

Marital Rapport in ManjuKapur's Novel: A Married Woman**1. Scenty.S**

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Abstract:

ManjuKapur, has presented an interesting image of a woman who represents the delight and the distress of being married, in her second novel *A Married Woman*. ManjuKapur, in this novel the protagonist as the daughters has an educated middle -class Delhi woman and could ask for a loving and wealthy surrounding and yet inspired with a sense of dissatisfaction. She begins an extra marital affair. She describes men and women relationship consists of multiple identity quest of heroine, the protagonist Astha, who initially feels sense of separation from her married life and family. But finally leaves herself to accepting truth, by reviews her relationship with her husband as a mark of conclusion that is refreshing man and relationship which is vital one for all human being in this common world.

Key words: marriage, emotions, family, Astha.

Introduction

Women long for financial independence to carve a position for themselves, to earn respect and prestige in a society that tries to put a check on their movement, the excitement of women empowerment notwithstanding. Every working woman lives with more or less guilt feeling that she is ignoring her family because of her career. For everything in the family - whether it is related to her children's studies, in-laws health or husband's work pressures, a woman is expected to make compromises with her career because a man's career is more important than a woman's career. Man is elected to be the master and women are never to be granted freedom. It has emerged from the debate of anthropologists and sociologists that the subservient role of the female gender is either the result of biological necessity or the construct of power relationship culturally determined by society. (Adhikari, "Angle" 10) According to Balakrishna: "Generation after generation, women had

been molded by the ethics of self-negation and take pride in being the custodians of this norm. They are thus led to think which they can hardly dare step down..." (439). Indian woman to a certain extent accept the inmates of her husband's family without any hesitation and adjust the situations that come across their life.

Astha, the protagonist, in *A Married Woman* is a happily married woman who in the initial years of her marriage savors the marital bliss but as the time passes and the rut of matrimony sinks in, realizes that loneliness has pervaded her life. She feels that her husband, Hemant, ignores her psychological and emotional needs and expects her to take care of the family, against all odds. He remains oblivious to her preferences, not only as a wife but also as an individual. And Astha ends up indulging into a full-fledged love relationship with Peepilika. She feels Hemant is incapable of comprehending her emotions and desires, and has a crude understanding. In fact she herself is incapable of resolving the issues with Hemant. She has had this habit of sulking since her childhood.

In the early years of her marriage, Astha is fascinated by the magic of their sexual life. She eagerly looks forward to a physical union with her husband and enjoys it immensely thinking that the physical intimacy to be the be all and end all of her married life. It is rightly pointed out in the novel as: The days passed. Astha had not imagined that sex could be such a master. Slightly ashamed, she kept hidden that she longed to dissolve herself in him, longed to be the sips of water he drank, longed to be the morsels of food he swallowed. The times he was away she was focused on one thing, the moment of their union.... I haven't really lived, thought Astha, till now I did not know what life was all about. She felt a woman of the world, the world that was covered with the film of her desire, and the fluids of their sex (*MW* 46).

After her marriage with Hemant, Astha has gathered the impression that Hemant will encourage her writing. She believes that she could become a poet as well as a painter. Hemant's appreciation of her poem and the sketch that she makes has bolstered up her confidence. She feels that her life is opening up before her in golden vistas. Astha has always been inclined towards writing. Earlier she used to write a diary where she jotted all that she has experienced and felt like. "She writes about gardens and flowers, the silent dark faces of gardeners tending plants and never getting credit just as she feels when Hemant neglects her. She writes about love, rejection, desire and longing" (*MW* 79). After marriage Astha takes up a job in a school at the insistence of her mother and her mother-in-law.

Astha's academic performance has been average throughout her school and college years. But once she takes up a job at the school she sees the difference and starts enjoying the financial independence and the security that came along the recognition and appreciation for her work. It gives a boost to her individuality.

The life of Astha has become happy when she is blessed with a girl child. Hemant becomes all cooperative and all adjusting. He lends his help to Astha in everything she needs, playing a perfect husband who is committed to his wife. But when she conceives her second child, Hemant transforms from being an all-American father to being a typical Indian husband who is biased in his choices. Astha finds this disturbing. Even her mother talks in the same vein siding with Hemant's views:

She tried to stay calm for the baby's sake, she took to meditation, and she concentrated on peaceful thoughts. But she was not allowed to forget that everybody, her colleagues, her in-laws, her husband's friends' wives, her mother, the cook, the gardener and the part time help all had an opinion about her baby's gender, and that almost universal opinion was that it would be a son and heir" (MW 68).

According to Gray if "a woman's financial needs are fulfilled she becomes more aware of her emotional needs" (129). Owing to her artistic streak she is recognized by the principal for her work at school at school she had grown to be her principal's right-hand woman, appreciated and valued for one tenth the work she did at home, and paid for it too. Her salary meant she didn't have to ask Hemant for every little rupee she spent. With two children, family obligations, entertainment and holiday costs, the travelling involved in a new business, the uncertainty of business itself, rising prices, she knew Hemant would prefer her to bear her small expenses herself. As it was he spent enough on her clothes and jewelry that she always looked well turned out (MW 72).

On so many occasions Astha feels that she plays a second fiddle in the family. Hemant's care towards their children leaves Astha wondering: "He never sounds or looks like that when I have a headache, thought Astha, and then struck that thought from her consciousness. The father daughter bond could not be compared to the rocky terrain of a marital relationship" (MW 170). Savitri makes the following bitter, cynical statement about a married woman, whom she considers in no way better than a prostitute, for her very existence rests upon her economic dependence on her spouse: "...What is the difference between a prostitute and a married woman? The prostitute changes her men, but a married woman doesn't, that's all; but both earn their food and shelter in the same manner...." (MW

89-90)According to Uniyal "A woman in any society and certainly so in an Indian society must 'know fear'. She must accept she is vulnerable. She must be afraid to walk out alone. She must not highlight her 'femininity' for in doing so she would also be subjecting herself to danger" (87).

Astha's mother considers Astha's marriage as the uppermost responsibility she has to shoulder: It is pointed out in the novel that "Her mother often declared, 'when you are married, our responsibilities will be over. Do you know the shastra's say if parents die without getting their daughter married they will be condemned to perpetual rebirth?'" (MW 1). According to Trikha "Each female is told that sacrifice and devotion (but only for females) is the foundation of happier marital life. The success and accomplishment of married life is their trip to the US. She writes from her ashram: "God bless you my little one and your family. Poor Hemant needs a break from all his troubles. You do not give him enough attention. Remember men have to bear the burdens of the outside world, home is their refuge" (MW 270). Feeling concerned for Hemant's health, Astha thinks, "A trip abroad would be nice, no matter whom one loved and whom one left behind" (MW 271).

As Hemant makes an effort to resume his previous pace of work, the chest pain starts again. Doctors say collapse is imminent if he continues smoking, drinking, not exercising, eating red meat and heavy food. It is up to Astha to take hold of the situation.. It is pointed out in the novel that: "Every morning she made sure they went for a walk. All those years ago, exercising and resentful with her parents, she was now doing the same with her husband, with feelings so much more complicated with the years that had passed" (MW 283) Astha tries to get more understanding with Hemant to see his point of view, in spite of all grudges and grouses that she has with Hemant. She finds herself doing what a typically traditional wife would do to take care for her husband.

The novel is a sincere confession of a woman about her personality cult in the personal allegory of a bad marriage. Astha enters a traditional Indian arranged marriage and initially finds love and companionship but following the birth of her two children she too finds that she has sacrificed her own identity while striving to satisfy the traditional duties and family values. The novelist carefully portrays the shades of pain love, anger and frustration in the novel. It is a novel about contemporary Indian society, about the awareness of the conflicts between one's aspirations, visions in life, the threads of intolerance, anger, circumstances.

ManjuKapur is perhaps the only Indian woman novelist who has made a bold attempt to give voice to the frustration and development of women in patriarchal world. It is a novel which provokes the readers thought and moves them deeply and quietly to apt for the Man-Woman relationship which is essential one in each every human being's life.

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