
Threads of Motherhood: Tracing Maternal Strength in the Domestic World and Negotiating Patriarchy in Manju Kapur's *Home*

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Abstract:

In Manju Kapur's *Home*, the traditional Indian joint family structure's overlapping themes of motherhood, patriarchy, and female identity are profoundly explored. Women are portrayed as important but constrained characters in the book, with their lives centered on taking care of the home and meeting social standards. Motherhood becomes a defining force and a source of strength in the face of patriarchal dominance, as Kapur illustrates via characters such as Sona, Rupa, and Nisha. Within the home, women negotiate between self-assertion and subordination, serving as a metaphor for both empowerment and imprisonment. Nisha's representation of the younger generation represents a transition from passive endurance to active resistance, signifying a slow change in how women are viewed. Examining how Kapur's *Home* reinterprets the concepts of motherhood, home, and patriarchy, this piece of writing shows how women are shown as resilient individuals who uphold and transform the moral and emotional foundation of society and the family.

Keywords: Home; Indian womanhood; feminism; patriarchy; gender roles; empowerment; identity; motherhood.

Introduction:

Renowned Indian novelist and scholar Manju Kapur is well noted for her realistic depictions of middle-class Indian women's life. She was born in Amritsar, Punjab, and taught English at the University of Delhi's Miranda House. *Difficult Daughters* (1998), Kapur's first book, made her a significant literary figure and received the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book (*Eurasia region*). *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008), *Custody* (2011), and *Brothers* (2016) are some of her works that examine gender, patriarchy, identity, and family ties. Kapur's stories frequently focus on women negotiating the lines between tradition and modernity, providing a potent critique of social

norms. Manju Kapur has significantly influenced Indian English literature and feminist writing with her complex narratives and powerful female protagonists. “Sometimes the best thing to do is to take a step back and get a little bit of a different perspective and re-evaluate things” (Aries).

The 2006 film *Home* by Manju Kapur provides a detailed depiction of Indian joint family domestic life, where a woman’s existence is defined by the limits of duty, love, and submission. The book follows several generations of women whose lives are influenced by patriarchal conventions and societal expectations. In addition to being a real place, Kapur uses the home as a metaphor for imprisonment and perseverance. She explores how parenting in patriarchal society can be both a source of empowerment and a tool of control via the stories of women like Sona, Rupa, and Nisha.

The Strength and Sacrifice of Motherhood: *Home* portrays parenting as a multifaceted thread that both gives women inner power and ties them to conventional norms. Sona’s identity is shaped by her desire for a child and her eventual motherhood, which illustrates how women are largely regarded for their ability to procreate. However, Kapur demonstrates how maternal love also fosters emotional fortitude. Mothers in the story exhibit compassion and bravery in the face of social pressure, defending their children’s aspirations even when doing so means going against the grain. This dichotomy makes motherhood a symbol of tacit resistance as well as a hardship. “Sona’s longing for a child underscores how women’s identities are often tied to their reproductive roles: Sona longed for a child as if her very existence depended on it” (Kapur 45).

The experience of motherhood is presented in *Home* as being multifaceted, serving as a place of emotional empowerment as well as a place of imprisonment. The fact that Sona’s identity is built almost exclusively around her ability to conceive shows how biological reproduction is closely linked to women in a patriarchal framework. Her desire for a child is a reflection of the social conditioning that links a woman’s value to her ability to conceive, supporting Simone de Beauvoir’s claim that patriarchy reduces women to their biological roles. However, motherhood is portrayed by Manju Kapur as a source of emotional agency and inner power rather than just a passive state of submission.

Despite their marginalization in the home order, mothers like Sona and Rupa wield silent dominance through their nurturing responsibilities. They are able to subtly but effectively question social norms because of their protective tendencies toward their offspring. As a result, motherhood in the book is not only a household responsibility; rather, it takes the shape of silent resistance, where giving care turns into a political act and sacrifice becomes strength.

Gynocriticism is the study of women as writers, of the history, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women. It seeks to construct a female framework for the analysis of

women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience to replace male models of literary creation. (Showalter)

In the home, motherhood also turns into a means for women to manage their identities under the strict patriarchal norms. At first, Sona complies with the conventional expectations placed on her, but as a mother, she progressively gains emotional independence. She raises Nisha with love and caution, demonstrating her commitment to her, highlighting the tension between personal desire and social training. Her silent choices, like letting Nisha go to school and later supporting her business goals, show a subtle rebellion of social standards even if she fits the traditional mold of the 'ideal mother' in this society. Elaine Showalter's idea of gynocritical space, in which women establish other platforms for expression inside oppressive systems, is consistent with this change. "We all get so caught up in the moment of what we're doing every day, it's hard to hit that reset button and get pulled away from all that and see life from a different perspective" (Stewart). As a location of female negotiation, the home, which is frequently written off as unimportant in patriarchal rhetoric, is where women like Sona and Rupa maintain their dignity, demonstrate their emotional intelligence, and exert power through acts of care rather than direct conflict.

Patriarchy and the Home Environment: The setting of the narrative, which involves a multigenerational family home and business, is the platform on which patriarchy is most obviously present. Women are supposed to uphold peace and submission, while men make financial decisions and establish family structures. Nisha's limited independence, Rupa's childlessness, and Sona's household responsibilities all demonstrate how patriarchy is maintained by societal norms. Nonetheless, Kapur quietly challenges these conventions by letting her female characters explore and navigate their surroundings, suggesting a gradual change within established frameworks. "Despite societal expectations, mothers in *Home* exhibit quiet resistance through their care for their children: She shielded Nisha from the harshness of family expectations, even when it meant bending the rules" (Kapur 112).

Nisha's Path: A Step Toward Freedom: The persona of Nisha comes to represent resistance and change. She strives for independence and uniqueness, in contrast to the previous generation of women. She defies the limitations placed on her by gender by pursuing education and entrepreneurship. Kapur presents a woman through Nisha who reinterprets 'home' as a place of self-expression as opposed to incarceration. The changing Indian lady, caught between personal aspirations and familial responsibilities, but driven to forge her own identity, is symbolized by her voyage. "The novel illustrates how domestic life is controlled by men, yet women negotiate these spaces with subtle authority: The men ran the household with absolute authority, while the women learned to survive in silence" (Kapur 178).

"Look at everything as though you are seeing it either for the first or last time, then your time on earth will be filled with glory" (Smith). The conflict between society expectations and personal wants is further highlighted by Kapur's portrayal of women roles. Women establish

their presence and influence the moral and emotional fabric of the home in domestic spaces, which are frequently depicted as constrictive. The female characters in *Home* demonstrate that identity is not a fixed idea but rather a dynamic negotiation between individual goals and social conventions by striking a balance between subservience and delicate opposition. In this way, Kapur depicts women as both products and agents of their social milieu, incorporating moral intelligence, inventiveness, and resilience into their fabricated roles.

Home by Manju Kapur deftly combines themes of female agency, patriarchy, and motherhood. The book asks for changing established roles while highlighting the fact that women's power frequently resides in adaptability and perseverance. Kapur highlights the subtle ways patriarchy functions while honoring the tenacity of women who turn their restrictions into sources of strength by portraying the house as both a place of oppression and empowerment. In the end, the home turns into a mirror reflecting the changing, resilient, and struggling fabric of Indian womanhood.

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