

A BRIEF STUDY ON THE PORTRAYAL OF UNDERPINNING OF WOMEN IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF THE INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS

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Abstract.

The portrayal of women exhibits significant diversity across multiple novels authored by various novelists. Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy, Sudha Murthy, and Shobha De have contributed to the exploration of various facets of Indian culture and the contemporary landscape. Women have not only been portrayed as slaves but also as victims of societal norms, male violence, and cultural clashes. The presence of victimisation in literature pertaining to works centred around female experiences, within the context of social and cultural factors, is highly apparent. The woman, in her endeavour, faces numerous challenges and is subjected to various judgements and perspectives, regardless of her assertiveness or submissiveness, physical attractiveness, or job aspirations. She is constantly evaluated through multiple lenses and perceptions. She has become familiar with the language and those who have bestowed upon her various titles. Each instance of her existence has been recorded and interpreted using various frameworks. This study discusses the fundamental concept of embankment or titles as representations of a woman's personality. This study will analyse many facets pertaining to the female characters in the novels *A Married Woman* by Manju Kapur, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy, *The House of Cards* by Sudha Murthy, and *Seventy.. and to Hell with It*. The literary works of these authors have shown female characters in both Indian and Western settings, exploring their experiences and hardships within various familial and societal situations.

Key words: suffering, fractured identity, confusion, mystic relations, gender bias and cultural exploration.

Introduction

In a nation such as India, individuals aspire to revere women as deities or symbols of selflessness rather than perceiving them as ordinary individuals. The deity has demonstrated exceptional proficiency in her capabilities, but she lacks the entitlement to freely articulate her thoughts and pursue her personal preferences. The woman is entangled in physical, mental, and psychological distress, ultimately preventing her from experiencing the gift of life bestowed upon her by a higher power. The individual in question exhibits initial vulnerability, which then gives way to a burgeoning feeling of personal freedom and resolute character.

The portrayal of women in literature serves as a significant representation of societal norms and diverse cultural perspectives. Throughout history, literature has played a significant role in establishing trends and evoking emotions. The presence of alterations and modifications based on cultural, normative, customary, and religious factors across many origins and circumstances is clearly obvious in numerous works authored by individuals from various time periods. The status of women is often influenced and moulded by strong and affluent individuals for their own advantage, as has been extensively documented by various authors using common and overused expressions. This approach has adversely affected the status of women. The representation of women over the past four decades has exhibited a consistent state of flux. The works of Manju Kapur, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, and Jhumpa Lahiri all address the issue of gender discrimination and explore how women's silence is sometimes overshadowed by the emergence of liberal or new-woman movements. The phenomenon of suffering has undergone a change in nomenclature; however, its fundamental nature remains consistent with its previous manifestations. She has assumed various personas and has undoubtedly transformed into a diva. The individual in question has undergone a process of urbanisation, resulting in a transformation into a new archetype of womanhood. This new woman embodies both informal and professional qualities. She has experienced the burden of personal accountability and the sociopolitical dimension of democracy. Manju Kapur demonstrates exceptional storytelling skills and a remarkable ability to depict intricate aspects of the typical Indian milieu. The author has adeptly crafted her female characters to possess a high level of education and a keen understanding of their own rights and responsibilities. The female characters portrayed in her work exhibit a remarkable degree of authenticity, embodying both an idealised and strong nature while also displaying a rebellious streak. The female protagonists in her work demonstrate instances of bigotry, the stifling of their voices, and the perpetration of crimes within the confines of old patriarchal customs. This statement highlights the concern over the chaos caused by women. Additionally, she expressed her inclination towards experiencing love and undergoing conversion in the context of sexual and psychological necessities while still adhering to cultural norms. Additionally, she possesses the ability to address various topics, such as gender, class, and religious conflicts, effectively weaving them into the narrative in a skilful manner. The author employs a combination of simplicity and dissemination in her language to effectively address and examine the role of women in modern contexts. She adeptly illustrates the socio-economic divide between middle- and upper-class communities coexisting amidst the backdrop of an economic crisis.

Related Work

The women in Manju Kapur's "A Married Woman"

The work titled *A Married Woman* explores the inner conflict that a female protagonist goes through after going through significant changes in her life. Ultimately, she confronts several challenges in her pursuit of fundamental rights encompassing equality, personal identity, and fulfilment. The characters in Kapur's works tend to possess a high level of education, resulting in a heightened awareness of their own identity. This paper explores the feminist perspectives of the author in order to raise awareness among women regarding their identity and societal position. The protagonist of the novel, Astha, exemplifies the concept of a "new woman" who navigates the challenges of her life without resorting to violence, instead fulfilling her familial obligations dutifully. A novel female individual derives gratification from her unique approach to challenging the established conventions of a patriarchal society characterised by male dominance.

Kapur adeptly portrays the character of Astha, who is instructed by her mother to prioritise domestic duties. The individual has a sense of discrimination as a result of the customs she is expected to adhere to. These customs impose obligations on her without due regard for her thoughts and emotions. Hemant, the protagonist's spouse, exhibits a conventional desire for her to fulfil the role of his evening entertainment. Despite her exhaustion from a day's work, she endeavours to satisfy her husband's expectations. Prior to her marriage, she held an idealised perception of a husband who would provide care and pampering. However, her expectations were crushed upon encountering the harsh realities of married life. Hemant is characterised as a traditional spouse who holds the belief that an ideal partner for marriage is a lady who fulfils the role of caring for both her own parents and the extended family. The individual in question deliberately selected Astha as a life partner due to her lack of demanding qualities. Astha's mother can be observed as conforming to gender stereotypes, as she places a greater emphasis on the male kid. This is evident when, throughout Astha's pregnancy, she expresses a desire to be blessed with a male child through her prayers. Astha's mother-in-law exemplifies the traditional portrayal of women, as evidenced by her behaviour during Astha's second pregnancy, wherein she performed a pooja (religious ritual) with the intention of conceiving a male child. Ashta perceives the societal inclination towards desiring a male child as peculiar, but comprehends the underlying aspirations and cultural significance associated with such a preference. The individual recognises that assuming the responsibilities of caring for her spouse and raising children results in a progressive loss of her own sense of self, leading to increased emotional distress. The woman's spouse regards her as a mere object of trade and actively seeks out alternative romantic connections. It profoundly affects her at a fundamental level. The protagonist expresses her personal goals and a need for acknowledgment, causing Hemant to experience restlessness. Pipee received her education at Shiksha Kendra. The institution in question is recognised for its emphasis on fostering a harmonious relationship with the natural world, demonstrating respect for all manifestations of life, and promoting holistic development of both the physical and mental faculties. Pipeelika is employed by the non-governmental organisation (NGO) known as Ujala, which is managed by

a triumvirate of women. She is an ambitious individual with a strong focus on her professional development, aiming to obtain a doctoral degree in the United States. Additionally, she is now enrolled as a student at the Delhi School of Economics. Following the demise of her spouse, the protagonist finds herself in a state of solitude. Consequently, Astha has a need for a life partner, leading to the formation of a deep connection between the two individuals. The individuals experience a feeling of contentment in one another's presence, although their connection proves to be short-lived due to Peeplika's desire to relocate to the United States, while Astha is unable to abandon her family and children for Peeplika. Ashta assumes the responsibility of returning home unaccompanied in order to attend to her children and spouse. The individual embraces their circumstances and experiences personal growth and increased resilience. During her discussion with Nivedita Mukherjee, Kapur discusses the concept of emotional coherence and the creative expression of feminism that is simultaneously vulnerable and exposed. She has adopted various characteristics at the personal, religious, and socio-political levels. The protagonist exhibits a transformation from reliance on external sources to a newfound ability to navigate her emotions independently. In her portrayal of the role of Astha, Manju Kapur effectively depicts the upbringing of women in a challenging environment and provides a platform for the expression of their experiences inside the confines of their homes.

The protagonist in Sudha Murthy's 'House of Cards'

House of Cards depicts the narrative of Mridula, a very intelligent young woman who possesses an immense passion for life. The unexpected encounter between her and Sanjay, a talented though financially disadvantaged professional, came as a complete surprise. The pair developed a deep affection for one another, entered into the institution of marriage, and ultimately established their residence in Bangalore. During the initial phase of their marital union, the couple held progressive aspirations to allocate a portion of their income towards supporting those from marginalised and disadvantaged segments of society. Mridula undertook a new employment opportunity with the aim of enhancing the family's income, allowing Sanjay to dedicate himself fully to his duties at the government hospital. Subsequently, Sanjay established his own healthcare facility, achieving unforeseen success within the industry. The amalgamation of a painless salary and the elimination of Sanjay have resulted in his transformation into a deceitful medical professional.

The novel emphasises the importance of maintaining sincerity, honesty, and faithfulness within interpersonal relationships. Upon a thorough comprehension of the work through the lens of the female heroine, it becomes apparent that all the assertions made are auspicious. The protagonist asserts that she possesses all the necessary attributes expected of an idealistic Indian woman. Sanjay's initial audacity in expressing affection towards and marrying a modest individual such as Mridula diminishes over time, leading to his failure to acknowledge and fulfil his wife's basic wants and desires. Mridula becomes aware that Sanjay possesses a susceptibility to aesthetic appeal, and so he enters into matrimony with her just to showcase her as a symbol of personal satisfaction and gratification. House of Cards is considered to be one of Sudha Murthy's most notable literary works, providing an opportunity for an analysis that explores the Indian consciousness with regard to feminine concerns. Initially, the novel

appears to possess a straightforward premise. However, it delves into a peculiar occurrence that blurs the boundaries between reality and fantasy, experienced by both the characters inside the novel and its readers. The present book engages in a deconstructive analysis by raising questions about the legitimacy of ethical obligations within exceptional circumstances. The primary expectation of a woman towards her spouse is an unwavering and genuine expression of love. She recognised Sanjay as her romantic partner, acknowledging his distortion as well. When her father attempted to educate her about his concerns, she responded by suggesting that if Sanjay were to encounter an accident resulting in disability after getting married, he would not be held accountable for it. The individual in question does not express any objection to the alliance, provided that the approval of both her parents is obtained. The individual expressed a firm belief that their desire to marry is not contingent upon the physical appearance or financial status of their prospective partner. She desired a partner who had a sincere and rational disposition. The author imparts her insights regarding the institution of marriage and the respective expectations of men and women inside this union. The effective portrayal of these subjects is achieved through the characters of Sishir and Neha. Sishir, the offspring of Mridula and Sanjay, articulates his perspective on the ideal spouse, expressing a desire for a female partner who has a non-confrontational demeanour and possesses adaptability in many circumstances. The female gender has a significant role in shaping the cultural and environmental dynamics within a household. However, it is suggested that she should exhibit modern characteristics beyond the confines of her domestic sphere (p. 224). Even in contemporary society, younger individuals rely on women to adapt to changing family dynamics and environments. However, within the context of marriage, this adjustment often entails the suppression of a woman's individuality, self-expression, and moral compass. The aforementioned phenomenon exerts a profound impact on her overall psychological state and behavioural patterns, resulting in the deterioration of her emotional sensitivity and fundamental sense of self.

As Mridula's exposure to many parts of the world increases, her comprehension of the acquisitive and parochial mindset of individuals deepens. Nevertheless, she does not allow herself to be affected by the highs and lows of life and approaches each day with a cheerful mindset. The novel constantly emphasises the notion that the sun's ascent and the arrangement of rainbow colours were exclusively intended for her. Sanjay's behaviour and mental state undergo a transformation when monetary inflows are received from the nursing home. For an extended period of time, Mridula remains unaware of Sanjay's decision to relinquish his soul. However, upon abruptly realising this harsh truth, she promptly terminates their relationship.

The women in Arundati Roy's 'The ministry of Utmost Happiness'

The literary work entitled "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" commences by introducing a distinctive location situated in Bombay. The narrative commences by introducing Anjum, a transgender individual who experiences a dissonance between their gender identity and the physical characteristics associated with their assigned sex at birth. She resides within a cemetery, akin to a tree. The significance of trees has been consistently overlooked while they endure the hardships and affronts directed at them. Similarly, Anjum experienced numerous instances of insult at the outset, prompting her to draw inspiration from the resilience of trees

in order to endure these affronts. She adopted a mindset like a soft breeze, allowing the insults to pass by her without causing significant harm while finding solace in the metaphorical balm provided by the leaves to alleviate her emotional distress. The issue of transgender individuals finding suitable living spaces is a significant challenge since they often encounter a lack of inclusive accommodations. They are consistently regarded as objects of sexual desire. Regardless of the medium through which they are presented, be it literature or film, these portrayals primarily serve to fulfil the sexual desires of men. The rationale behind her decision is influenced by her familial and social environment. She perceives the location she has resided in as a fortunate one. Gradually, he began to distance himself from his family over time. The individual's motivation stemmed from the perception that their presence within the family unit was a significant burden, resulting in undue hardship due to their inherent characteristics at birth. According to Nimmo, a friend of Anjum, the creation of Hijas can be attributed to the belief that humanity, as a species, lacks an inherent understanding of bliss, as intended by a divine entity. The rationale for her statement pertains to the multitude of concerns that commonly occupy the minds of ordinary individuals; however, for transgender individuals, the struggle predominantly resides within themselves.

Proposed Methodology

The methodology is descriptive in nature for this study. It is a qualitative method. The narrative analysis of the major characters in each novel of the select writers will be taken for the study. The suffering, discrimination, identity crisis at home and in the society are explained through the text from the select books.

The portrayal of Women in Shobha De's 'Seventy ...to Hell with It'

Shobha De's fictional universe is characterised by a notable abundance of female characters who consistently hold prominent positions within the narratives of her novels. Within the context of her imaginary realm, it appears that women are not burdened by societal expectations or pervasive male authority that could potentially impede their freedom of movement or limit their ability to advance socially. These women are members of the upper echelons of society, where wealth, romance, and show business prevail. The newfound freedom experienced by these women leads to the development of an unconventional perspective on marriage and family. In addition to emancipated contemporary women, there are assertive and ambitious women who prioritise their careers in the business world.. An exploration of various perspectives as portrayed in De's imaginary world provides insight into the contemporary society that is now evolving. The handling of sexuality within De's imaginary world has elicited significant astonishment among observers and has been met with scathing criticism. Engaging in sexual activity devoid of love and emotional connection results in a purely mechanistic and utilitarian experience. The representation of this particular form of sexual union is evident in the marital relationships of many characters in De's literary works.

Conclusion

The female characters exhibit a rebellious nature and actively seek opportunities for self-identification. It can be argued that individuals' confidence in institutions such as marriage has diminished. The challenges faced by the protagonist in maintaining and shaping their lives and identities are considerable. The protagonists, Astha, Mridula, Anjum, or Tillu, seek both societal recognition and a prestigious position, accompanied by a life of luxury. It might be argued that there is a lack of ability to comprehend and embrace familial dynamics and the institution of marriage within the Indian context, particularly in relation to male domination, disregard for female identity, and the perpetration of acts of atrocity against women. In contemporary society, women are increasingly progressing by acquiring education and developing awareness of their rights, rather than passively surrendering. This transformation has contributed to the strengthening of their feminine identities, which authors depict with meticulous attention to detail in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the actual condition of women in society. A woman's self-perception is influenced by the social standards, individuals, and familial influences that shape her self-image. However, as time has progressed and technology has advanced, she has endeavoured to cultivate her own persona, garner respect, and cultivate a sense of motivation to take action. She transitioned from being perceived as a mere source of entertainment to being a self-determined individual who actively preserves her own rights, develops her own beliefs, and fulfils her psychological, emotional, and physical requirements for survival.

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