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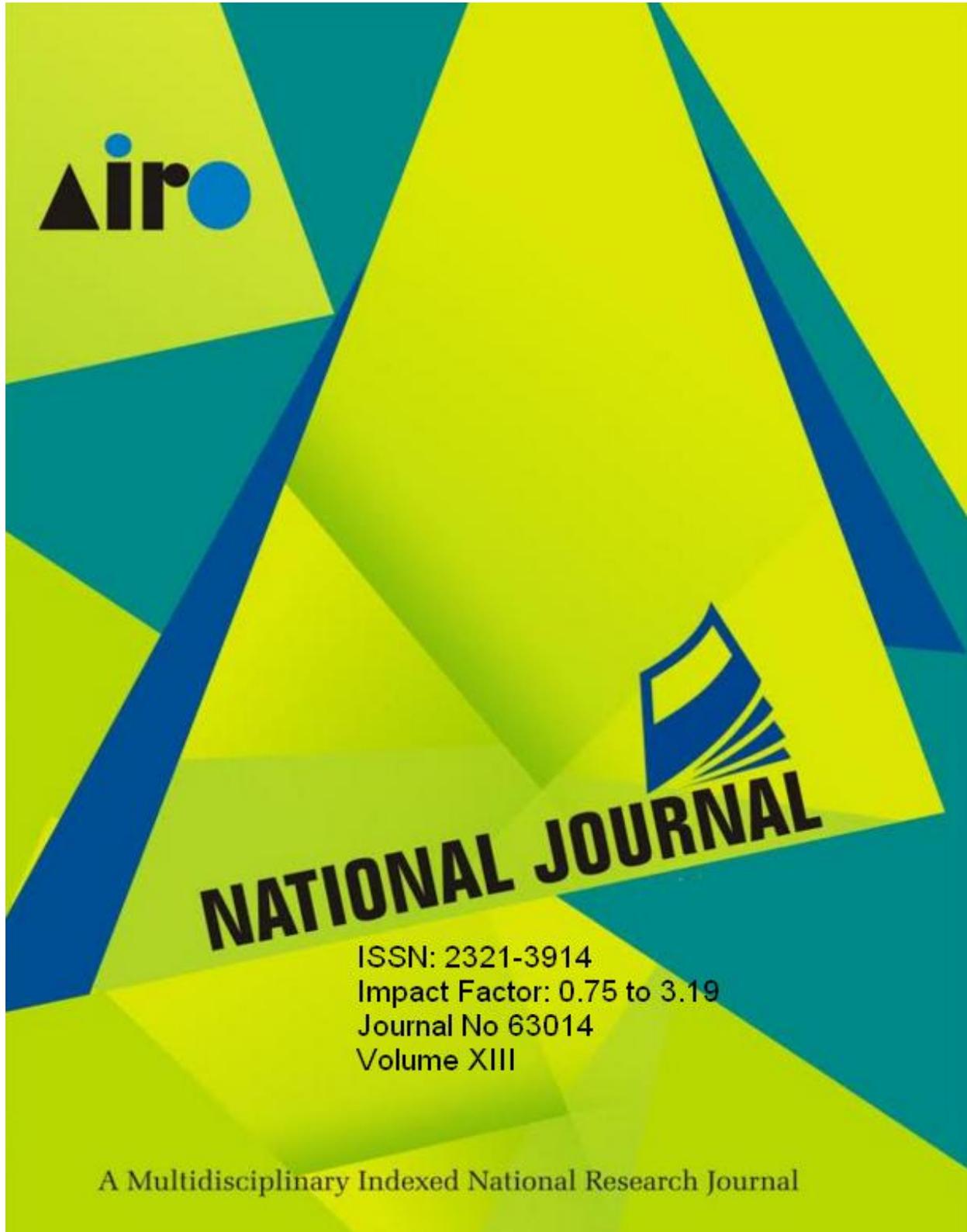
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SHIFTING PATTERNS OF WOMEN IN PATRIARCHY A STUDY OF THE SELECTED NOVEL OF MANJU KAPUR

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation is about the evolution in the portrayal of women in Indian English Novels written by women novelists. The thesis aims to show how the women characters portrayed in the novels the past three decades reflect the changes that are taking place in Indian society. There is a lot of differences in the way women portrayed- their desires, their trauma as presented in the earlier novels are different from their desires and trauma as presented in the later novels. It tries to show the gradual change in the outlook of the character as well as the change in the social outlook through the novels of Manju Kapur

KEYWORDS: *Changing outlook of women's life, violating the pattern, individual conflict,*

INTRODUCTION

the evolution in the portrayal of Women Indian English Novels written by Women Novelists. The thesis aims to show the women characters portrayed in the novels of the past three decades reflect the changes that are taking place in the Indian society. There is a lot of differences in the way women are portrayed –their desires, their trauma as presented in the earlier novels are different from their desires and trauma as presented in the later novels. This research work attempts to see the causes and consequences of this gradual development.

In no country in the world has the worship of the Divine Mother been so deep rooted and ubiquitous as in India. With the rise of feminism across the world, a new generation of Indian feminists has emerged. Women have developed themselves according to the situations and have become advanced in various fields. They have become independent in respect of their reproductive rights. During the course of the nineteenth century, the life style of woman began to change. In reality the concept of the 'Perfect wife' was being redefined. First there were

modifications in the appropriate activities for a female at different stages of her life. Second, the appropriate arena for female education was expanded and third there was a new and growing approval of individualism. As a consequence of changes set in motion by the British Conquest of India, by the end of the nineteenth century there were a number of women who were educated, articulate, mobile and increasingly involved in public activities. Like boys of an earlier generation, some of these girls attended educational institutions, social gatherings unrelated to family affairs and new religious ceremonies. These 'New Woman' as they were called were part of a modernizing movement which sought to modify gender relations in the direction of greater equality between men and women. Many of the women were sent to school and their parents waited until their daughters were older before arranging their marriages or occasionally allowed young married women to continue their education. Older brides became mother at a later age and often played a greater role in child-rearing. Often there were opportunities to exercise some choices of their own and consequently their status was far less derivative than had been true for a previous generation. Indians supported female education because they wanted social and religious reform, or social and financial mobility, or both.

CHANGING SCENARIO

Anita Desai and Manju Kapur have been writing for more than two decades and have

contributed a lot to social awareness about the status of women through their writings. Githa Hariharan and Anita Nair, though belong to the next generation continue the trend along with many other women writers of the age. However, Hariharan's 'Thousand faces of Night' and Anita Nair's 'Ladies Coupe' have caused ripples because they have been bold enough to portray and unconventional yet true to life protagonists. In *Difficult Daughters* one can listen to *Virmati's Voice*. She could not break out, living at the juncture of two oppression colonialism and patriarchy. *Virmati* remains in constant conflict with tradition, is at loggerheads with her parents and is contemptuous towards the institution of marriage which is considered as the be all and end all for a girl's life especially in India. *Virmati* begins to value education and other higher things in life. She realizes that life's horizons are not only wider, but there are things even beyond the horizons that still remain unconquered. *Virmati* is very much impressed by her cousin's education as she looked vibrant and intelligent. She is inspired by her speech and the style of grooming. She is drawn towards her cousin, whose thinking is beyond marriage. Her thrive to be intellectual and obsession towards the knowledge drives her to relationship with Professor Harish. She believes that she and professor are bound together by the band of intellectual compatibility; it is physical lust that overpowers them. She tried to achieve a level of modernity through education and social mobility, but she finds herself

stumbling on traditional values that haunt her efforts to grasp female agency. Her inner conflict is very much the issue of reconciling and tradition. Nadia Ahmed says that “Virmati is trying to achieve a level of modernity through education and social mobility, but she finds herself stumbling on traditional values that haunt her efforts to grasp female agency. Her inner conflict is very much the issue of reconciling and tradition.” (Ahmed 21). Kapur shows another character Swarnalata, whose ideals differ from Virmati. She participates in political activity and makes Virmati to regret for she is not like those two women who fight for the nation. Virmati always felt uncomfortable as she always did when swarna started talking about the many things she was involved in. She is a national activist and participated in speeches, Anti-Pakistan conference, the Arya Bhasha sammelan, the Urdu conference, the India History conference, the Punjab Azad Christian conference, the All India Sikh league etc. Virmati accompanied Swarna for the conference even with her worst health condition, when she felt weak swarna gave her courage. Virmati came across women like Mohini Datta, Sita Rallia, Mary Singh, Mrs Leela Mehta who were involved in the National movement. They all appeared so remote from her. She begins to contemplate.

“I am not like these women. They are using their minds organizing, participating in conference, politically active, while my time is being spent in love, but then how come I have never have a moment for anything

else? Swarna does. And she even has a ‘friend’ who lives in the city.”

And as these newly awakened women carried out research projects, wrote and spoke about the problems and attempted to institute new programs, they too faced challenges. Their own institutions and families were less supportive than expected and recipients of this attention were always grateful even then they echoed for the nation and fought for the revolution, participated in the organizations and conferences and they remain clear headed about their decision and what needed to be done. Education made them articulate for their freedom and overwhelmingly leads them to participate for the nation’s freedom. Their deviant behaviour has become acceptable due to their knowledge and redefined them. Kapur speaks about another sort of women Kasturi and Ganga, where Kasturi’s education made her enter into a decent family whereas Ganga’s ignorance of not being educated made her to share the life with Virmati. Kasturi and Ganga, remain within the conventions designed by numerous cultural traditions. There are vivid portrayals of the changing scenes in *Difficult Daughter*. The reasons for educating a girl may be to get a bridegroom but men are prepared to send them to school are no more interested in child marriages.

Manju Kapur shows Kasturi’s Virmati’s mother who got education through Arya Samaj only to enter into the decent family, which made her marriage whereas Ganga

uneducated Harish's wife lost her life due to her state and Virmati in search of education and intelligent fell into the life where she finally desolate of her own state. Finally, she achieved intelligence through her education and freedom through her Job. Manju Kapur initiated the idea of how woman were meted out of their system through education. When we go to Anita Desai she portrays the subtle way of how women are entrapped, irrespective of the culture and enveloping milieu, by oppressive bonds exercised by their own parents in "Fasting Feasting." She mentions that how freedom remains as an abstract idea and identity an elusive concept, that's how when sudden deluge of ideas hit them and they order their eldest daughter, Uma to carry them out without delay. Uma is suppressed, repressed and imprisoned at home and she was trapped with the responsibility in taking care of her brother. She can't even liberate herself through education as she is the poor performer. Kapur has illustrated the changes incurred in the daughters due to education, whereas Anita Desai shows the concept of education as the way to get into marriage and here too woman succumbs, fights and is over ruled by the environment they belong to. The elder daughter Uma fails and restricted by the parents whereas Aruna the younger daughter over powers through the confidence attained through education and tackles the situation and even protest against her parents to live the life as she wishes. Aruna's life and her problem are different from that of Uma and Anamika. When Anamika and Uma lost their identity to seek

freedom, Aruna achieves it in a different way. Aruna is bright and pretty and exists because of the way she could handle the problems. Desai project Anamika cousin of Uma and Aruna is intelligent and beautiful. Her excellence in education does not provide a happy life. She was brilliant enough to get scholarship for her studies and her parents did not send her abroad instead they kept the scholarship letter as the matter of pride to show it to the bridegroom.

"The scholarship was one of the qualifications they were able to offer when they started searching for a husband for her, and it was what won her a husband who was considered an equal to this prize of the family."

With all these elegances and qualifications, she has been tortured by her in-laws and finally murdered by her mother-in-law. Her education didn't give courage to face the family. Instead she had become submissive in her ways and finally murdered by the family. Desai portrays the two types of women who without education and poised elegance with utter ignorance lost her marriage life and another one with the all these qualities loser her life and burnt to ashes. Desai's portrayal of Aruna differs from Uma and Anamika who wins her life,

"So they were looking for an accomplished bride, a young woman who would talk intelligently to her scientist husband's friends, but who would also be, as all the matrimonial ads in the Sunday papers

demanded, fair, beautiful, home –loving and prepared to adjust.”

After frequent visits, stranger called Mahesh regional manager was accepted as her partner as he fulfilled her mother’s expectations. Her marriage got over and she wished to share feelings with her husband but he was detached and did not participate in her sentiments but alas only telling about himself. Devi gets tired and feels that she has only been listening to his stories and achievement.

“I find I can barely suppress my increasing longing to say, yes we have said enough about your work, your tours, your company. A marriage cannot be forced into suddenly being there, it must grow gradually, like a delicate but promising sapling.”

CONSEQUENCES OF EVOLUTION

Historical circumstances and values in India have caused feminists to develop feminism that differs from Western feminism. In the changing scenario of post colonial Indian Society that observed cross currents of traditional ideals and newly imported ones and Indian women writers were burdened with the task of giving the women characters’ specific roles that would fit in the socio-cultural modes and values of the changed society. The new generation of women emerged, embracing the changed values according to which women have a voice of their own, a voice that had been suppressed for centuries. These women, who have the capacity to make free choice and

need not therefore depend on the choice of the male, are portrayed in the novels of the new generation women novelists. “Breaking off, from the traditional male-dominated works that focused on public subjects and public space.” (Gupta, 19). A change has been taking place, in a culture where individualism and protest have often remained alien ideas, marital bliss and the women’s role at home has been the central focus. In *Difficult Daughters*, the second protagonist of third generation, Ida revolts against the ways and follies of her mother Virmati. She embarks on her search to know her mother’s legacy after she dies.

“The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother. Now she was gone and I started at the fire that rose from her shrivelled body, dry-eyed, leaden, half-dead myself, while my relatives clustered around the pyre and wept.”

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