



Available online at www.elixirpublishers.com (Elixir International Journal)

Language and Testing

Elixir Lang. & Testing 90 (2016) 37410-37412

Elixir
ISSN: 2229-712X

Nina's Emergence as a Liberated Woman in Manju Kapur's *the Immigrant*

L.D.Easter Raj Densingh

Department of English, H.H.The Rajah's College, Pudukkottai.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 30 November 2015;

Received in revised form:

28 December 2015;

Accepted: 4 January 2016;

Keywords

Postcolonial feminist criticism,
Marginalizations of women.

ABSTRACT

There are number of postcolonial theorist and critics such as Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, and GayatriChakravortySpivak contributed to postcolonialism and the postcolonial intellectuals has developed a new perspective whereby the conditions of marginality, subalterneity, plurality, mimicry, hybridity are seen as sources of energy and potential change. Many women writers, thinkers and critics have formulated a school of thought that searches for such instances in literature. Feminist literary criticism primarily responds to the way woman is presented in literature. Postcolonial feminist criticism examines how women are represented in colonial and postcolonial literature and challenges assumptions which are made about women in both literature and society. Postcolonial feminists point out the ways in which women continue to be stereotyped and marginalised, ironically sometimes by postcolonial authors who might claim to be challenging a culture of oppression. The main task of the feminist literary critics seems to oppose patriarchal norms which exist in the society. The marginalizations of women, their predicament, struggle for identity, finding their own space, celebrating the female body are the chief subjects of this trend. The protagonists of all the novels of ManjuKapur are seen as women struggling against all odds. ManjuKapur has always tried to depict the picture of the sufferings of women at deeper level in her novels. In her novels, she deals with the problems of women and their struggle to establish an identity. She in particular takes up the cause of the females who are victimized on account of conservative and traditional mind-set of the Indian masses. Most of the protagonists of Kapur are women who assert their rights and raise voice against male chauvinism. Nina is one such character who rebels against the exploitation and oppression to assert her individuality.

© 2016 Elixir All rights reserved.

Introduction

Feminism is a broad socio political movement which advocates women's welfare in society and aims at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights and equal opportunities for women in a male dominated society. It is also an organized movement for women's rights, interests, freedom and equality. It is of the opinion that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men and so it needs struggle to achieve this aim. There should be the political, economic and social equality of sexes in male dominated society. Many women writers, thinkers and critics have formulated a school of thought that searches for such instances in literature. The main task of the feminist literary critics seems to oppose patriarchal norms which exist in the society. The marginalization of women, their predicament, struggle for identity, finding their own space, celebrating the female body is the chief subjects of this trend. ManjuKapur has always tried to depict the picture of the sufferings of women at deeper level in her novels. The protagonists of all the novels of ManjuKapur are seen as women struggling against all odds.

ManjuKapur is a renowned postcolonial women writer who presents the condition of women in a patriarchal society. In her novels, she deals with the problems of women and their struggle to establish an identity. She in particular takes up the cause of the females who are victimized on account of conservative and traditional mind-set of the Indian masses. Most of the protagonists of Kapur are women who assert their rights and raise voice against male chauvinism. Her characters stress the importance of economic independence and they fight against restrictions and social taboos against them. They try to search for an identity to establish their individuality, protest against injustice done to them and raise their voice to uphold their rights. They strongly send the message that they are not ready to accept the patriarchal system in which they have to be submissive and suffer silently. Nina is one such character who rebels against the exploitation and oppression to assert her individuality.

Nina in *The Immigrant* is an English teacher at Miranda House who lives in a single room apartment at Jangpura Extension, Delhi with her widowed mother. The story begins just before Nina's thirtieth birthday and Nina's mother tires to find a suitable bride for her but ends up in vain. When the

Tele:

E-mail addresses: erajenglish@gmail.com

© 2016 Elixir All rights reserved

mother and daughter consult an astrologer regarding the impending marriage, he predicts that the next suitor will get marry Nina and take her abroad after the marriage. Finally Nina is married to a Canada based Indian dentist, Ananda. The mother like all other Indian mothers is now relieved of the burden of her unmarried daughter. Nina after marrying Ananda, reaches Halifax, Canada. She arrives in Canada with an expectation of a happy married life but to her dismay, she finds herself defenseless. She lacks the warmth of passion and eventually walks out of the nuptial bond.

In the beginning Ananda takes care of Nina with respect and affection, and makes sure that she is comfortable when she arrives in Canada. However, as the story unfolds, Ananda tries to dominate her physically and financially and subtle patriarchal side to Ananda emerges as he tries to decide Nina's dress, eating, name, sexual practices, and even her desire to have children. When Nina wants to wear traditional dresses like saris and salwarkhameezes and she believes that her traditional wears help her to relate her identity as an Indian woman. But Ananda asks Nina to stop wearing her saris everywhere as they are too formal. Being a vegetarian when Nina comes to know that Ananda eats meat she is slightly shocked because according to her she feels that Indian culture is represented in the vegetarian food. So she feels betrayed by Ananda but compromises by cooking separately for them. She cooks Canadian cuisine and meat for Ananda and vegetarian meals for her. But Ananda continues to suggest throughout the story that Nina's life would be much more exciting and easy in Canada if she is ready to eat meat. Ananda is happy that to Nina's advantage her name can be Indian as well as western and thus suits well in Canada.

Ananda, being the only earning partner, controls the finances and pays the bills. On one occasion Nina spends three hundred dollars on clothes, western clothes which he encouraged her to buy. However, upon receipt of the bill, he gets very angry at her expenditure. Knowing that Nina has no proper income of her own, he continues to make her feel guilty for spending his money and continues to control her expenses. If a woman does not have any money of her own, it then restricts various other aspects of her life that involve certain expenses. She can thus be confined physically and financially.

Nina is shattered when she comes to know about her husband's sexual problem of premature ejaculation and she feels quite helpless as she could not get pregnant. When Nina suggests if they could see a fertility specialist, after many failed attempts at trying to conceive, he justifies his non-cooperation by stating that it was still too early for them in their marriage and that there was no rush. It is an example of how he controls and dominates her. Ananda wants to decide everything for Nina starting from her dress to her desire to have a child. As a result a gradual rift is born between the couple. Arguments, blame, guilt, indifference and ultimately infidelity create a much different atmosphere within their marriage than that of the beginning.

Nina feels lifeless without a child and isolated without a job. Even though she spends her time at her will, she finds herself lonely and bored. She cries, "I miss home- I miss a job - I miss doing things. I feel like a shadow. What am I but your wife ?" (Kapur, p.237) Nina's feeling of loss takes her to a group of women who work on feminist principles. Her distress resulting from her being without job in Canada and also her failure in conceiving make her to wail before Beth. "Everything is very strange", she said in a rush, "I used to be a

teacher, in fact I taught for ten years before I came here. And now I do nothing. I have not even been able to conceive. (Kapur, p.232)

Eventually she tries to overcome loneliness by engaging herself in various work. She buys books from the grocery shop to fill her time. But reading books also fails to distract her. It seems her mundane and boring. She, in order to find herself out, begins to wear jeans. She joins a library course so that she could remain engaged. But here she enters into an extramarital relationship with Anton, a fellow student, which ends on a date rape. Nina feels guilty after the first sexual encounter and she begins to ponder what she had done. But soon she rationalizes herself when she says that she has done what she likes. She thinks "That she like, she had lived. Who can feel guilty about living ? Judging from the evidence, and the sexual therapy centers, every citizen in North America regarded good sex as their unalienable right. It was her right too" (Kapur, p.263).

As the story proceeds Nina feels tainted by her own infidelity with Anton and she decides to eat fish, and meat. "After she had sex with Anton, it seemed especially hypocritical to hang on to vegetables" (Kapur, p.267). She thus compares her fidelity and vegetarianism to all that is pure and Indian, and her infidelity and eating of meat to that which is tainted and un-Indian. Her disappointment with the sexual relationship between Ananda and her, the lack of intimacy on his part and lack of orgasm on hers, the inability for them to conceive, all lead to Nina's change in expectations of who she has to be as an Indian woman and the promising expectations of a happy married life. Kapur depicts very easily how a girl from India migrates to Canada and how her traditional dress sari is replaced with jeans and T-shirt and how she starts eating meat in her food which was so difficult for her earlier. She is not hesitant in being adultery but later she doesn't seem to enjoy this relation.

At the end when she discovers Ananda's infidelity, it becomes clear that their marriage "was based on more than one person's lies" (Kapur, p.328). Her discovery of Ananda's affair represents the end of their marriage and the end to her identity as his wife. She decides to leave her husband and to move to some new place. Nina now feels relieved and enjoys her regeneration. She sets herself free and decides to be by herself away from her husband, thinking that independence would help her lot in future. She is now an independent and socially acceptable. Nina liberates herself from all clutches by moving away from Halifax and thinks of all those who have been quite nice to her but feels that they were all temporary. The story ends with a note:

When one was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home. Pull up your shallow roots and more. Find a new place, new friends, a new family. It had been possible once, it would be possible again" (Kapur, p.334).

References

- Mukherjee, Meenakshi. "Interrogating Post-colonialism." *Interrogating Post-colonialism : Theory, Text and Context*. Ed. Harish Trivedi and Meenakshi Mukherjee : Shimla : IIAS, 1996.
- Kapur Manju. *The Immigrant*. New Delhi : Random House, 2008.
- Prasad, Amar Nath. *Indian Women Novelists in English*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors , New Delhi, 2001.
- Rai, G. " Postcolonialism : Its Meaning and Significance" *The SPIEL Journal of English Studies*, Volume : 1 No. 2 July 2005.

Verma, M.R and A.K.Sharma .*Reflections on Indian English Fiction*.New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi,2004.

<<http://bibliojunkie.wordpress.com/2012/12/25/the-immigrant-by-manju-kapur/>>

<http://impressions.50webs.org/jan12/guest_maltia.html>