POLARISED 'NISHA' IN MANJU KAPUR'S HOME

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Gender polarization is a concept that what is feminine cannot be masculine and what is masculine cannot be feminine. It is expected of men and women to display stereotypic gender roles. It utilizes the differences between the two groups of male and female to designate particular characteristics to group members of one group and not the other. Sandra Bem describes “the relationship between men and women as a division of social responsibilities. Women are seen suitable for private concerns, such as familial issues, and men as the public representatives, or professional individuals. Women should know just enough about professional business that allows her to empathize with her husband when needed and is denied access to power through other political and professional aspects.” In her book, The Lenses of Gender, Bem mentions that there is still hope for the dismantling of gender polarization. By dissolving the use of gender polarization the distinction between male and female would no longer be the dimension around which culture is organized. She recommended that a social revolution as well as a psychological revolution would need to take place in order to widen the viewpoint of a person’s sex being completely given by nature. Manju Kapur, the radical feminist, truly presents the hidden intricacies of women psyche in her novels. Her protagonists make an effort to dismantle the gender polarization up to a great extent.

Her novel, Home, presents the constant embarrassment of Nisha at the hands of her family, rather she is victim of gender polarization. This novel unfolds the story of a girl who is not having a home of her own. The impact of the grandfather, father, uncles and brothers on Nisha is presented in such a way that she is designated a lower position in the house. The story is narrated in such a finest way and the struggle of Nisha for study, marriage, business and her establishment in the house is revealed. She struggles for herself affirmation in the world in which she is living. Nisha, Sona, Sunita, Sushila and Rupa all are the symbols of women's suffering in Indian context:

"All the suffering in the world was not enough to make that women human. Though grieving, she could still find energy. She talked of love but did she know the meaning of the word?" Pg. 19

To be born as a girl and to be loved in the Indian family is not so easy. When Nisha is born the repeated reference to the son is there:

"And now the wound has opened, continued Rupa, a baby brother will come. It is all in the hands of God. Our house is blessed with the sons do not worry about that, remarked Sushila." Pg 37

Nisha is accepted in the family with hope that she will bring a son after her. Double standards of the family are revealed by Manju Kapur. Nisha is welcomed in the family with all rituals and the ceremony. All the relatives and the friends are invited to look at the baby. The naming ceremony is performed the girl who comes in the house with great pomp and show turns out to be unfortunate:

'The baby's horoscope was cast, the configuration of the planets at the birth made her mangali, This was not good news, mangalis were
horribly difficult to be married off. Unless they found a man with similarly unfortunate stars unhappiness or death was the sure result." Pg 40

Kapur describes Lala Banwari Lal's family who deeply believe in horoscope. After the birth of Nisha there is a death in the family. Sunita, the daughter of Lala Banwari Lal dies and her son Vicky is homeless. Vicky is added as a new member in the family. He brings a misfortune for Nisha as he sexually harassed her and warned her not to tell anybody about it:

"We are not going to tell anybody about this he whispered, holding her. This is our secret." Pg 58

Her present experience with Vicky damages her present and the fairy of the house has to leave her home. She loses love, affection and sympathy for Vicky and in despair avoids her meal. Rupa, her Mausi takes Nisha to her house and for the first time Nisha's plight makes her body, mind and spirit free from the presence of the family demon. Manju Kapur has a deep vision of the family life of Indian society Kapur shows that how within the family the girl is cut deeper inside by the boy of the family:

"But this time Nisha found her in an atmosphere very different from the one she had lived in. As the only child she was the centre of interest, concern and attention.... gradually the girl's bad dreams drew infrequent in their cessation Rupa found the proof that the demon lay in the home-otherwise, would such a small child, willingly leave her mother?" Pg 68

The disorder in Nisha’s life brings relief. She is admitted to a good school of Delhi and after the exile of eleven years Nisha enters Lala Banwari Lal's house. Nisha's mother insists her to learn cooking and fasting and be like goddess Savitri. But Nisha feels that once again she is going to victimize at the hands of her family. She declares her choice of joining college. She enters in DBC as a grown up girl. While coming home from college one day she meets a boy, Suresh who is from KCE and a desperate one. Suresh has develops liking towards Nisha. He takes her to the coffee house. They started spending their hours and ultimately their secret is discovered by the family. Manju Kapur unfolds the truth of the polluted caste system of Indian society. The family is against solemnizing the relationship as Suresh belongs to the lower caste. They are having the unequal backgrounds. Nisha resists by saying:

"I am not a fool, she announced as she thought of the love that has driven her own parents to marry, of all the films she had seen with myriad combination of unequal background between boy and girl: rich-poor, Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Christian, highclass-lowclass, educated-uneducated. Love was the bridge over the great divide." Pg149

Under the pressure of the family Nisha's life takes U-turn. She raises so many questions to her mother regarding her own love marriage. The answer to all her questions comes out to be a ban on her college going. Her home turns out to be a prison for her:

"All day she remained in the house, a prisoner of their words. She was distrusted too much to be allowed to put a foot outside. A padlock was put on the phone, only incoming calls could be received without the key."Pg 201
Manju Kapur has presented Nisha as a marginalized. She eats less, speaks less and notices much. There is no pity on her, neither has she wanted any. She ignores her coming exams. Study is unimportant for her and ultimately after giving a threat to Suresh, the family allows her to see Suresh. Their relationship comes to an end as Suresh takes his foot back from marrying Nisha. In depicting Nisha’s suffering Manju Kapur underscores the dilemma of Nisha’s beliefs.

The behaviour of family is indifferent towards Nisha and they start finding another permanent home for her. As she is mangli and must be married to a mangli boy hence matrimonial advertisement is given in the newspaper. The family fails in finding a suitable boy; therefore Nisha has to rejoin her studies to kill her time. She witnesses so many marriages in the house but where is her’s. Her delay in the marriage is because of her guilt. The itch of the body is the result of what she has done. She has established the relationship with the low born and the result is her tormenting skin. Nisha wants to go to the parlour but how? She hears the sounds of the other girls saying - go home, go home, go home. Discovering that one by one, all settled in the family Nisha feels homeless.

To kill her time Nisha starts her own business as a dress designer. Kapur reveals through Yash Pal’s words that they understand the life of their daughter:

“If she wants to work she should be allowed to, Yash pal said stubbornly.
My first duty is to her not to her future family. Otherwise, the karmas on our head will too much. Too-too much. Pg 297

Nisha's Creations is merely a pass time. No matter how successful is she, as a business-woman? At last, the search for a new home ended with the discovery of a widower. This time, she has no emotions, no curiosity, nothing about the boy. She even not wants to see him. Therefore she says;

"Why does he want to see me?
I don't want to see him. You have chosen, it is enough." Pg 298

The only daughter of the house is getting married because she wants to do anything for her father. This marriage brings relief to the family. With this marriage her Creations get shifted to Pooja's Creations and she is left with her new home and Arvind. She gives twins to Arvind- one girl and one boy. Her duty is over.

Kapur has revealed the life of a girl from upper middle class family whose birth is much awaited. She is a desired baby. She is sexually assaulted by Vicky at an early age. When she wants to marry Suresh, she is not allowed and ultimately she marries a widower of thirty four years. She has no place in her home. Her life is gone. Her business is shifted to someone else and meekly she accepts her non caring husband, Arvind. Manju Kapur has shown her as a polarized woman.

Works cited: