

# WOMEN AND HER COMPLICATED ENTANGLED DESIRES: COURAGE TO REACH BEYOND THE HORIZON IN MANJU KAPUR'S NOVEL *A MARRIED WOMAN*

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## ABSTRACT

In a world that is fast changing and moving towards development in all aspects, women are still expected to be dormant and soft spoken. In extreme cases they are not even allowed to wear what they prefer nor do the things that they like the most. It is not just the fault in the system of our society rather in the backwardness in our mindset that women are weaker sex and that they are not capable enough to manage themselves. Manju Kapur, a writer par excellence has given in her best to picturizes how women and their dreams are disregarded in an Indian society. The way women are trapped in matrimony and the ways their husbands fail in understanding them. Women equally have dreams and responsibilities to be taken care of and at the same time they deserve some space to cultivate their creativity. Manju Kapur has a parallel turmoil set in the backgrounds of this story, the political unsettlement amidst the Hindu-Muslim regarding a plot of land in the city of Ayodhya. The confusion and struggle are very much evident. This paper clearly depicts women and their basic interests and their darkest desires that shape their lives.

**Key Words:** Women, Suppressed, Inferior, Desires, Dreams.

## ஆய்வுச்சுருக்கம்

எல்லா அம்சங்களிலும் வேகமாக மாறிவரும் மற்றும் வளர்ச்சியை நோக்கி நகரும் உலகில் பெண்கள் இன்னும் செயலற்றவர்களாகவும் மென்மையாகவும் பேசப்படுவார்கள் என்று எதிர்பார்க்கப்படுகிறது. தீவிர நிகழ்வுகளில் அவர்கள் விரும்புவதை அணியவோ அல்லது அவர்கள் விரும்பும் விஷயங்களைச் செய்யவோ கூட அனுமதிக்கப்படுவதில்லை. பெண்கள் பலவீனமான பாலினத்தவர்கள் என்றும் அவர்கள் தங்களை நிர்வகிக்க போதுமான திறன் இல்லை என்பதும் நமது மனநிலையின் பின்தங்கிய நிலையில் இருப்பது நமது சமூகத்தின் அமைப்பில் உள்ள தவறு மட்டுமல்ல; ஓர் இந்திய சமுதாயத்தில் பெண்கள் மற்றும் அவர்களின் கனவுகள் எவ்வாறு புறக்கணிக்கப்படுகின்றன என்பதைச் சித்தரிக்க மஞ்சு கபூர் என்ற எழுத்தாளர் தனது சிறந்த முயற்சியை வழங்கியுள்ளார். பெண்கள் திருமணத்தில் சிக்கிய விதம் மற்றும் கணவர்கள் அவர்களைப் புரிந்து கொள்வதில் தோல்வியுற்ற விதம். பெண்கள் சமமாகக் கவனித்துக் கொள்ள வேண்டிய கனவுகளையும் பொறுப்புகளையும் கொண்டிருக்கிறார்கள் அதே நேரத்தில் அவர்களின் படைப்பாற்றலை வளர்க்க சில இடங்களுக்கு அவர்கள் தகுதியானவர்கள். இந்தக் கதையின் பின்னணியில் மஞ்சு கபூர் ஓர் இணையான கொந்தளிப்பை ஏற்படுத்தியுள்ளார் அயோத்தி நகரத்தில் ஒரு நிலம் தொடர்பாக இந்து-முஸ்லீம்களுக்கு இடையிலான அரசியல் குழப்பம். குழப்பமும் போராட்டமும் மிகவும் தெளிவாகத் தெரிகிறது. இந்தக் கட்டுரை பெண்கள் மற்றும் அவர்களின் அடிப்படை நலன்களையும் அவர்களின் வாழ்க்கையை வடிவமைக்கும் இருண்ட ஆசைகளையும் தெளிவாகச் சித்தரிக்கிறது.

**திறவுச்சொற்கள்:** பெண்கள், அடக்கப்பட்ட, தாழ்ந்த, ஆசைகள், கனவுகள்.

## Introduction

Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

-Proverbs 31:25-26

Women in our society are practically stereotyped to be calm, soft-spoken, submissive, obedient, and receptive. The novel *A Married Women* (2002), is all about how Astha, a middle-class girl in the 1970s Delhi, born and grows into an artistic person and sheds off everything possible to reach her dreams. Manju Kapur, as an acclaimed writer with her feministic visualization sketches the character of her novel with a keen eye towards all the necessary details. Her novels create a tight spot in which all women are stuck like glue in the name of socially adjusting to all norms that draw a line of percussion to their lives.

## Review of Related Literature

Kalasalingam University, International Journal of Research of Education Vol.5 issue 1, January 2017. Feministic analysis of Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* by Hariharan - traces the tribulations in life, set against the background of communal riots and Ram Janma Bhoomi – Babri Masjid. Astha's life from her childhood with various hopes and miseries has made her a rival against men with a staunch tinge of Feministic idea, which led her to deviate her path of female bond with her friend. The author's work may not have been accepted by conservatives but in fact it's the new norm in society.

Protest and Reconciliation in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* – by Ganesan.M.P., Sourashtra College, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India. Devanga Arts College Manas, A Multidisciplinary Research Journal Vol 9, No.1, December 2017 has elaborated on the revolutionary ideas and concepts visualized in the society. Family turmoils especially her dissatisfaction with her husband forces her to have a lesbian living with her friend Pipeelika. Astha found solace and comfort in her living with Pipeelika. There too, fate intervene and Pipeelika leaves abroad for higher studies. Unwillingly Astha returns to her family life and reconciles, which is her own decision. Though she protested for her identity in the male dominated society finally reconciled to her family life.

The Reflection of new woman by S.Deviga Journal of Natural Remedies 21(7), 176,181. The New Woman in Manju Kapur, novels the protagonist avoid being a rubber doll and wants to be independent. Though they want to take family responsibilities they want to wander beyond it. They are strong individuals, bold and outspoken do not want to depend on others for survival. Their education lead them for freedom but in the real sense the new women concept is not real. Though they dare to prove empowered there free spirits are cut and finally adjust to compromise.

## Research Methodology

This Paper advocates the Summative analyses of the characters Astha and her emotional bond friend. It undertakes a thematic approach of how women's suffering make them strong to search for their identity and lead a life of their own trodding a new path.

## Objectives of the Study

This is the Study of Astha, with the following objectives;

- To Analyse complicated Marital Life of Women.
- To Search Beyond the horizon.
- To find their Space.

## Astha's Life

Astha, who grew up with a great zeal towards life and her dreams, was locked under the roof of her own house in the name of marriage. She was a dutiful wife and loved her stranger- husband, Hemant with all her heart. They shared a steamy bed and he was not as bad as she thought in handling her tenderly.

Hemant was as simple a guy with an ordinary mindset and he genuinely liked Astha's paintings. They made love and lived like normal couples and had kids of their own. It was after becoming a mother of two kids she realised that she was capable of doing better than just housekeeping.

### **Marital Struggles**

Hemant let her work as a teacher at a local primary school, and it was during this time of her life she started outgrowing her married life and this started causing crackle. There was visible detachment between the husband and the wife. Making this situation worse Astha joined a theatre troupe which was run by Aijaz, a local political activist. Hemant was completely against all her extrovert activities. He wanted her to just be a dutiful wife and a mother to his children. There were frequent arguments over this issue "you seem to have forgotten that your place as a decent woman is in the house and not in the streets" (168).

### **Astha's Transformation**

She kept over seeing all these situations and one fine day Aijaz is murdered due to his involvement in a controversial case. Astha was deeply hurt by his death and kept weeping for his absence. While all this was causing ransack in her own life, she decided to find her true self through things she loved doing. Astha started writing and painting through which she unveiled her true self and all her pressure. Astha undergoes some transformation at this phase of her life, where she creates poem of her own in the course of self-exploration. Though she finds little space to breathe, she is yet suffocated by pressure that keeps building in every time her Mother-in-law or her husband has something or the other to contribute in her mental-breakdown.

### **New Relationship**

Astha's encounter with Pipeelika Khan, Aijaz's wife, has a serious change in her emotional level. They have an explicitly sexual and emotional relationship. They find comfort in each other and act as a tower of refuge. This doesn't make them lesbians; it's a desire for passion and care that they felt safe to share between them. Through this Manju Kapur, pinpoints that there is no gender restriction to be confirmed when one needs to feel secure and loved. In an interview accentuating "India's woman and the writing process" by

Lisa Lau, Manju Kapur states:

The lesbian relationship in "A Married Woman" grew out of a number of factors. My initial intention in writing the book was to show the strength of female friendship, how often it can be a source of companionship and joy. It is not only marriage that caters to one's emotional needs. Of course, this is a truism, no one relationship can cater to every need, and in India there is a whole supportive network around marriage that can both sustain it and destroy it, depending on the people involved.

To state this as an understatement is an understatement for itself, women no matter how weak they are portrayed they are beyond ones understanding. The character Astha, seemingly a person with heightened senses and ambition and desires beyond one's imagination, could not sought out her emotional quotient. The only sensible reason to that is she was not ready to accept the fact of who she was or declare her own emotional state.

### **Emotional Bond**

Astha risking her marital life for her own emotional clinging that she seeks solace in, something that makes her feel comforted and emotionally in a state of ecstasy is what she finds with Pipeelika. The struggle is real, both from the inside and the outside. While all this swirling around the life of Astha is quite unbearable, the shift in the backdrop is evident. At this very parallel timeline, the political-communal rio

that causes an outburst has the same intensity. The land of Ayodhya causing concern over the Muslim and Hindu brotherhood.

### **Her Inhibition**

Social unrest, political disorder, religious anarchy and beyond all, the pain and suffering of a married woman. The War between what she wants and what she needs to give-up is of a greater intensity while in comparison to riot out there. Astha's life was a backburner for her own preference, while all her husband expected from her was "A willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day and an obedient mouth" (AMW 231) it was hard for Hemant or his mother to understand Astha and her emotional state of mind.

### **Astha's Choice**

Astha had to choose her footing, it was whether being a conventional dutiful wife or explore further in her journey to self-discovery. One would pull her deep into horrid domesticity, and the other into the unknown abyss. To both Astha and Pipeelika, their emotionally- frustrating life came to a still when they had each other to embrace. The two women had a connection that they never felt with their husbands, a bond that fed their starving souls.

### **Astha's Newness**

This is something to be perceived, women feel complete only when their thoughts and action please their inner soul. Women feel satiated only when the soul's hunger is fed, it takes a lot more than pleasing the flesh. Astha's love beyond her own religious boundary, beyond her marital status, beyond her family, beyond the society, beyond the gender was something that touched her in a way no men have ever touched or even the feeling was something that made her feel complete and something dangerously new and addictive.

### **Search of Self**

Both the women in this novel are in search of their own identity to affirm with and they seek comfort in each other's arms beyond the social restrain. Their quest takes them to unknown lands and a journey of self- actualization. Astha completely finds her liking towards painting and by which she creates her own comfort space and so does Pipeelika. In the end it was all about what they created and the solace they so very much earned for amidst the chaos.

### **Conclusion**

This paper was aimed at studying the Identity Search of women in the male dominated world. The author has suggested the women should thrive to their best to equip themselves all those necessary values to find a space for them. The space can be achieved by breaking the barriers laid for women constructively in a new untrodden path.

In general, the followings were the main findings of the study can be summarized as;

1. Women should strive to create identity and fight for their space in a patriarchal world.
2. Barriers to be removed to make strong Women is not against nature.
3. No way- leads to diversion and not to quit definitely, it has another road to destination.
4. Change of tactics of women will lead rights in a rightful way.

It is women's very personal pursue to find and establish what they want; how to gain it is absolutely their individual endeavor.

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