



The Barricades faced by women in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman*

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Abstract:

Manju Kapur, a prolific writer presents the society in various dimensions. The various dimensions include various ups and downs faced by the women in the society. These women range from lower class of the society to upper class. They face various criticism not only in the outside world but also in the family house. Though women belong to various classes but all face the same problems in the society. A married woman is not only bound to the barriers of the family but she has to face the challenge in the and around the society. Women tend to lose their identity, their recognition, their self-respect and lose themselves completely. At last, by facing all these, the woman come to a point where they lose their temper and try to come of it and fight back irrespective of the gender and search for themselves in the patriarchal dominated society. Finally, like how India emerged out from the British rule the same way women also emerge out from the domination and subjugation to abuse.

Keywords: Barriers, society, class, patriarchy, domination, gender, identity, self- respect.

The novel is about the story of Astha, the protagonist, who is young and active and her passion for painting is boundless. Like any modern woman of her age who likes to have a partner of her choice, in the same way Astha also wants to have a partner of her choice. Meanwhile, she engages in love with Bunty, but their love didn't last long and eventually they broke up. Later she again gave a try to her life and loved Rohan, but that love also didn't work out. As Astha belongs to strict cultural family, now it the decision of her mother who follows the tradition of getting the girl child married as she reaches a particular age. Hence forth, her mother searches a suitable boy for Astha. Finally, the marriage is fixed between Astha and Hemant, who is good – looking, educated and solvent.

Astha gets married to Hemant and lead a peaceful life. She carries on with her routine job and also takes care of the family following family rituals. Soon love develops between them and eventually she gives birth to a girl and later to a boy. Suddenly we notice that there is lot of change in the behavior of Hemant and starts behaving like an Indian father and passes on his duties also to Astha. Slowly there develops a communication gap between both of them and now all the burden comes upon Astha. She becomes both, the mother and father for her children while Hemant is busy with his business. On the process of her everyday job, she forgot that she is also a painter and

before having kids she was working. Now after so many years she again resumed the job. She gets involved with Theatre Troupe run by Aziz, a local social activist. Though, Hemant is supportive but he feels discomfort when he gets to know that she is engaged in the social work with a man. Hemant is very much concerned about her teaching job and gallery but he is uncomfortable with her outside social work, due to which he starts to slowly avoid her. He wants her to completely detach herself from the social work and just look on to the family.

Astha, later gets to know about Pipeelika, a Hindu girl who is married to Aziz Akhtar out of love, breaking all the rules and regulations of her religion and after ends up in getting widowed. Here, Pipeelika is an NGO worker, working on social welfare. Later on, slowly both of them get along with each other and starts liking each other. They become each other's company and start building love, they get into lesbian relationship. Altogether, both develop hatred from men in their life. On the other hand, Astha thinks that her life with Hemant is just for sexual desire as she gets to know that he is engaged with some other girl which he initially refuses and to teach him a lesson, she very patiently and sweetly protests for lesbian relationship. Finally, Pipeelika goes to US for pursuing higher education and after the completion she accepts for another marriage with a heavy heart.

The Barricades in Astha's Life:

Astha, though she gets married to a well-educated person, but she fails to get a peaceful life. Astha thought of continuing her job of teaching, but after the delivery of kinds, she is forced into the marital life responsibilities, her husband changes to the functioning of an Indian man and father and becomes careless about the children's. The Indian society, though they work on the upbringing of girls and their liberties but still in some of the Indian families those liberties are rejected and cornered to get on with their familial responsibilities. Hence, Astha falls under such domination.

Astha in her life face the barricade when she begins with her love life in her teenage. When she thought of getting into the modern life through the act of love. At first her choice was refused by her mother as she follows the typical Indian, Hindu patterns. This led to the breakup of her first love life. Later, she again falls in love with another person, but that person just had a time pass with her and rejected her proposal and this also ended in despair. Finally, she went on with the custom of getting arranged marriage of her parent's choice and gets married. In her in-laws family, she is being criticized for going to job. She is being scolded for neglecting familial jobs. She gets no recognition from her husband and he becomes careless, as according to him looking after the family and children is the job of a woman. She has to get bound with the rules and regulations of the family. She slowly loses her own self. She, now thinks that she is completely lost in the field of family rituals and traditions.

Astha, slowly feels alienated from her own family, her marital life, her job and involvement in the social work. She becomes tired of her every day rituals. She becomes lonely even having a joint family and kids to lead her life. Astha enjoys the destiny of the poorest. She is suffocated with the growing needs of her family and "Always adjusting to everybody's needs" (227). Finally, she realizes her place in her in-laws and accepts the real-life situation that has taken all her energy. Hence, Astha becomes the victim of all the struggles that she faced in her life.

Conclusion:

Thus, Manju Kapur presents real situation of women and their struggle in the society, their hardships, their sacrifices, and their adjustment with their family as well as their in-laws family and also the society that is the real place of their survival. Hence, we see the emergence of new women who do not want to be puppets anymore. Henceforth, the patriarchy, the society, force women towards domestic life and are barred from their formal right of getting educated.

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