an independent life like that of Shakuntala. Despite her desperation to forget the professor she helplessly failed and became more entangled with him. Being away from her home, and moral control exercised by her mother, she succumbed to his passionate demands.

The novel opens with the frank declaration of the narrator, Virmati's daughter Ida, a childless divorcee, who undertakes a journey to know her mother's history, „the one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother." (Kapur 1) the name Ida implies a new state of consciousness, a fresh beginning. (Prasad 163) Through Ida's conscious decision to be different from her mother we are introduced to the question of defiance and generation gap. Every new generation seeks to defy its predecessor, and fight against the anxiety of influence, Virmati challenged Kasturi's principles, Ida could not accept Virmati's. Although Virmati's case may be seen as representative up to a point yet she could not live up to it completely. It is true that she represents the spirit of "New Woman".

## **INDIANESS IN MANJUKUPUR**

India with her assertion of individuality, and yearning for education but she fails to show her strength of mind in love. She was caught in the whirlpool of misplaced passion towards the Oxford returned Professor who already had a wife. Virmati was burdened with family duties from childhood because of her mother's incessant pregnancies and had a repressed craving for love and affection. Professor Harish had filled her emptiness with love and she helplessly fell in love with him. Despite his education and understanding, Harish lacked the courage and ability to support Virmati for despite the fact that he could not love his illiterate wife, yet he could not leave her. Virmati too was aware of the hopelessness of the illicit love affair. She reproached him with harsh words when she heard the news of his wife's pregnancy as well as his simultaneous confession of love for her, "You think you can do what you like so long as you go on saying you love". Her decision to go to Lahore was prompted by the desire to forget him. But Virmati failed in her mission. She succumbed to the professor's implorations and passions in her loneliness during her stay at Lahore and helplessly yielded to the temptations of the body.

Consequently, she realized that she had become pregnant and was left with no other alternative but to go in for an abortion. She knew that the professor would not render any support to her in her hours of crisis and left with no other alternative she decided to take the action to save her family from shame. She regretted the fact that she who had come to Lahore for expanding her mental horizons had done nothing but ended up getting more and more helplessly involved in a useless and meaningless love relationship that had given her nothing but pain. She wanted to do „something meaningful" in her life like her roommate Swarnalatha, who was a freedom activist, but she failed to transcend her underlying need for love and emotional dependence. (Malik 135) Kapur's novel shows Virmati vacillating between the demands of her heart and her yearning to be a part of the political and intellectual movements of her time. She was moved by Swarnalatha's words, who professed, Marriage is not the only thing in life Viru. The war, the Satyagraha movement because of all these things women are coming out of their houses talking jobs fighting, going to jail.

## CONCLUSION

By reading Manju Kapur's writings one can understand how she raises her voice for voiceless womenfolk who are grappling for their liberty in the world in general and in India in particular. She goes to the extent of verbal fighting in the form of her characters who outburst themselves.

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