



Cultural and social alienation in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman*

Paulsy Diana^{*,a}, *Dr. V. Lizy*^b

^a: Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, India.

^b Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, India.

E- mail*: dianadhas2@gmail.com

Abstract

The fiction written by Manju Kapur is predicated on the idea that women are persistent in their pursuit of freedom from patriarchal, socially constructed, and smart systems. They fight a constant battle between modernity and tradition. Kapur has demonstrated a tremendous understanding of the inner anguish that a woman experiences as she searches for a place, an identity, and a personality of her own in the world. In the novel *A Married Woman*, the author makes a concerted effort to correct the skewed and distorted portrayal of married women, whose pleas for liberty and equality in a patriarchal society have been and continue to be ignored. It is abundantly obvious that the idea of women's emancipation, which is making headway in modern times everywhere, is the result of the contributions of a lot of different people. It is an intriguing fact that the majority of today's women have some level of formal education. This paper will talk about the female protagonist in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* from a variety of perspectives.

Key words: social alienation, quest for identity, patriarchy



Social Disparity

The narrative is built on the idea that women living in modern societies are in an unpleasant position on the precipice of societal upheaval. Manju Kapur is the author of this work. The novel "*A Married Woman*" offers a nuanced representation of the struggle that women have to find their identity and gives a voice to the women's frustrations, disappointments, and feelings of alienation they experience in a patriarchal society. It is a story that makes us think about how Astha, a married woman who is searching for her identity, files her objections against the prevailing patriarchal set-up and emerges as just an independent woman. The novel does this by making us think about how she does it. "Manju Kapur's fictional writing suggests her interest in radical feminism, emphasising sexuality as a central basis of woman's subordination" (Anita and Dr. Ritu Sharma).

The author of the work makes it clear from the very beginning that Astha is a female character by establishing her status as a girl. Astha is shackled by the values of her middle-class upbringing, according to which she should strive to elevate herself to a higher class and be constantly scared of falling into a lower one. "He is twenty-six, five eleven, and works as an assistant manager in a bank," writes the author (35). It shows how they searched for a higher-class match for her marriage. She comes to terms with her fate and agrees to an arranged marriage, where she plays the role of a typical Indian housewife and grows frustrated waiting for her husband after a long day of work as well as taking care of her children and in-laws. Her first interaction with Bunty and then with Rohan is unsuccessful due to her status as a member of the middle class, and she goes on to marry Rohan.



Astha was born into a conventional household of the middle class, where she spent her childhood. Her parents are well aware of the expectations placed on her as a member of a family in the middle class. Her mother is highly overprotective of her, and she anticipates that her daughter will uphold the family's customs. She explains to Astha quite frequently that the real significance and worth of a woman lie in getting married, having children, and treating one's husband as if he were God. "The woman smiled her agreement. What does your husband do?" (Kapur)

Manju Kapur is widely regarded as one of the most successful and prominent Indian-English female novelists of the present day. Her works have been translated into dozens of languages. The challenges that are specific to women are discussed in the *book A Married Woman*. The novel tells an enticing story about passion, love, and attachment in the midst of India's political and religious turmoil. Because of their intense physical connection, the protagonist of the book runs the risk of losing the achievements of her conventional marriage and the linked family that she has built as a result of her relationship with a much younger lady. "In her in-law's house, Astha submerged herself in the roles of daughter-in-law and wife." "Her husband teaches her marital routine." (Rifat Binte Joynal, Maruf Rahman*)

In her book, Kapur depicts the problematic topics surrounding homosexual relationships in a way that is difficult to understand. After all, lesbian and gay relationships aren't only figments of people's imaginations. Even if we choose not to acknowledge this fact, the fact is that its prevalence in today's culture is growing. Astha, the main character of the



book, gets married and evolves into a devoted wife and selfless mother over the course of the story. Owing to her temperamental mismatch with her husband's business-minded way of thinking, she had to fulfil the dual roles of "mother and father" for her children. Because of this circumstance, she decides to end her marriage and give up on the possibility of achieving her goals in life.

This dissatisfaction causes her to disobey, which in turn causes her to get agitated. Because of her discomfort, anxiety, loneliness, and isolation, she does not have the confidence to give voice to her sadness over her damaged relationship. Instead, this prompts her to channel her feelings of guilt, lack of self-confidence, and pessimism into addressing the obstacles in her life. Her restlessness compels her to seek out complete isolation, which she sees as a form of liberation from the constraints imposed on her by her family, its responsibilities, and the subtly dominant role it plays in her life. "The system is not so demanding, that's all I meant" (Kapur)

Astha takes pleasure in her position at the centre of the family's vast labyrinth of income, spending, knowledge, discontent, rights, obligations, agitation, and dependency, which she views as her destiny to live in poverty. As the requirements of the family continue to expand, Astha feels as though she is being crushed and is "always adjusting to everybody's needs." (227) Astha is aware that the role of a married woman in the household is that of a slave or an unpaid servant, and she understands that the possibility of a divorce would result in the end of her social and economic standing as an Indian.



She considers marriage to be a poor choice since she believes it will provide her with an abundance of opportunities to experience anger, anguish, and indecision. She holds the view that being married is preferable because it brings about feelings of togetherness, respect, and interest. Because she is torn between her religion and facts, duty and responsibilities, societal standards, and personal convictions, she believes that "a tired woman cannot make good wives" (Kapur), and she fights for emotional freedom from the nation's bane.

Alienation

Astha, a well-educated woman from the middle class in Delhi, is described as having been "brought up properly, as befits a woman, with large supplements of fear" (page 1). She enters into a traditional Indian arranged marriage with Hemant, who is a foreigner who recently returned with an MBA. Hemant is also a bank employee who comes from a reputable family and has a lot of property. Due to Hemant's conflicting motivations, he decided to quit his job, form a partnership with his sister, and eventually start his own TV manufacturing unit after he had already established the business with her. Because he has so much work to do, he has less time for Astha and the rest of his family. Hemant wants to have another child who will behave like a boy after their first: "I want to have my son," Hemant declared, looking emotionally "manly" at the time (Kapur); This shows his male dominance. Astha starts to get the impression that, in her efforts to fulfil her familial responsibilities and the roles traditionally expected of her, she has neglected her own identity. She struggles with feelings of isolation. It is clear that the feelings of isolation and exclusion are having a significant impact on her.



Astha focuses her attention inward and reignites a passion for writing and drawing that she developed while she was in high school and college. As she allowed her pain and sense of isolation to be expressed through her drawings and poems, she experienced a sense of relief. Writing helped her to unburden herself of the burden she was carrying, and in her efforts to express how she felt, she discovered a measure of momentary relief. Changes, the title of one of her poems, expresses both her sense of isolation and her sense of release: The eventual relief from one's suffering Amidst the heartbreaking and unrelenting separation From those who, out of routine, were loved can come so gradually that it seems as though there will never be a day of complete tranquilly and peace. "Astha is a married woman who is portrayed as an idol of sacrifice and adjustment, which makes her the favourite in her family but lowers her own status" (Ms. Bena Bhatia¹ & Dr. S.G. Chauhan).

Hemant thinks that her poems are a form of self-indulgence and remarks that reading them would make her unhappy and cause her to feel isolated from the rest of the world. She gives up writing and instead continues to draw, which is rather unfortunate. Because of the cruel treatment by her own people, Astha's marriage is going through a rough patch right now. However, as the couple has a child and a son, the perfect image of their life together as a married couple starts to fall apart. Hemant is an unrivalled performer in bed, but their family dynamic starts to change. Astha has a hard time pulling herself away from her own thoughts and fantasies. Her growing displeasure is being played out against the backdrop of the social and political instability in India. The theatre personality Aijaz takes an interest in her and asks her to write the screenplay of the play that will be performed at the school, which causes her flagging spirit to all of a sudden rise to the surface.



While Hemant said her script about the Babri Masjid sounded like a parrot's, Aijaz praised it to great heights and called it a masterpiece. He counsels Astha, telling her, "Please, keep to what you know best, which is the home, the children, and teaching." "All doesn't suit you." (Kapur) Astha is impressed, and Aijaz's unexpected touch has a profound effect on her: "What did it mean?" Did he want to have an affair with her? Why was she so startled by his hand on her knee? "Why hadn't she responded, but she was a married woman with two children, and those were right in front of her eyes?" (Kapur) After the death of Aijaz, a theatre personality and social activist in Ayodhya whom Astha adored, she becomes active in the political struggle. Aijaz was a victim of the strife between Hindus and Muslims in Ayodhya.

The potential destruction of Babri Masjid, a mosque that is said to have been erected on an ancient Hindu site, is at the heart of the unrest that has broken out in the area. In this particular scenario, Astha, a politically conscious painter who is also a member of the Sampardayakta Mukti Manch, travels to Ajodhya, where she meets Pip, a worker for a nongovernmental organisation who is also the widow of Aijaz and a former lesbian. Pip is one of Astha's fans because of her impressive oratory abilities. They become more intimate with one another and reveal their deepest, darkest secrets. Pip now has a reliable follower thanks to Astha's weeping and her complete and utter disillusionment, which is exactly what she wanted. Pip and Ashta's relationship serves as a key link throughout the story, and Manju Kapur establishes it here as a form of lesbian love. "Awful. Awful couldn't sleep, and she left this morning without saying anything" (Kapur).



Manju Kapur always presents two distinct forms of female mirroring, one being the woman existing in a domestic setting and the other being the woman existing in an external setting. One can draw the conclusion that the woman is juggling her personal life and professional obligations. *A Married Woman* emerges as a type of work that is unorthodox but at the same time bears the cultural tendencies of textual culture. The protagonist currently resides in a society that is both traditional and contemporary in context. Indian traditions that are deeply ingrained in the ancient social order, Indian identity, and equality concerns all go hand in hand. Astha is a married lady who is shown as an ideal of self-sacrifice and flexibility within her family, which elevates her prestige within the family but lowers her own personal standing. She was brought up in a setting that adhered to the norms from the time she was a child.

Violence on women

The portrayal of women in Indian English-language fiction as the silent victim and upholder of tradition as well as traditional norms of parents and community in India has undergone a tremendous change, and they are no longer portrayed as passive characters. In the past, women were portrayed in Indian English-language fiction as the ones who upheld tradition and the traditional norms of family and society in India. However, it seems as though Manju Kapur is aware of the fact that in the sixty years after India's independence, the women of India have truly accomplished their goals. The novel now reveals the relationship that exists within the home. In her depiction of the hardships that women experience on the personal, religious, professional, and societal levels, Manju Kapur has remained quite realistic throughout the entire process. The novel written by Kapur illustrates a shifting image



of women as they move away from conventional ideals such as women who are self-sacrificing and toward modernity, which depicts women as self-assured, aggressive, and ambitious and also offers a platform for women to express themselves. When her husband spoke about women's virginity by identifying the blood in intercourse, she declined his thoughts by saying, "Some women don't bleed even though they have had no sex, you know?" (Kapur).

Through her writings, Manju Kapur has honed her observational skills regarding life and bestowed a psychological authority upon her readers. She has fashioned a fresh canvas again for the younger generation of Indian female novelists to work on. As a developing nation, India is making strides toward becoming more contemporary while still preserving its rich cultural heritage. Female authors are arranged in the shape of a chain with each other in Indo-Aryan literature. During this time period, women have already been indicating a significant part of the change by themselves by providing a major portion of Indian current literature in English.

This shift has been brought about by women's desire to take control of their own lives. It offers a plethora of meanings and bases for conversation, as well as insights and knowledge from a variety of perspectives. The majority of Indian women authors are concerned with problems that are specific to women as well as the circumstances in which they find themselves, and they write from a female point of view. In addition to the numerous topics they cover, the Indian women who write novels in English do their utmost to focus on the trials, emotions, and routines that are unique to women. The terrible predicament of



abandoned women who are doomed to suffer from birth until death is portrayed by the female authors in their works.

Conclusion

In general, the novels written by Kapur depict the struggles that women go through in order to discover who they are as individuals. The female protagonists in her novels stand out like role models for contemporary modern Indian women, as well as describing the male-controlled limits and prospects for them to affirm their uniqueness and achieve self-righteousness and self-actualization in their lives. Her novels are widely considered to be important to the development of contemporary Indian literature. The novelist almost always leans toward realism when writing her books, and the belief that women should have equal rights is prominently featured in her books. The female protagonists in Manju Kapur's novel are portrayed in such a way that they are believable, and this allows her to demonstrate how they struggle to maintain their individuality while living in the patriarchal culture of India. Astha has chosen to devote her life to painting because she has found that it is the one activity that allows her to forget everything else and become one with her mind, her hand, and the image in her head. In the end, she finds comfort in the realm of art, which is best exemplified by the painting exhibition that was organised by her husband. Her exhibition ends up being a smashing success. More than half of Astha's paintings sell for nearly two lakh rupees each. Through the character of Astha, Kapur presents a frontal assault on patriarchal thought, social organisation, and control mechanisms by focusing on the individual's desire and the



individual's inner potentials to achieve personal recognition. She is progressive and aware of her rights and potentials, but she quickly concedes to the fact that a woman's real position lies within the family unit, which she must maintain and protect and therefore not ignore or neglect because of the false notion of being "liberated." She is progressive and aware of her rights and potential. Astha is, in this sense, not just the image of the new woman of our time but also the archetype of the Indian woman of our days.

References

- Anita, and Dr. Ritu Sharma. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation*. Vol. 24, no. 4, <https://www.psychosocial.com/article/PR260861/20521/>.
- Kapur, Manju. *A Married Women*. London, Faber&Faber, 2004.
- Ms. Bena Bhatia¹ & Dr. S.G.Chauhan. "Mirroring of Women in Manju Kapur's a Married Woman and Bharati Mukherjee's Wife." - *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2019.
- Rifat Binte Joynal, Maruf Rahman. "Social Impediments of the Third World Women: A Study of Manju Kapur's a Married Woman (2002)." *Advances in Literary Study*, vol. 1, no. 6, 2020.



Aladeen, H. (2023). Breaking News: Machine Learning Helps to Spot Fake News Before it Spreads.

Aladeen, H. (2023). Addressing Bias in News with Advanced Machine Learning Techniques.

Aladeen, H. (2023). Can Machine Learning Algorithms Really Stop Fake News in Its Tracks?.

Aladeen, H. (2023). Fake News Detector: The Newweapon Against Misinformation.

Aladeen, H. (2023). Investigating the Impact of Bias in Web Search Algorithms: Implications for Digital Inequality.

Burgers, N., Imaad, T., & Aladeen, H. Machine Learning Algorithm Unveils Fake News Conspiracy Theories.

Burgers, N., Imaad, T., & Aladeen, H. Tackling Bias in News Head-On with AI and Machine Learning.

Burgers, N., Imaad, T., & Aladeen, H. Overcoming Bias in News: How Machine Learning Can Help.

Burgers, N., Imaad, T., & Aladeen, H. AI-Powered Tool Identifies Fake News with 98% Accuracy.

Burgers, N., Imaad, T., & Aladeen, H. Algorithmic Bias in News: Can Machine Learning Be Part of the Solution?.

Padmaja, D. L., Nagaprasad, S., Pant, K., & Kumar, Y. P. (2022). Role of Artificial Intelligence and Deep Learning in Easier Skin Cancer Detection through Antioxidants Present in Food. *Journal of Food Quality*, 2022.



Padmaja, D. L. (2021). Performance Analysis of Different Architectures on Face Mask Detection. *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education (TURCOMAT)*, 12(13), 377-381.

Gundu, K. S., Dhyaram, L. P., Ramana Rao, G. N. V., & Surya Deepak, G. (2023, January). Comparative Analysis of Energy Consumption in Text Processing Models. In *Advancements in Smart Computing and Information Security: First International Conference, ASCIS 2022, Rajkot, India, November 24–26, 2022, Revised Selected Papers, Part I* (pp. 107-116). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

Ramirez-Asis, E., Guzman-Avalos, M., Mazumdar, B. D., Padmaja, D. L., Mishra, M., Hirolikar, D. S., & Kaliyaperumal, K. (2022). Metaheuristic Methods for Efficiently Predicting and Classifying Real Life Heart Disease Data Using Machine Learning. *Mathematical Problems in Engineering*, 2022.

Padmaja, D. L., Tammali, S., Gajavelly, N., & Reddy, K. S. (2022, May). A comparative study on natural disasters. In *2022 International Conference on Applied Artificial Intelligence and Computing (ICAAIC)* (pp. 1704-1709). IEEE.

Padmaja, D. L., Sruthi, B. S., Deepak, G. S., & Harsha, G. S. (2022, April). Analysis to Predict Coronary Thrombosis Using Machine Learning Techniques. In *2022 International Conference on Sustainable Computing and Data Communication Systems (ICSCDS)* (pp. 21-27). IEEE.

Padmaja, D. L., & Sriharsha, G. K. (2022, December). Challenges in Crop Selection Using Machine Learning. In *Artificial Intelligence and Data Science: First International Conference, ICAIDS 2021, Hyderabad, India, December 17–18, 2021, Revised Selected Papers* (pp. 66-76). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.



Padmaja, D. L., Nagaprasad, S., Pant, K., & Kumar, Y. P. (2022). Role of Artificial Intelligence and Deep Learning in Easier Skin Cancer Detection through Antioxidants Present in Food. *Journal of Food Quality*, 2022.

Baker, M. R., Padmaja, D. L., Puviarasi, R., Mann, S., Panduro-Ramirez, J., Tiwari, M., & Samori, I. A. (2022). Implementing Critical Machine Learning (ML) Approaches for Generating Robust Discriminative Neuroimaging Representations Using Structural Equation Model (SEM). *Computational and Mathematical Methods in Medicine*, 2022.

Lakshmipadmaja, D., & Vishnuvardhan, B. (2018). Classification performance improvement using random subset feature selection algorithm for data mining. *Big Data Research*, 12, 1-12.

Padmaja, D. L., & Vishnuvardhan, B. (2018). Evaluating the influence of parameter values on the performance of random subset feature selection algorithm on scientific data. *Data & Knowledge Engineering*, 117, 174-182.

Padmaja, D. L., & Vishnuvardhan, B. (2016, February). Comparative study of feature subset selection methods for dimensionality reduction on scientific data. In 2016 IEEE 6th International Conference on Advanced Computing (IACC) (pp. 31-34). IEEE.

Dhyaram, L. P., & Vishnuvardhan, B. (2018). RANDOM SUBSET FEATURE SELECTION FOR CLASSIFICATION. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer Science*, 9(2).

Padmaja, D. L., & Vishnuvardhan, B. (2014). Survey of dimensionality reduction and mining techniques on scientific data. *International Journal of Computer Science & Engineering Technology*, 1(5), 1062-6.



Padmaja, D. L., & Vishnuvardhan, B. INFLUENCE OF DATA GEOMETRY IN RANDOM SUBSET FEATURE SELECTION.

Lakshmi Padmaja, D., & Vishnuvardhan, B. (2019). Variance-based feature selection for enhanced classification performance. In *Information Systems Design and Intelligent Applications: Proceedings of Fifth International Conference INDIA 2018 Volume 1* (pp. 543-550). Springer Singapore.

Padmaja, D. L., Surya Deepak, G., Sriharsha, G. K., & Ramana Rao, G. N. V. (2021). Ensemble Methods for Scientific Data—A Comparative Study. In *Information and Communication Technology for Competitive Strategies (ICTCS 2020) Intelligent Strategies for ICT* (pp. 587-595). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

Nagaprasad, S., Padmaja, D. L., Qureshi, Y., Bangare, S. L., Mishra, M., & Mazumdar, B. D. (2021). Investigating the impact of machine learning in pharmaceutical industry. *J. Pharm. Res. Int.*, 33, 6-14.

Sriharsha, G. K., Padmaja, D. L., Rao, G. R., & Deepa, G. S. (2022, December). A Modified Approach of Hyper-parameter Optimization to Assess The Classifier Performance. In *2022 IEEE Pune Section International Conference (PuneCon)* (pp. 1-9). IEEE.

Mohammed, N. J., & Hassan, M. M. U. (2023). Cryptosystem in artificial neural network in Internet of Medical Things in Unmanned Aerial Vehicle. *Journal of Survey in Fisheries Sciences*, 10(2S), 2057-2072.

Mohammed, N. J. (2023). Quantum cryptography in Convolution neural network approach in Smart cities. *Journal of Survey in Fisheries Sciences*, 10(2S), 2043-2056.



Mohammed, N. J., & Hassan, M. M. U. Cryptosystem using Artificial Neural Networks for UAV.

Mohammed, N. J. (2020). Neural Network Training by Selected Fish Schooling Genetic Algorithm Feature for Intrusion Detection. *International Journal of Computer Applications*, 175(30), 7-11.

Mohammed, N. J., & Hassan, M. M. U. (2021). Robust digital data hiding in low coefficient region of image. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Computer Science & Technology (IJIRCST) ISSN, 2347-5552*.

Hassan, M. M. U. (2021). A Robust Multi-Keyword Text Content Retrieval by Utilizing Hash Indexing. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Computer Science & Technology (IJIRCST) ISSN, 2347-5552*.