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**PLETHORA OF FAMILIAL AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN MANJU
KAPUR'S HOME**

The institution of family is considered essential for the existence of society. Family serves as a shock absorber in the times of crisis and stress. Benefits of family centered interventions are being recognized more than ever before. Leo Tolstoy has rightly said in *Anna Karenina*: '*Happy families are all alike: every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.*' Family, whether happy or unhappy, is a vital institution. It is the primary social unit in any community; an individual's opening into wider social network. It provides nourishment to the individual and sets the condition of growth. Confronted with the individual's desire for independence and growth, the family may be seen as a closed door or an open door, a prison or a gateway. Family is the major factor of survival, health, education, development and protection among children. It is a link between continuity and change, a source of nurturance, emotional bonding and socialization. It

has the major potential to provide stability and support. On the other hand, it can also precipitate conflicts and generate stress amongst the family members. Interference of elders may not be appreciated by the younger generation who want to live life on their terms and conditions. Today's generation loves its privacy and they are not ready to compromise it at any cost. In joint families, people of different age groups, with different tastes, live together and this, sometimes, can create frictions. In large families, every individual delivers something in the process of bringing up a child which is lacked in nuclear families. In nuclear families, this drawback prevents a child in becoming a well-rounded individual. In joint families, a child understands the quality of sharing which is found missing in kids of nuclear families. When the parents in a small family grow old and require help, they may not have somebody around to take care of them.

In India, family is the backbone of every community and this institution has survived through ages. As the custodian of tradition and memory, the family fulfills an important function of transmitting and mediating memories to preceding generations and the community. Rituals, customs, spirituality, morality and religion, all have their place within the family structure, forming family fictions of unique and communal nature. Here, families adhere to patriarchal ideology and father is always the head of the family. Kinship ties are of utmost importance for families. Indian family is always considered strong, stable, close, resilient and enduring.

Home by Manju Kapur could have been her first novel but she focused more on *Difficult Daughters* and it got published first. *Home* is not about her personal analysis but on her intellectual thinking based on her academic experience. She takes writing as a muscle which needs to be activated on time. Almost all her books deal with generations of same family. She prefers this set, may be, to show the flux in the characters of each generations. She wants to extend the thought that all the generations are the same and make same mistakes again and again. She tries to project the roots and wings of each family, setting the novel in family background. In an interview with Jai Arjun, Manju Kapur says:

“Literature by women about families, always has these larger considerations, with years of studying texts, it becomes almost second nature to look beneath the surface, at social and economic forces, gender relationships and how they are played out, in an arena that, in my

writings happens to be the arena home. But the all sort of things happening outside do affect what is happening inside home”

Home, shows the choking closeness and destructive limitations of Indian family values. In this novel, Kapur portrays a family of three generations living under one roof. It has altruistic elders, a mutual support system and an intimacy that makes joint family a place for caring, sharing and pleasure. But *Home* does not dwell much upon this aspect rather focusses on tensions and rivalries for finding your own space, escaping the shadow of others and live your life on your own terms. The world of joint families is not the world of larger happy family of films. The home in the novel is that of Lala Banwari Lal, an old patriarch, who believes in the thought of joint family. Anupama Chowdhury elaborates that *Home* reveals a disturbing home truth that joint families can destroy and preserve our maturity, individuality and mental progress. Having two sons, Yashpal and Pyarelal, Lala Banwari Lal, runs business of saris in Karol Bagh. He has one daughter named Sunita, who dies very early, leaving her son. Her husband sends their son to his maternal house of Lala Banwari Lal. The novel focusses on lives of two sisters; elder one Sona, beautiful and charming; younger Rupa, merely plain. Banwari Lal’s elder son Yashpal is so fascinated by Sona’s beauty that he asks his parents to take proposal of his marriage at her place. Things work out and she gets married to Yashpal. Traditions and customs of home are challenged at the very outset of the novel. Yashpal’s love marriage with Sona is against the laws of traditionalism. Younger sister Rupa gets married to Junior Government Officer. In the beginning, the story revolves around both the sisters, each one considering luckier to her. Rupa lives in a nuclear family while Sona has a large joint family. Rupa and her husband remain childless throughout the novel. They have a problematic tenant, who refuses to pay rent on time. Rupa is considered lucky by Sona as she is not subjected to bear taunts of her in laws for not having child. Sona, even after two years of marriage, is unable to conceive. Her mother in law comments her occasionally:

“What can you know of a mother’s feelings? All you do is enjoying life, no sorrows, only a husband to dance around you.” (Home: 18)

Yashpal’s younger brother gets married to Sushila. Being an arranged marriage, unlike Sona, their marriage is well appreciated by everyone. Sushila is well respected in her in laws family

due to rich dowry she has brought in the form of scooter, fridge, double bed, cooler, sofa etc. The newly married couple starts living upstairs where Sona wanted to shift. Like a typical Indian joint family, all the family members take meal together because they believe '*separate kitchens lead to a sense of mine and yours, dissatisfaction, emotional division and an eventual parting of ways.*' (Home: 12) After years of prayers, Sona is blessed with a girl and a boy. Her mother in laws feels '*now I can die in peace.*' (Home: 18)

Kapur has described Sona's daughter Nisha's growing up years in a heart rendering manner. In her childhood, she is sexually abused by her cousin Vicky and this forces her to think that *she has something dirty* (Home: 59). Nisha's education at her aunt Rupa's house is properly taken care by her uncle. Her stay with them conditions her mind. She wants to live her life not like her mother but like her aunt. In college, she falls in love with Suresh but is always overshadowed by the patriarchal set up of her house. When her family comes to know about her love affair, she is not allowed to go out of the house. Her empowerment, for opening boutique is also not liked by her family members. Her desire to work outside her home is not approved as her family believes that a girl's Karam- Bhoomi is her home. In her interview with J. Dadyburjor Farhad, Manju Kapur asserts that her novel is based on real facts:

"I teach in all girls' college (Miranda House Delhi) and Home was first conceived to the home situations of some of my students who come from conservative backgrounds."

Nisha's marriage is fixed with Arwind and her *Nisha's Creation* boutique is taken over by her sister – in-law Pooja. Despite her hard work for self-fulfillment, all her efforts go into drain. She is alienated, disintegrated and discriminated in her own family. She builds herself as a successful designer but is enslaved within her family responsibilities. Her emancipation for her individuality and identity becomes useless as she finds her peace in her own home. *Home*, even being an open ended postmodernist literary text, leaves plethora of questions in reader's mind. How could Nisha sacrifice her career so easily? What happens to her aspirations? Is home real place for self-fulfillment? Isn't this a retrograde step for a modern woman like Nisha? Readers would have appreciated if she could have balance her personal and professional life rather than sacrificing her business enterprise in pursuit of home and hearth. Through her character, Manju

Kapur carries forwards the picture of our society and portrays the image of a woman as a subjugated being, as a taken for granted aspect.

Home like other novels by Manju Kapur, is dominated by women. The novel does not portray any male character with great significance. Men in the family are carriers to work outside while their wives take the responsibilities of their home. Elder son of the family is portrayed as an affectionate and sympathetic character. To maintain the harmony of the house, he executes his household responsibility in a decent way. He is possessed with a human heart and is very affectionate towards his nephew Vicky, son of his deceased sister and asks his wife to adopt him. *'The boy is orphaned. He needs a mother's special attention. Let he be your child.'* (*Home*: 22). But Vicky, on the other hand is a black sheep. He does not acknowledge the love and affection showered on him by his uncle. Manju Kapur has portrayed him with a bitter hand. His ingratitude and selfish nature crosses the limits when he rapes his innocent cousin Nisha and asks her to masturbate him. He commits this bestial act not once or twice. but repeatedly and threatens his cousin not to disclose this incident to anybody in the family. He hardly understands that these types of his actions can destroy a girl, both psychologically, emotionally and physically as well. In our society, what is pleasure to man can be a sin to woman, what is desire for one can be a disgrace for other.

In spite of urbanization in contemporary Indian society, role of family is always central in the life of an individual. Family structure is conceptualized as the configuration of role, power, status and relationships in the family which depends upon family's socio economic background, family patterns, extent of exposure. Traditions and conventions go long way in Manju Kapur's *Home*. Women take the charge of being custodian of family and prestige. This novel portrays the evolution of women in the midst of repressive patriarchal structure of Indian Society. The novel deals with the locus of its inhabitants, loss of living space of home. It invites critical rethinking of the nature and existence of home. The sanctity of home is contaminated by the inmates of the house who are supposed to guard and protect it. By evaluating Nisha's character, we can say that with new generation, old filial ties and traditional values are eroded away. Unlike other women characters of the novel that are homebound and passive, Nisha wants to live her life on her own terms, being a financial independent woman. Yashpal and Pyarelal's sons dismantle the old

home and build a new one. It shows a sense of materialistic advancement but loss of mental and emotional solace with so many clashes and disagreements. Home is no more a unifying state but an arena of contesting claims.

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