

Fight Against Plight of New Women

Abstract

The paper highlights the plight confronted by the protagonists in the novel "Home". Plight is that situation where a person is in distress and leads to alienation. Nowadays, one of the most exalted term in English literature talks about "New Woman". What adverse situations they come across for attaining their dignity means the "Plight" and how they cope with it means the "Fight" is the major concern of this article with the special reference of a strong-willed girl Nisha, whose struggles defined her character, her way of dealing with adverse circumstances moulds her into an empowered personality in the novel "Home" by Manju Kapur. Nisha in absolute patriarchy fights to attain autonomy and self-identity.

Keywords: Plight, Alienation, New Woman, Patriarchy, Self- Identity and Autonomy.

Introduction

Today's women are left with the dilemma to choose between their loyalty towards established creeds and orthodox mindsets and their intense zeal and fight to break the traditional barriers in achieving their autonomy. This conflict arises the plight of isolation with which today's modern Indian women are confronted with. Their feelings of rootlessness and alienation leads them to severe identity crisis. Actually reality is that Indian women theoretically enjoys every constitutional rights but on the real ground many of them are devoid of economic rights, religious rights, educational rights etc. and still want to chase their fantasies.

Susan Polis Schultz portrays the 'new woman' who is inclined to take the 'road less travelled' for self-actualization. He remarks, "The new woman arises full of confidence, she speaks eloquently, and thinks independently, full of strength. She organizes efficiently and directs proudly". (Inner Journey).¹

Aim of the study

1. To awake women and make them understand sense of awareness towards their rights.
2. To fight for their ability of decision making, power and self- esteem.
3. Quest for autonomy and establish feminine identity.
4. To enhance economic self- independency.
5. To strengthen rebels against the oppressive mechanisms of the male dominated society.

The purpose is to analyze the alienated psyche of women which ensues from the plight they come across as well as to explore their fight against the plight with reference to Sona and Nisha, who represents new-woman, who had courage to conquer it and came out with flying colours.

One is not born, but rather
Becomes a woman. No biological
Psychological or economic fate
Determines that the human
Female present in society; it is
Civilization as a whole that
Produces this creature, intermediate
Between male and eunch, which
Is described as feminine.

..... Simone de Beauvoir²

Manju Kapur is an expert in depicting the psychological trauma mainly the alienation of the modern woman living in the society which seldom allows her to articulate herself. Kapur artistically and interestingly shapes the plot of the novels that her readers can relate to her works more emphatically. About her writing style, she asserts "I have evolved my own style, to suit my subject matter and temperament".³ A state of alienation exists when a person is unable to identify himself with his self or with the society. Some writers characterize this type of alienation from others in



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terms of “ social isolation” which is comprehend in their sense of dislocation from the norms, values and culture of one’s society. As seen in the psyche of Sona and Nisha, especially in case of alienated women, it is found that their sensitivity increases. They start internalizing the stress and the problems and hurts deep inside. They begin to feel helpless about things they cannot really change. Overtime, that sense of helplessness turns into anger, and since there is no place for the anger to melt, it converts into alienation and depression.

Sona and Rupa struggles throughout the domestic intrigues, desire for independence as this applies to Nisha also the protagonist of the novel. It is a story of middle class woman as from the very beginning they are asked and imbibed with this fact that they are girls whose duty is to look after their family members and children after marriage as marriage is their ultimate goal. Lack of proper education and orthodox mindsets compels girls to crush their wishes, fantasies to fulfill the demands of others.

In this respect Anupama Chowdhary remarks:

“Home reveals a disturbing home truth that joins families can both destroy and preserve our maturity, individuality and mental progress.”⁴

Manju kapur skillfully portrays the psyche of Nisha from her infancy to the struggles her fate gave her. When she was a teenager she was sexually abused by his cousin Vicky. She was very disturbed by that incident mentally. Finally she was sent to her mausi’s house because she also had nightmares.

Nisha’s new journey started when she started going college. Pratibha became her best friend. Pratibha as a new woman also wants to create her own identity and an independent existence in the economic field. Like Nisha, she deserves to be mentioned as active, confident and thorough. During the journey Nisha met Suresh, a student of Khalsa College of Engineering whom she started loving, she started skipping classes Nisha got much time to spend with Suresh. The courtship continues into its second winter. She begins to miss even more classes, they saw movies, enjoyed themselves. By the end of second year, in her quest to establish her own identity, she becomes more adventurous in her clothing, alternating her salwar kameez with jeans and T-shirts. In her appearance and temperament, she becomes a liberated girl. Kapur observes that Nisha was “feeling adventurous, daring and modern”.

She was asked to cut her hair by Suresh, that she will look more beautiful. He was forcing her to choose between an outsider and her family, modernity and custom, independence and community. The protagonist of the novel Nisha had to suffer a lot of mental torture as well as physical which she considered sacrifices for love. Her alienated psyche is being revealed pathetically and deeply by kapur. One can notice the dilemma and isolated state of Nisha, neither she can share to anyone nor can oppose Suresh whom she loves and who claims to love her a lot. When finally she gathered some courage to confess their relationship in front of family. Love was the bridge over the great divide. Personal worth was

all. The pure mind and the feelings of the heart. In the result Sona got angry and she scolded her how dare she could do this? Due to her stubbornness they decided to meet Suresh once. And now that guy had changed his mind and refused to marry Nisha reason being he can’t go against their families. In name of loving her Suresh wants “to decide her future on his own”. But Nisha wants to live on equal footing with men, creating her own identity. She refuses to admit any discrimination between men and women. Nisha seems rebellious in her nature which arises from time to time.

When all other things are kept aside, what could be more dreadful for Nisha as Suresh was vanished from her life forever. All these restlessness of mind and body resulted into serious discovery. She explored patches and infections on her skin. Doctors strictly advised her to be away from fire (kitchen and cooking) as her skin grew darker and darker. Here the novelist probe into the psyche of Nisha that how could she deal with that constant trauma her fate gave her. Once being a simple, beautiful, intelligent and innocent Nisha at her school and college, cruel time has transformed her smooth going life into the pangs of betrayal from Suresh who supposed to love her passionately. Nisha felt agonized due to the mental conflicts, suffered alienation from family, the restlessness, the percipient accumulated personal screams and mental revolts of a woman. Her skin problem, which was the result of her stress and depression, proves how much she is broken and shattered when forced to sit at home with the feeling of nothingness. Nisha voices her wish to study Fashion Designing. “I want to study fashion designing. Lots of girls do it, why can’t I?”⁵

Besides being elder sister, her younger brother Raju was getting married first due to the prevailed circumstances of Nisha’s illness. Raju wedded Pooja, she proved selfish and made Sona’s son her slave. Which disturbed the family and for Nisha, hating Pooja was all absorbing occupation. There was no conflict in this emotion, no divided loyalty, no pain besides the pain of hatred. The time passed but she was suffocated staying at home idle. She sits at home but protests and struggles to prove her identity by shouldering her responsibility and by doing something meaningful. Her father explained patiently you must join school. Teaching, though not her cup of tea, is a welcome relief for Nisha, for it would free her for at least a few hours from the house in which she was trapped like a rat in rattrap. Obediently she followed him and went to school for some days but was not satisfied with what she was doing. She wandered this is not she want to do in her life its waste of energy.

So Nisha decided to start her own business of boutique. Here, as a new women Nisha appears to be self-assured and confident. With the help of her father’s initial investment of twenty-five thousand she founded Nisha’s creations. She decides to start a business of Salwar suits. Continuous involvement of her hard work she did well in business and took her work to another level. Nisha’s happiness was increased when her business begin to bloom, it reflected from these lines “Every figure attached to a

Remarking An Analisation

suit proved she was a business woman, making profits and she hugged this precious feeling to her heart". Within a year, Nisha's suits become very popular, bringing good profit and she returns half the loan amount, and invests more money in her business and regains her lost self-confidence.

As a young college girl, she applies her power to work as a business woman. Her quest for identity, as Nayantara Sahgal comments, is a "whole new look at women- not as the property of father, husband or son..."⁶

But being a member of so called conservative society her mother Sona objected "working was alright as a time pass, but if she started making such situations who would take her? Families wanted daughter-in-law, wife and mother, husbands were not looking for business woman".⁷ Then we find Nisha again struggling between her present and future, her business and identity after marriage as her family finally fixed her marriage.

Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest sons of India, quoted that, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved, It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing."⁸

Conclusion

Thus, Nisha proved herself as a real warrior who strongly fought the battles of her life.

Following lines seems better to conclude the paper, that in order to comprehend Nisha's state of mind and moreover the reality of life assimilate it- Life will test you but remember this, when you walk up a mountain your legs get stronger.

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