



CROSS CULTURAL ISSUES PORTRAYED IN MANJU KAPUR'S THE IMMIGRANT

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The present paper deals with the cross cultural issues portrayed through Manju Kapur's novel *The Immigrant*. The paper initially defines the cultural identity crisis and its usage in this globalized era. It shows how migration causes people to struggle in adapting various cultures. There comes an instance when one has to search for their identity when in a cross-culture environment. It also defines how the protagonist struggles for creating her own identity. Culture and tradition has been followed by a group of people since long years ago. Indian novels consists the overview of cultural anarchy which was strictly followed by the Indian society. Culture is a social group in which one lives and this group determines the role of individual which is the root of identity. Cultural identity is shaped by a complex set of factors which are associated with the process of evolution and beliefs of people. *The Immigrant* focus on how cultural issues affect people which makes them to search for their own identity. She explores the cultural conflicts arise even between the tradition and modernity. Her women protagonists are strive hard to secure their freedom and fight for the traditional limitation which was enforced upon them. Her feminine protagonists are highly educated which leads them to have a keen look about their identity and empowerment which was refused by the family as well as the society. They struggle between the cultural identity and patriarchal society. Dr. Shaleem Kumar Singh writes,

Manju Kapur has successfully portrayed the conflict of tradition and modernity in her characters. The specialty is that her female characters are only involved in clash against male dominated traditional world but they have also suffered this conflict in the form of generation gap. (37)

Kapur projects have taken a deep insight into woman's inner turmoil to find a place, an identity and individuality of her own in society. For centuries, women are always dominated by patriarchal world. Even though Literature and art - and scriptures too – consider women as a meek and docile creature. One who appears to be against this ideological of a framework of a feminine is considered as immoral.

The protagonist Nina, an educated middle class girl expounds her rebellious ideas against this male-dominated society and tries to gain her identity. She experiences a journey to her inner self. Dr. Ashok Kumar says right:

A major preoccupation in recent Indian women's writing has been a delineation of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships. In a culture where individualism and protest have often remained alien ideas and marital bliss and the women's role at home is a central focus, it is interesting to see the emergence of not just an essential Indian sensibility but an expression of cultural displacement. Manju Kapur has joined the growing number of women writers from India on whom the image of the suffering but stoic woman eventually breaking traditional boundaries has had a significant impact. (48)

The Immigrant focus the theme of alienation and disconnection of Indian culture in the context of globalization with the bird's eye view and twist of East and West culture. Her female protagonist Nina struggles to secure her identity and found in the clash between the two cultures in the novel. Nina as an English teacher of Miranda House, New Delhi lives with her widowed Indian traditional bound mother. When the story begins Nina celebrate her thirtieth birthday and getting into the trouble of being unmarried even in her thirty. According to the Indian tradition the girl's marriage is arranged by her family. Similarly, Nina's mother too looking forward a suitable soul mate to marry Nina. Simone de Beauvoir also describes the institution of marriage,

Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to woman by society. It is still true that most women are married, or have been or plan to be, or suffer from not being. The celibate woman is to be explained

and defined with reference to marriage whether she is frustrated, rebellious or even indifferent in regard to that institution. (445)

When a marriage proposal comes for Nina from NRI Ananda, a dentist by profession in Canada, her mother's happiness knew no bounds. After their marriage Nina suppose to goes to Canada with Ananda and she faces a lot of controversy to cope with the western modern culture because she had grown up in a traditional bound Indian family where as western culture is completely differ from that. There arises a cultural conflict for not only Nina but for Ananda too. They begin with the traditional way of living in India where as they found an adjustment life in Canada.

Nina's dream about an arranged marriage eventually came true and a unquenchable thirst for identity started between the married couple Nina and Ananda. Through the novel, Kapur portrays the cultural conflicts occur in the life of immigrants. Nina's life is divided into two parts. The first half dealt with the reputed Indian values, culture and identity and the second half is about Nina's studies in post graduate at the local university which paves way for her to finds her own identity and self realization in the alienated culture in Canada. Her life in Canada seems to be a big ordeal for her to mingle with the westerners and survive in the modernized country.

Ananda is a successful person in his professional level and also have good rapport with his friends and colleagues, but he too is captivated by the cultural conflict which is focused on his sense of sexual inadequacy. He fails to develop a good relationship with western woman. Christopher Lasch points that "Identity refers both to persons and to things. Both have lost their solidity in modern society, their definiteness and continuity" (32).

Nina was identified as a lecturer before her marriage in India. But in Canada she is identified as Nina Sharma and not by her individuality. The cultural conflict makes her to crave for her ideology. Apart from the migration issues, the couple's married life does not have a smooth going one. In general Indians are bound to respect their valuable morals and culture but when they migrated to a foreign culture they tend to change their attitude according to the western culture. Nina felt alienated and disengaged from the Indian culture and crave for her identity. As Kapur writes,

At present all she is, is a wife and a wife is alone for many hours. There will come a day when even books are powerless to distract. When the house and its convenience can no longer completely charm and compensate. Then she realize she is an immigrant for life. (122)

Nina goes for a job interview at the New Brunswick's university, to secure her identity and it helps her to come across the cultural alienation which makes her to feel inferior in the metropolitan city. She starts to wear a jeans and salwar kameez in order to mingle with the people who lived in Canada. She felt that she lost her valuable Indian culture there. She faces a lot of difficulties to adapt herself in the new atmosphere. When changing her life style she felt that she lost her self respect. She remembered that before marriage in India she was identified as a good lecturer where as in the modern culture she lost her identity. She felt that, "I am wrong color, I came from the wrong place. Of all the passengers the only are not allowed to sail through immigration, made to feel like an illegal alien" (108).

The quest of identity for Nina continues till the end of the story. At last she becomes a new woman adapting a new western culture, because she felt that the cultural norms are responsible for the changes in a person's reality. So she is ready to change her personality in order to cope with the new culture because she faces an encumbrance of getting identity. She thought without changing her personality, she could not live in the developed country. She unintentionally follows this cultural norm and tends to give up her own cultures. Like some other immigrants Nina too recoil from the cultural conflict and craves for her identity in the western culture.

The Indian immigrants face the identity issues in the alienated cultures, traditions, values and attitudes. The mixture of cultural values makes the people to ends up with alienated when they suffer from the cultural conflicts like Ananda and Nina. Kapur successfully displays the quest for identity and culture issues in her novel *The Immigrant*.

Reference:

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