



## The “Rebound Resilience” - An Overview Of Manju Kapur’s Novels

Mrs. S. Poornima<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. V. Anuradha<sup>2</sup>, Mrs. Cilvy A.V.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Research Scholar, Department of English, Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute University, Maduravoyal, Chennai-600095, Tamilnadu, India. Assistant Professor –English, St. Thomas College of Arts and Science, Koyembedu, Chennai 600107.

Email ID: poornima.sp31@gmail.com

<sup>2\*</sup>Research Supervisor, Associate Professor, Department of English, Dean Admission - Bihar, West Bengal & Assam, Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute University, Maduravoyal, Chennai- 600 095, Tamilnadu, India.

Email ID: anuradha.eng@drmgrdu.ac.in

<sup>3\*</sup>Research Scholar, Department of English, Dr. SNS Rajalakshmi College of Arts and Science, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India. Assistant Professor –English, St. Thomas College of Arts and Science, Koyembedu, Chennai 600 107.

Email ID: cilvyav@gmail.com

**Citation:** Mrs. S. Poornima et.al (2024), The “Rebound Resilience” - An Overview Of Manju Kapur’s Novels, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(5), 7961 - 7965

Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i5.4284

### ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT

Manju Kapur, a well-renowned feminist in the contemporary literary domain, is preoccupied with depicting the pitiable plight of Indian women owing to recovery of fostering sustainability which leads to the emergence of new women. She artistically elaborates on her feminist concerns about Indian women to create an identity of their own.

Kapur’s first novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998) received huge international acclaim. It was awarded the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the best first book. The key theme of *Difficult Daughters* is the search for control over one’s destiny. The novel is the story of three generations of women – Kasturi, Virmati, and Ida. Her second novel *A Married Woman* was published (2002). It carried the feminist movement a few steps ahead of Manju Kapur’s previous novel. It won comparable commercial success both in India and abroad-becoming a surprise library hit in Britain.

Her third novel *Home* (2006) was short-listed for the Hutch Crossword Book Award in 2006. This novel is dedicated to her children- Amba, Maya, Katyayani, and Agatsya. It is a multi-generation family saga. This is a fast-moving story of a middle-class family’s life in Delhi.

This paper focuses on the women characters of Manju Kapur, and their suffering during the struggle for survival in the male-dominated society. But at the same time, they are resilient to the patriarchal age-old dominance.

It sketches how the novelist interprets the struggle of women for liberation. This paper also explores the qualities of rebound, repercussion, and recovering spirit of women who emerge as self-conceit. Their sufferings have made them strong and they are struggling to set themselves free from the shackles of tradition and various prejudices.

**Keywords:** Rebound Resilience, repercussion, Patriarchy, Self-Conceit.

### Introduction

Feminism is the belief that women should have the same rights, positions, and opportunities that men have. The movement supports the idea that the present situation should be changed to give women equality with men in all aspects.

There has been partial success regarding gender equality, reform laws, and family law in the Society. This may be a major advancement still it is not a complete triumph in terms of feminism and relieving oppression. There are many reasons that women are less likely to reach optimal levels of education including the fact that they are needed to assist their mother at home, illiterate mothers who cannot educate their children, have an economic dependency on men, and so that they are sometimes subject to child marriage. Women are very sensitive, sensible, and exuberant homemakers by destiny. Their suffering has mellowed them down and gives them an edge over their male counterparts when it comes to depicting confusion created by clashing

values and thoughts. In the wake of the feminist movement in India, themes like women's search for identity, zest for selfhood, relocating the self, and awareness to seek a balance between tradition and modernity became popular in the work of both males as well as female writers of the post-colonial Indian English fiction. The Indian English fiction resounded with the woman's assertion of her individuality, social and economic freedom, freedom of mental stability, and also emotional independence. Although they have always been the heart of family life because they play various roles as wife, mother, daughter, friend, sister, companion, mother-in-law, and daughter-in-law and always live for the honour of family values and make attention to maintaining its unity, at present, with the national movement and other subsequent political events. Feminist literary criticism is an offshoot of the feminist movement. It is a new style and method of reading literature. It is an analytic literature that conforms to interpret literature from the women's point of view and introduces the notion of sexual difference into the literature study.

### **Women writers and their contribution**

The seeds of women's writing in India can be traced back to the last quarter of the 20th century. The periphery of their creative imagination was confined to romances, fantasy, and fairy tales. Though female writers like Raj Laxmi Debi, Swarn Kumari Debi, Shanta Chatterjee, and Sita Chatterjee are the earlier models of Indian women novelists. The next era of English Fiction in India was inaugurated with the advent of Ruth Praver Jabwala, Kamala Markandya, Attia Hosain, Nayantara Sehgal, Santha Rama Rao, and Anita Desai. It is the first phase of women novelists in India covering thirty years, stretching from 1950 to 1980, and can be defined as the phase of social representation and reawakening. Also, the feminist vision is interpreted in the novels of the contemporary Indian women novelists like Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Gita Hariharan, Uma Vasudeva, Anita Rau Badami, Kiran Desai, Bharati Mukerjee, Chitra Banerjee, Namita Gokhle, Shobha De, Jumpa Lahiri, Kamala Das, Nargis Dalal, Dina Mehta, Indira Goswami, Malati Chendur, Gauri Deshpande, Anita Nair, Sudha Murthy, Gita Mehta, Bapsi Sidhwa, Kamala Samsie, Sauna Singh Baldwin, Manju Kapur. The portraiture of women is reflected in various literary forms of the literature. The women writers in their voice proclaim and assert that they are women of substance, not merely sex objects or sacrificing persons in the family. Cultural practices have always played a pivotal role in the subordination of women, as there are implications of power and control mechanisms embedded in culture, which reinforces gender inequality. The woman was never considered an independent human being. The condition of women has not changed much. Even in the twenty-first century suffering and subjugation still forced her to lead a circumscribed life with the advent of feminism, every female-oriented subject has become an issue of contemporary literary debate. In psychology, it stands for the mind functioning as the core of thought, emotion, and behavior and consciously or unconsciously adjusting or mediating the body's responses to the social and physical environment. To define Feminist Psyche is the most controversial aspect of feminist literature. Psyche contains different modes. A common trend runs through a feminist group that male undermines women's psyche by projecting patriarchal notions.

Manju Kapur is also a distinguished and well-established writer in the world of novels. She is one of the groups of Indian women writers in English who lived and wrote in India itself. She was born in 1948 in Amritsar, a city familiar with sectarian conflict. Manju Kapur has lived through turbulent times in India. She is the daughter of a bureaucrat and married her right-across-the-road neighbour Gun Nidhi Dalmia who draws on her father's bureaucratic days to create the same conditions as her father. She has four children-Amba, Maya, Katyayani, and Agastya. She did her graduation from Miranda House University College for Women and went for an M.A. at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, and an M.Phil. from Delhi University. She teaches English Literature at Miranda, Delhi University. She projects a new vision of Indian women in her fiction. She is the author of five novels. They are *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2009), and *Custody* (2011). Literary Contribution of Manju Kapur's first novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998) received huge international acclaim. It was awarded the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the best first book (Eurasia) and was India's number one bestseller book. It earned her substantial commercial and critical success in India and the world of literature.

### **Recessive and sociable characters**

The key theme of *Difficult Daughters* is the search for control over one's destiny. The novel is the story of three generations of women – Kasturi, Virmati, and Ida. It is a story of a young woman's life caught up in the complex web of social positions, personal desire, and a quest for education. It is set up against the backdrop of the partition of the sub-continent into India and Pakistan. In this novel, the protagonist is trying to find a place for her in a world where her life is dictated by familial duties and becomes entangled in a forbidden affair while the seismic upheavals of the partition surround her. The book is set during India's independence struggle and is partially based on Manju Kapur's life too. She enters into a scandalous relationship with her married neighbour, the Professor. The relationship parallels India's battle for freedom, and eventually, Virmati becomes the Professor's second wife. The book is set mostly in Amritsar and Lahore. "The most readable novel published in 1998 is the result of five years of research at Nehru Museum and Library at Teen Murti and was rewritten eight times. Manju Kapur had 18 initially named her first novel "Partition" but changed it at the suggestion of her publisher." (Interview)

Her second novel *A Married Woman* was published in 2002. It did not attract much attention but it carried the feministic movement a few steps ahead of Manju Kapur's previous novel. It won comparable commercial success both in India and abroad, becoming a surprise library hit in Britain. It provoked strong reactions in the reading public, being if anything even more controversial than its predecessor. It was short-listed in India for the Society of Authors 2004

Encore Award for the best Second book. *A Married Woman* may be studied at three levels. First at the feministic level, second at the historical level, and lastly at the level of deconstruction and post-modernism. It is a seductive story of love, set at a time of political and religious upheaval- a struggle which persists today, years after the 1992 destruction of the Babri Mosque – and parallels Astha's emotional turmoil told with sympathy and intelligence. It is the story of an artist whose canvas challenges the constraints of middle-class existence. She has depicted a lesbian relationship for the first time in Indian history. "Manju Kapur has delineated Astha's character as a woman who seeks in her life, a woman who asks a bit more of life than tradition will automatically give her." (Verma 55) Astha is the daughter of a working-class family. She is the only daughter of her parents. Her parents want her to study to the eligibility level of the requirement for marriage. But like Kapur's other heroines, she also wants to feel freedom. Initially, her affair with Rohan has been presented. Then her marriage with Hemant is described. Manju Kapur depicts the gripping political situation with the same zeal and graphic details as she describes Astha's actions and inner turmoil. Only one thing is sure; beset by enraged Hindus, pleading Muslims, and crooked policemen, the mosque, like Astha's marriage, will stand or fall depending on the courage and clout of those willing to fight the aggressors in the name of liberty and tolerance.

Her third novel *Home* (2006) was short-listed for the Hutch Crossword Book Award in 2006. This novel is dedicated to her children- Amba, Maya, 19 Katyayani, and Agatsya. It is a multi-generation family saga. This is a fast-moving story of an ordinary middle-class family's life in Delhi. The novel presents the picture of a joint family the Banwarilals-which pursues business with all its heart. It is rather more domestic, the generation conflicts that bother the sub-continent which provide the backdrop of Kapur's other novels. Manju Kapur has tried to put a lot of issues in this book that are commonly encountered in a joint family and are usually kept under the carpet to protect the family's honor and name. The two sons of Banwarilal-Yashpal and Pyarelal - are well settled in business and are married, the former to Sona and the latter to Sushila. Banwarilal's daughter, Sunita, is wedded to Murli, a jobless man of irritable nature believing in dowry and is responsible for burning Sunita at the age of thirty-two, leaving behind her only son, Vicky, a lean and thin boy of shy nature, to the care of maternal uncles and their parents. Kapur presents Nisha, the protagonist, and daughter of Sona, as bold, educated, balanced, and of course, both Indian and modern. Her feminist sensibility has been suppressed to a great extent by patriarchy. Although Nisha undergoes a series of traumas, she finally succeeds in living like a free woman without resorting to any extreme steps as in the case of Astha. She asserts her womanhood boldly because she is iconoclastic and modern in her approach to life.

Manju Kapur's latest novel, *Home*, is all about home and hearth about women and their activities in the Banwarilal family. It squarely treats not merely one home and hearth but many others, with those of Sunita and Murli, of Rupa and Premnath, of Nisha and Arvind. But all these homes are interconnected to the home of Banwarilal. (Dwivedi 45)

Kapur's fourth novel *The Immigrant* (2008) is short-listed for DSC Prize for South Asian Literature in 2011. In subject matter and locale, the focus is shifted from India to Canada but at the core, the novel deals with man-woman relationships. Kapur depicts the two aspects of the man-woman relationship – sexual and psychological. But it is the sexual aspect with overpowers the psychological aspect. Nina is a thirty-year-old English lecturer in New Delhi, living with her widowed mother and frustrated by how little life has to offer. Ananda has recently immigrated to Halifax, Canada; having spent his twenties painstakingly building his career, he searches for something recently immigrated to Halifax, Canada; having spent his twenties painstakingly building his career, he searches for something to complete his new life. When an arranged marriage is proposed, Nina is uncertain: can she give up her home and her country to build a new life with a husband she barely knows? The consequences of change are far greater than she could have imagined. As the two of them struggle to adapt to married life, Nina's whole world is thrown into question. And as certain truths threaten the marriage; her fragile life in Canada begins to unravel. Her fifth novel *Custody* (2011) follows her previous novels which are acclaimed works such as *Difficult Daughters* and *The Immigrant*. This story is largely set in the thriving, elite-class colonies of Delhi in the mid-90s against the backdrop of the initial surge of foreign investment in India. Manju Kapur is well-established as a thoughtful and entertaining chronicler of the Indian middle classes. Raman and Shagun seem like the couple who have everything. He is a hard-working man who holds a high-pressure marketing job. Shagun is the gorgeous wife who dutifully produces a boy, Arjun, and a girl, Roohi, and accompanies him to official parties. In another part of the city is Ishita, whose marriage runs into trouble and finally breaks up when her in-laws realize she can't have children. Kapur is adept at dealing with this complicated family reconfiguration, and the insecurity it brings to the stepmothers as well as children. In Ishita's plight, we see the second wife's desperate struggle to replace the biological mother, while Ashok, Shagun's spouse presents a more ambiguous kind of care. Neither does she spend too long on whether Shagun's infidelity scandalizes society, but focuses on how it affects her characters. The concept of family shame and social propriety is firmly visible in the background. Manju Kapur is one of the prominent new voices making her presence felt. She is one of the women writers

from India whose protagonists are women trying to maintain a balance all the time. Their sufferings have made them strong and they struggle to free themselves from the shackles of tradition and various prejudices. Manju Kapur like Roy, experiments with new themes such as the gratification of sex from Women's point of view along with the politics of the day. Feminism and contemporary history go hand in hand to give new dimensions to their fiction. (Pushpa 290) Kapur's intellectual work is a form of raising awareness, identifying problems, and suggesting forms of resistance and negotiation. It will be interesting to note the man-woman relationship in the novels of Manju Kapur. The emergence of new women in the realm of social, cultural, and racial aspects will also be probed in the novels of Manju Kapur. The concept of new women in Indian society varies from the one in the West and therefore Manju Kapur has tried to evolve her stream of emerging new women grounded in rebound resilience. She has her concerns, and priorities as well as her ways of dealing with the predicament of her women protagonists. Her novels make a significant contribution in this direction.

### Conclusion

To conclude, Manju Kapur holds great concern for Indian Women in all her novels. She concentrates on various feministic issues like female education and their empowerment, financial independence, mental trauma, and gender bias segregation. She narrates important issues of class and nationhood and connects them to the emerging sense of female identity in postcolonial India. Manju Kapur's message is loud and clear that society would be better off if women were competent. Women in Postcolonial India have opened the cage before flying out they have to strengthen their wings and vision to avoid perching on dangerous branches. Women are socially responsible in all their aspects and they always strive to emerge as new women.

### WORK CITED

#### PRIMARY SOURCES

##### A) NOVELS BY MANJU KAPUR

- Difficult Daughters. London: Faber and Faber, 1999.  
 A Married Woman. New Delhi: India Ink, 2002.  
 Home. New Delhi: Random House India, 2006.  
 The Immigrant. New Delhi: Random House India, 2008.

#### SECONDARY SOURCES

##### JOURNAL ARTICLES AND REVIEWS

- Cormack, Margaret. The Hindu Women. Columbia University: Bureau of Publishers, Teachers College, 1989. Print.
- Das, Sangeeta. "Quest for Identity with Sashi Deshpande". New Perspectives on Indian English Writing, Ed. Malti Agarwal. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2007. Print.
- Beauvoir, Simone De. The Second Sex. UK: Vintage Classics, Random House 1997. Print.
- Dwivedi, A.N. "Manju Kapur's Home (2006): A Feminist Reading" Novels of Manju Kapur: A Feministic Study. Ed. Ashok Kumar. New Delhi: Sarup Book Publishers, 2010. Print. Halder, Santana.
- "Exile in Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss". The Atlantic Literary Review, Vol.-8, No.2, 2007. Web. Interview with Manju Kapur in September, 2005.
- Manju Kapur's comments are part of this interview and find a place in the chapter. Mohandas, Pushpa. "A Journey to Selfhood: Manju Kapur's 'A Married Woman'", Feminism and Recent Indian Literature. Ed. R. K. Dhawan. Vol. II. Delhi: Prestige International Publishing House, 2009. Print.
- Nehru, Jawaharlal. Discovery of India. New Delhi: JLN Memorial Fund, 1981. Print.
- Saini, Bimaljit. The God of Small Things- A Feminist Analysis; Feminist English Literature. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1999. Print.
- Trivedi, Harish. Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India, Calcutta: Papyrus, 2005. Print.
- Verma, Anuradha. "Manju Kapur's Astha: A New Woman.". New Perspectives on Indian English Writings. Ed. Malti Agarwal. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2007. Print.
- Chaudhari, Mina. Novels of Manju Kapur: A Study in Feministic Approach. Diss. Gandhinagar. 2011.
- Das, Krishna, Patra Deepchand. Studies in English Literature, New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 2009. Print.
- Dhawan, R.K., Ed. **Indian Women Novelists**. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1991.
- Dwivedi, A.N. "Manju Kapur's Home (2006): A Feminist Reading" Novels of Manju Kapur: A Feministic Study. Ed. Ashok Kumar. New Delhi: Sarup Book Publishers, 2010.
- Gupta, Poonam Rani. "Breaking the Tradition of Silence: A Study of Manju Kapur's Novels." Rise of New Woman Novels of Manju Kapur. Ed. Ram Sharma. Delhi: Mangalam Publications, 2013

**Review on thesis**

1. Girija, Uggirangi, Women in the novels of Manju Kapur a study, 2017. Andhra University <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/388402>
2. Kusuma Kumari, Y, Reinventing womanhood in the novels of Manju Kapur. 2018 Andhra University <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/388407>
3. Bharathi, S. A critical study of women characters in the select novels of Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur, 2017 Alagappa University <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/201594>
4. Girija, Uggirangi. Women in the novels of Manju Kapur a study 2017 Andhra University <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/388402>
5. Modiani, Rinkoo S Tradition versus modernity in Manju Kapurs novels A critical study 2017 Saurashtra University  
Pawan Pratap Singh Quest for Identity in the Novels of Manju Kapur 2023, P.K. University <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/557577>
6. Joshi, Samir Rameshchandra. The images of women reflected in the novels of Manju Kapur 2015 Saurashtra University <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/50888>
7. Vyas Jigisha R Conflicts of Women in the Selected Novels of Manju Kapur 2017 Bhagwant University <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/173209>
8. Alagumeenal N The conflict for autonomy and separate identity of Indian women in manju kapurs select novels 2019 Periyar University <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/263705>
9. Swami, Khushbu M Identity Crisis of Women and Survival Strategies In Manju Kapur's Novels A Critical Study 2017 Hemchandracharya North Gujarat University <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/303039>

**WEBLIOGRAPHY**

1. [www..amazon.com/Difficult-Daughters-ManjuKapur/ap/05711195695](http://www.amazon.com/Difficult-Daughters-ManjuKapur/ap/05711195695)