

Chapter VII

Summation

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- **Social Commitment in the Novels of Kapur**
- **Women's Space in Indian Culture**
- **Women's Status in Indian Marriages**
- **Women and Womb**
- **Women in Shackles of Stereotypes**
- **Challenging the Stereotypes: Kapur's New Women**
- **Women's Role in Indian Politics**
- **Narrative Technique**
- **Language and Literary Devices**
- **Scope for Further Study**

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Summation

The concluding chapter is the researcher's observations and findings based on the study of the different facets of women characters; social commitments, narrative technique, language and style used by Kapur in her novels. Kapur has dealt with the portrayal of Indian women and their emancipation. She has given a clear picture in her novels how the anguished mind of a woman surfaces due to various factors like divorce, dissolution in marital life, infidelity, betrayal and frustration in love, rape, sexual abuse, dowry and lack of education. In her works she emphatically depicts how the traditional restrictions and unacceptable features of the Indian society become the root cause of the pathetic plight of the women sufferers.

Social Commitment in the Novels of Kapur

“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”.

(Beauvoir 267)

Women of different age groups and social backgrounds are portrayed in her works and they are generally victimized by economic and social disparities and pressures. One can see the excellence in her works in handling the personal relationships, the sensitive way she builds these relationships and how the significance of these relationships are brought out. Her concern is also centered round the phenomenon of migration, the status of new immigrants, their alienated feeling as expatriates. Thus, these novels deal with the key issues of Indian society that a woman goes through, such as family, tradition, culture, marriage, infertility, abortion, child marriage, divorce, lack of education for girl child, religion, caste, gender discrimination, identity crisis, dowry, sexual abuse of the girl

child, rape, stereotypes regarding women and hence the position of women in her family and society. At the same time Kapur presents her new women characters who defy these social norms and creates an identity and space for themselves in the society.

Women's Space in Indian Culture

“Demanding to be equal presupposes a term of comparison. Equal to what? What do women want to be equal to? Men? A wage? A public position? Equal to what? Why not to themselves?...Even a vaguely rigorous analysis of claims to equality shows that they are justified at the level of a superficial critique of culture, and utopian as a means to women’s liberation. The exploitation of women is based upon sexual difference, and can only be resolved through sexual difference.”

(Irigaray 21)

The Indian women are considered as an essential part of the socio-cultural system, whereas in reality they are given a different treatment, a low position in the society. Hence, the position of women in the Indian society has always been contradictory. Indian society is strictly bound to tradition and symbols and has always been valued as they stand for diverse experiences. With a strong emphasis on the different factors shaping the development of the individual, Kapur’s novels focus on the Indian culture that builds up the women characters of her novels. Her novels are not free from the complexities that characterizes Indian cultural milieu. Her exposure and familiarity with the society in which she lives render her novels highly authentic. Kapur goes on asserting how violence has crept into social and domestic relationships. This deterioration, according to her can be related to the country’s past.

A woman’s identity lies with the family. Each individual woman is endowed with freedom, but her behaviour should be in accordance with the social norms. The women characters in the novels are life like portrayals of tradition and modernity. They are modern

yet not isolated from their traditions. A woman who violates the social norms and taboos is considered an outcast and is looked down upon by society. A mother is supposed to be the carrier of tradition as generations look up to her.

Patriarchal family plays an important role in the novels of Kapur. For the sake of family's reputation daughters are forced to sacrifice their study, freedom, identity, desires and dreams. They are considered as ideal daughters when they present themselves as the epitome of sacrifice. The family is not a nuclear family rather it is united with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. The family is based on a hierarchy. It is an extended joint family where the elders of the first generation of the house take the decision for the younger generations. Hence, the position and independence of the women in the house is almost negligible.

Gender is the product of a socio-cultural construct. The constitution of India guarantees equal rights to both sexes. However, in reality, equality does not exist. Daughters have always been unwanted, unwelcome; her birth is repudiated. She always remains an object in the hands of the male members of the family; father, brother and husband where her personal dreams, desires and aspirations does not hold any value. The daughter is always treated as the temporary member of the family whose real place is with her in-laws. Even her roles and responsibilities are decided by the male elders of the family. She is not allowed to do what the male members of the family do.

In Indian culture, dowry is given to the in-laws of the daughter during marriage. If the demands of the groom's side are not fulfilled, then the bride is tortured to an extreme extent and may also lead to her death. Sona and Sunita in *HM* were constant sufferer of dowry where Sunita finally becomes the victim of the dowry death.

Kapur highlights the social evils of child marriage and lack of education of the girl child. Education is a powerful tool which empowers a woman and makes her come out of the cage of traditional beliefs and myths. Education builds immense self-confidence in women, which makes them self-reliant and makes them feel empowered. Her novels depict the importance of education in the life of a woman. A victim of arranged child marriage and illiteracy is Ganga in *DD*. She is married at an early age where she is wedded to the educated professor Harish who is not interested in Ganga because she is illiterate. She could not become independent or self-reliant ever. Her illiteracy makes her handicapped, helpless and dependent on her husband. Finally, their marriage ends up with the extra-marital affair and marriage of Harish with the educated Virmati and Ganga is left alone forever.

‘One of the benefits of education is that it teaches us to think for ourselves....Do you know how an earthworm lives? It inhabits an extremely limited space; its whole life is spent within the darkness of the soil. It can neither feel nor see. Uneducated people are like that.... Society, which deems that their sons should be educated, but not their daughters. Who is responsible for this state of affairs? Society that decides that children – babies really – should be married at the ages of two and three as we were. (Kapur 102-03)

A girl is always threatened by the society since childhood. Her body is to be protected both inside and outside the family. In *HM* Nisha at an early age of six becomes a victim of the sexual abuse by her cousin brother Vicky, a member of her own house. In *TI*, Nina is raped by her lover Anton. The irony of the issue is, in both the situations

these two female characters are silent sufferers who keep their mouth shut for the fear of spoiling their image and reputation in the society. The safety of a girl has always been a question mark in the Indian society. In this regard V. Geetha comments:

Women's bodies were often routinely viewed as objects of male desire and lust; a fact that was particularly evident in media images of women. Women's groups pointed to the range of sexual crimes that were directed at women - child abuse, incest, marital rape – to argue that their social existence was invariably sexualized and therefore not seen as worthy of equality or justice. The family and larger kin group, they noted, actively aided this sexualization of women's bodies by valorizing against women, they insisted, which secured the patriarch's power, both at level of family and society.

(Geetha 191)

Religion and caste have always been a constraint to the women in the novels of Kapur. Nisha in *HM*, could not marry her lover Suresh because he is from a low caste. Pipeelika and Astha in *CY* undergo the trials of religion. Pipeelika is restricted from marrying Aijaj since she is a Hindu and Aijaj a Muslim. Astha is questioned and restricted by her husband and mother-in-law for participating in the rally where she is protesting against the communal violence and riots during Ram Janmabhoomi Babri Masjid issue.

Women's Status in Indian Marriages

John Stuart Mill in his *The Subjection of Women* refers to an ideal relationship in marriage:

What marriage may be in the case of two persons of cultivated faculties, identical in opinion and purposes, between whom exists the best kind of equality, similarity of powers and capacities with reciprocal superiority over them- so that each can enjoy the luxury of looking up to the other, and can have alternately the pleasure of leading and of being led in the path of development... I maintain with the proudest conviction that this, and this only, is the ideal of marriage. (Mill 235)

Kapur projects the main aspects of an Indian married woman's life - marriage, migration, motherhood - that is destined for her in marriage in Indian culture. One of the most prominent themes in the novels of Kapur is marriage since all her novels reveals that marrying off the daughters is the top priority of the parents in Indian culture since it is their social-religious and moral duty which affects even the reputation of the family to get their daughters married at the marriageable age is the primary responsibility. Kapur emphasizes on the role of the Indian parents who focus on their basic duties to comply with a social and moral code to preserve their cultural heritage. Their main concerns are aspects about their daughters' marriage in their marriageable age. Hence, we come across female characters who are hostile to their parents. The mother-daughter conflicting relationship is a major aspect of the novel.

However, in the novels of Kapur we witness a different picture of the Indian marriage system. Hence, delving deep into the psyche of women and exploring the sensitivity of her human heart we realize that an Indian wife's life undergoes subtle changes. She doesn't live her married life as per her choice, rather it is the life destined for her by the parents and her in-laws and husband. Kapur has evaluated the various shades of husband-wife

relationships and projected the experiences of a woman as a wife, a married woman, in this institution of marriage. The experience of the bond of marriage is suffocation for one, whereas for another it is liberation. If it is adjustment and acceptance for one, it is compromise and cooperation for another.

Kapur has intelligently introduced the east-west perspectives of marriage. In India marriage and a married woman commands great respect. A married woman has a privileged status and identity in the society. Indian culture has the history of arranged marriages. In western countries the woman's opinion carries importance in her marriage, whereas in Indian marriages it is the family and the opinion of the elders that decides the marriage of the girl. It is not just the union of two individuals rather two families. Nina, in *TI* marries because of the society, her passing marriageable age, her mother's sense of security, and to escape from social criticism.

A married woman is not only a wife, she has to play a satisfactory role of a responsible and obedient daughter-in-law and adjusting and caring sister-in-law. Hence, the wife keeps on sacrificing to keep the relationship intact for the sake of her parents and in-law reputation. Whereas, the western woman can break-free from this institution since she holds the right to decide her life. Finally, the husband-wife relationship in Indian marriages turns out as a matter of social prestige. The couples in most of these marriages in these novels are forced to stay in the relationship because of the social norms and hence get suffocated, and gradually give way to extra-marital relationships to fulfill their desires. Ananda in *TI* wanted to marry an Indian bride, but always desired and had sexual relationships with many white women.

Astha in *AMW* crosses her boundary of sanctity of marriage and falls in love with Pipeelika ending up with a lesbian relationship. Shagun in *CY* falls in love with Ashok, breaks out of her marital bond with Raman and marries Ashok. Kapur's women search for security and a permanent shelter of their own – home - in their marriage. Sometimes, they get it in their own land or may be in a foreign land. In both the cases they adjust to the new people and new environment. They sense alienation, dislocation, relocations and assimilation into the new culture.

Kapur's married women have different faces; some are traditional, submissive and conventional; Kasturi and Ganga in *DD* and Sona in *HM*, who are forced to live the life within the cultural restraints and norms prescribed by Indian Society. Some educated women are aware of their self and work outside home for self-identity and independence; Virmati and Swarnalata in *DD*, Astha and Pipeelika in *AMW*, Rupa, and Nisha in *HM*, and they fulfil dual responsibilities of a wife and a working woman, by managing both home and profession by staying in the relationship. However, at times we witness some new women who break the barriers, move out of the ties of marriage and relationships; Ida in *DD*, Nina in *TI* and Shagun in *CY*, and feel a new wave in their new life designed and decided by themselves; a world of liberation, assertion, freedom, independence and space.

Women and Womb

“Marriage must be necessarily followed by motherhood.” (Nubile 24)

On the one side maternity is a power for women and on the other side, it is a symbol of patriarchal control and regulation of female sexuality and agency. In an Indian traditional framework, woman does not have any space for herself as an individual. She must be a wife and a mother. Her novels reveal the truth that in a traditional Indian

society woman is disempowered due to her barren body and an infertile woman undergoes tribulations and negative experiences due to her infertile womb. Infertility is another major issue that has been highlighted by Kapur, through her women characters Sona and Rupa in *HM*, Nina in *TI* and Ishita in *CY*. At the same time, woman's womb is used as a child bearing agency. Kasturi in *DD* is married off at the age of seventeen and almost instantly in the next seventeen years to come she delivers eleven children that takes a heavy toll on her physical and mental strength. A time comes when she prays to God for miscarriages. Kapur's novels witness forced abortions where the female psychology is disturbed and hurt along with the pain and suffering of the physical body. Virmati and her daughter Ida in *DD*, though they belong to different generations still becomes victim of this evil in the society. Hence, woman and her womb goes through knives, scissors, pain and sufferings throughout.

Women in shackles of stereotypes

'The family is at once the source of women's affirmation as well as their subordinationwomen are heralded as the martyrs of the struggle and the source of its regeneration, and yet they are denied active leadership positions.' (Hassim 20)

Women have always been attributed with the traditional roles of a mother, a wife or a mistress or seductress. Her role has always been the role of a giver. She is expected to be a good cook and nurse; should possess desirable qualities of a good wife like being submissive, humble, caring and obedient. She should know how to seduce her husband in the bed and keep him satisfied sexually. Her position and role is confined to the four walls of her husband's house. However, with a blend of tradition and modernity and proper education Kapur's women have challenged these stereotypical roles. They are not confined to the houses and prove themselves to be emancipated women.

Challenging the Stereotypes, Kapur's New Women

It is not just about survival, but Kapur's women show their attitude to live with lot of zeal in their lives. They are emotionally strong women who have the amazing ability to face adversities with their head held high. They all exhibit a steely determination and try their best to ultimately emerge out as victorious women under all kinds of trying circumstances. Their assertive and decisive attitude can be seen in many of the novels.

Shakuntala, Swarnalata, Virmati and Ida in *DD*, are represented as the defying women. Shakuntala establishes her identity by becoming a chemistry lecturer, Swarnalata emerges as a freedom fighter and fights for women's rights, Virmati studied, did M.A. and married as per her choice, and Ida divorced her husband, worked and became independent. Pipeelika and Astha in *AMW* represent the liberated woman and progressive women respectively who take active participation in the social activities for justice. Nisha and Rupa in *HM* are the courageous business women with strong will power. Nina in *TI* is the modern woman who studies in a foreign land, gets degree in library course, divorces her husband and works for an independent life. Shagun and Ishita in *CY* are women who represent success in achieving their destination and quest in life. They created a space and made a position for themselves in the society.

Women's Role in Indian Politics

The major women characters of her novels are centripetally involved in the vortex of politics and fight for their freedom as well as the nation's freedom and justice. In *DD* she has mentioned about the empowered women power through Punjab Women's Student Conference and their involvement in the nation's struggle for independence. Kapur introduces Mohini Datta and her speech: "Mohini Datta was explaining the meaning of the flag, how

freedom was necessary for the development of the human spirit, how war, especially affected women, how progress was their object so that freedom could be enjoyed by all classes of people, even the lowest of the low" (*DD* 142). All the women participants in the conference had such strong opinions. They had appropriated their life to a large area like strikes, academic freedom, the war, peace, rural upliftment, mass consciousness, high prices due to the war, the medium of instruction, the Congress committee, the Muslim League, anti-imperialism, Independence Day movement, rally, speeches.

Neither Kapur nor her women ever profess any specific political ideology or favor any political creed. Astha and Pipeelika, the leading women characters in *AMW*, are active participants in various activities like Street Theatre Group, Sampradayakta Mukti Manch, demonstrations, rallies and protest against massacres. Astha reaches Red Fort; the air is thick with banners. The rally sets off. These women with high spirits join in the candle march against religious fanaticism in Ayodhya during Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy. Astha joins the crowd down Rajpath with the candles glowing. She carries the placards and demands a united India, secularism and declares that communalism is the scourge of the nation.

Narrative Technique

Kapur has done an extensive work in the psychological portrayal of her women characters through stream of consciousness technique. In her novels, one also gets to know her attitudinal changes with respect to the cultural context that shows vivid changes. The women protagonists in her novels express intense sufferings and the root cause for is their unsuccessful attempt to establish an emotional understanding and emotional connect. Her novels depict the lives of her protagonists who are fundamentally hypersensitive in

nature and perpetually searching ways to make their lives meaningful. In her works one can see that the disturbed state of mind of the women sufferers is either due to loneliness or estrangement.

In her novels she has portrayed her chief women protagonists as a victim, a heroine, a woman who believes not just in survival, but one having a jest for life, a gritty woman fighter who finally emerges to be victorious due to her compromising attitude and indomitable spirit. Her women characters are presented to be very sensitive beings who are constantly struggling to strike a perfect balance between their own selves and the societal norms. She has also shown success in writing about the male psyche as well. Her themes vary extensively from time to time. These women are in a confused state of mind, but as the story progresses, their introspective nature and self-analyzing nature is revealed and finally they reach the state of self-realization. She examines thoroughly the agony and anguish of her protagonists in various predicaments. Even though they are caught in conflicting situations, ultimately they make their aspirations and desires fulfilled.

Her novels focus on women who face very serious consequences owing to the traumatic experiences they come across in their lives. Her works speak about the dilemma and the difficulties faced by modern career-minded women in a patriarchal set up. The aptitude for survival make woman wade through many crisis and suffer losses, but ultimately their inner hidden strengths and coping techniques help them to emerge as confident and successful women. These women are caught up between tradition and modernity, between their duty as a daughter, wife and mother, upholding dignity as a human being.

Language and Literary Devices

The appreciation and high readability of these novels is because of its great lucidity triggered by Kapur's use of code-switching and code-mixing devices. The source of high readability of these novels lies in the transcreation or Indianization, i.e. extensive use of Hindi and Punjabi words in the novel, giving the language a local flavor local with local culture and customs. This makes the context or narration more realistic. Many such examples can be observed in the novels:

- i. ‘puris and parathas wrapped in Britannia-bread waxed paper’ (DD 2)
- ii. ‘aalu ki sabzi in mithai boxes’ (DD 2)
- iii. “a woman’s shaan is in her home” (DD 13)
- iv. At the doorway she (Kasturi) turned back once to say, ‘Indu, ... use the fresh butter in the *doli*, the old one is for *ghee*.’ ‘*Han*,’ said Indu ... (DD 74)
- v. ‘What a lovely place to be finally laid to rest!’ ‘*Hoon*,’ said Virmati absently who saw nothing so remarkable about the gravestones. (DD 176)
- vi. ‘They ... skirted the *zenana aangan*’ (DD 180)
- vii. ‘... and pull her *sari palla*’ (DD 213)
- viii. *Hai re, beti!* (DD 13)
- ix. He is ill, he is sick, he has fainted, *hai re, hai re.* (DD 78)
- x. Come here *beta.* (DD 202)

- xi. Mornings, toast and milk. Lunch *dal*, rice, chappati, vegetable, *dahi*, sometimes a sweet dish, for tea, *pakora or mathri*, for dinner, *dal, sabzi*, sometimes with *paneer*, rice, chapatti. (*DD* 108)
- xii. If something happens, God forbid, *thoo-thoo*, she has her family, her brothers, her aunt and uncle. (*HM* 124)
- xiii. He sounds like a real *chutia*. (*HM* 199)
- xiv. If only you could take me with you, *Papaji*. (*HM* 268)

The novels are brilliant because of the women issues being discussed like-female desires, entrapment, compromise and compliance. Yet, the researcher feels that the problems faced by these women cannot be eradicated forever. Different problems in new shapes and forms may crop up and hence women will be victimized. Writers will emerge with new writings depicting and analyzing these problems from various angles, views and perspectives. Hence, keeping these thoughts in mind, in coming future, more research studies in this field would be possible.

Kapur's novels is committed to the multi-layered historical, political, social and cultural aspects of the nation dealing with issues related to historical reconstructions and the reactions of the Indian women to these changing and challenging issues throughout the Indian history and even in contemporary India. Kapur, a novelist with political consciousness is not divorced from humanistic concern. The personal predicaments of the characters, sometimes, run parallel to the political crises they face. The political description in the novels comprises the turmoil both before and after independence in 1947, the revolt against the British Empire; the time of emergency in 1975, the surprise victory of

Janata party over Congress in 1977, the Ram-Janmbhoomi and Babri Masjid controversy in 1989. Her novels expose the power, hunger, and ambition of politicians on the one hand and on the other hand highlights the ardent freedom fighters and their sacrifices for their motherland.

Kapur projects her women characters who play a vital role in the politics of the nation. In her works there is a juxtaposition of two worlds: the personal world of women and their life and relationships and the impersonal world of women with their involvement in politics. Kapur depicts the nation's consciousness through the fragmented consciousness of her women characters. Kapur presents the personal independence that the Indian women strive for as an allegorical representation of the aspirations of political independence of the nation. Her novels effectively compare personal and national struggles. The individual woman's struggle against gender biases prevailing in the society appears as a reflection of an entire nation's struggle against racial biases. The challenges and upheavals on both the levels are similar.

At a micro-level these trials and tribulations represent an entire nation's struggle for freedom, at an individual level they symbolize the emergence of feminine assertiveness in a patriarchal society. Kapur's women are truly fascinating women whose display of women power unfailingly amazes the readers. All these women have questioned the age old customs during their struggle. They have a quest for self-identity and one can see a radical transformation in them. They are the embodiment of confidence, assertiveness, liberation, courage, passion, freedom, determination, independence, strength, freethinking, re-invention, rebellion, defiance and pragmatism. They defy the social norms by creating an identity and space for themselves in the society and prove themselves as 'New Women'.