

NINA- An Epitome of Emancipation-A Study of Manju Kapur's THE IMMIGRANT

Mrs. T. Sri Devi, Assistant Professor of English, SRM University, Tamilnadu, India.

Abstract-*Indian English Literature, with its new face, represents in its fullness all major aspects of Indianness. Especially modern-day women authors are now expressing themselves freely and boldly on a variety of themes. Among them, though Manju Kapur hates to be called a feminist writer, through all her fictional work projects the feminist concerns. The entire scenario in her novels is feminine. All of her heroines are middle-class educated urban Indian women struggling to establish themselves with their own independent identities in the patriarchal setup of which they are part and parcel. Marriage is one of the tools for a creative writer to depict the cultural ethos representing Indianness. Marriage and motherhood have long defined Indian women's roles and identities. Men as husbands and fathers have a protean identity and define themselves according to their own convenience. Yet few female like Nina in *The Immigrant* try their best to maintain the harmony at home but when they feel total injustice and suffocated, they don't hesitate to walk out of their men. Hence, it is decided to explore how Nina struggles a lot for her self-establishment in a host country, in her personal life and becomes the epitome of emancipation.*

Keywords: *Indian Women, Marriage, Injustice, Self-establishment.*

In *The Immigrant*, Ananda and Nina are thrown together by the system of arranged marriage. Nina agrees to this marriage because she has turned 30 and thinks that she will be left on the shelf. It would also please her mother and it would give her a chance to get out of her cramped life. Her husband Ananda is a dentist with a private practice in Canada. Ananda agrees to the marriage because he is unable to find a white girl in Canada mainly due to his sexual insufficiency.

On the bridal night, Ananda hides his sexual problem. With the help of his dental anesthetic spray, he consummates his marriage. For Nina, it is a different consummation, entirely different from her imagination. When she enquires about the medicinal smell inside the room, Ananda cheats that it's the smell of the cleaning stuff

in the bathroom. With a western attitude Ananda shares the household duties with his wife, asks her to use western attire and even asks her to continue her education. But when Nina feels their love making is not sufficient to make her pregnant, Ananda burst out with his Indian heart and complains as a Nina finding fault with him without understanding his nature of work.

When Nina demands for a clinical check up, Ananda replies that he does his best. He has inhibition, but as a typical Indian male, he doesn't want to start out with Nina complaining about his sexual shortcomings, though he has to admit she is the one most affected. So he decides to go for a therapy with a western attitude but goes secretly, even without the knowledge of his wife with an Indian heart. He plans that he has to inform her of this only if it becomes successful. He decides to go for the therapy not only to satisfy his wife but also to go for sexual adventures with other white women. When Ananda hesitates to go for clinical observation, the social space of Canada helps her feel easy to go for a gynecological consultation. Thus she is expanding into Halifax in ways that makes her less dependent on her work.

'You didn't feel it necessary to see a doctor,' she said as neutrally as she could, 'about why weren't getting pregnant, so I went myself. (171)

At the time of Ananda's secret visit for sex therapy, Nina's frequent visit to the local library earns her a part time job which she feels at home out of home. When Nina has joined in a women's group, Ananda is not amused instead he advises her to choose the best from the West, and not blindly follow any and everybody. As he has detailed his objections, anger submerges Nina:

'Why shouldn't I join a group? When in Rome, do as the Romans do'.

...

'I need to find my feet in this country. I can't walk on yours'. (213)

Nina has discovered that the only thing she has to rely on herself and she has an urge to adapt to circumstances and go forward. Therefore she has rejected Ananda's invitation for a consultation with a gynecologist. She doesn't even feel happy about Ananda's sperm test result. Ananda is highly disappointed with Nina's response to his sperm test. He has expected her to be more appreciative that there is nothing wrong with him. Instead, she has joined in a Library degree course in HRL, out of her performance in the personal interview for admission, and her admission is assured with a scholarship and a guaranteed job anywhere in North America. Thus Nina is taking the first step towards autonomy.

In the Library School, Anton, another student immigrant from America, who likes Asian women for their warm, intelligent, gentle and empathetic attitude, becomes the best friend of Nina. By the company of Anton, Nina completely sinks into Western culture. All around her she heard of open marriage, no need to live according to the rules of others. Her life is her own and doesn't owe anybody for giving explanation. Nina practices smoking, drinking, eating meat and even adultery with Anton as she doesn't have sexual fulfillment with Ananda. Adultery doesn't make her feel guilty, not beyond the initial shock. Instead, she has the sense of her own self, autonomous and independent. Thus, "Her first lover had taken her virginity and her hopes, her second lover had been her husband, her third had made her international". (261) But When Nina has found that Anton's importance of his wife is much greater than for her, she resolves to cut him off. As a result of that she has been raped by Anton, therefore she leaves him once for all.

The death of Nina's mother has broken Nina's last ties with her homeland. It makes a little difference inside her psyche, so when she has come back to Canada, she thinks of Ananda as the only anchor in her world. But he gives her a shock through an evidence of blond hair on their bed.

That hair explained much-the distance, the silence, the ticket for two months in India, his strange indifference interspersed with tenderness, the shifty look that skittered about her. She didn't blame him. His body spoke, when his tongue could not. (324)

At last Nina found that she should be her own anchor. So she decided to be distanced herself from the dependent life with Ananda and began her search for identity in an alien land.

This paper is an examination of the efforts of Nina to establish her self-identity. She has liberated herself from the patriarchal constraints and gets the ability to choose her own career through education, the ability to decide whether she wants to have children, her sexual freedom, her change in dress and image, and eventually her decision to leave her male partners. Thus, Nina becomes the epitome of emancipated Indian women who are now portrayed as more assertive, more liberated in their views, and more articulate in their expressions than the women of the past. Instead of downgrading the elements of suffering at the hands of her lover or husband or man, she has started asserting her substantive identity in action, not in words.

References

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