



# The Reflection of Women Psychology in the Character of Astha of *A Married Woman*

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**Abstract:** *The present paper is an attempt to study the character of Astha from the women psychological aspect. Manju Kapur has closely observed her characters from every angle and presents her findings through her characters of her literary works. Women psychology means the study of the inner behaviour and mental status of women. In the present paper term 'women psychology' is explained in brief.*

**Key Words:** *women psychology, lesbian relationship, love, anger, pride, quest for self identity.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

*A Married Woman* is a fit novel by Manju Kapur published in our age 2002. Many psychological aspects of male and female are minutely observed by the novelist. Manju Kapur dives deep into her characters especially of her female characters. In the present select novel; Astha and Pipeelika are the leading characters apart from them Astha's mother is a typical Indian woman. As far as the the purpose of the paper is concerned, only major woman psychological aspects of Astha's character is going to be discussed.

## II. WOMEN PSYCHOLOGY AND ASTHA

The term feminist psychology seems to invoke too many connotations and has a various meanings among different feminists. There is a dilemma in defining this term exactly but many scholars have tried their best to define this term. Mednick (1976) defined the field as "the study of variations within a group and across time of the female experience". Henley (1974) favours "psychology and women" as a descriptive term. However, Mednick believes this is too broad. We believe that Russo's definition of the psychology of women, as the study of behavior (not excluding male gender-role behavior) mediated by the variable of female sex, is one of the most useful. In the past, psychology studied behaviour, but it was not mediated by the variable of female sex. Thus, the psychology of women is also defined as that which includes all psychological issues pertaining to women and their experiences (Denmark, 1977).

Thus, women psychology means the study of the inner behaviour and mental status of women. Before going to discuss about the various aspects of women psychology, here I would like to quote Norton as he writes:

**The question has been asked, "What is a woman?" A woman is a person who makes choices. A woman is a dreamer. A woman is a planner. A woman is a maker, and a molder. A woman is a person who makes choices. A woman builds bridges. A woman makes children and makes cars. A woman writes poetry and songs. A woman is a person who makes choices. You cannot even simply become a mother anymore. You must choose motherhood. Will you choose change? Can you become its vanguard? (Norton: 2008, 1)**

From the above quotation one can understand that what is the role of woman and what is she and what does she do really? Behaviour, likes, dislikes, dreams, longings, care, various emotions like love, hatred, jealousy, fear, anger, sadness, joy, disgust, trust, anticipation, surprise, shame, pity, courage, pride, passions, closeness, hope, confusion, depression etc. are fully discussed in women psychology. Manju Kapur has also minutely observed all these parameters of women psychology in her literary works. It seems that Manju Kapur might have read the women psychology or studied it as subject during her student career. Astha is psychologically projected and delineated in the present novel by Manju Kapur.

Astha is the protagonist of the novel the entire novel revolves around her. She is educated, pretty and loving daughter and wife. She belongs to the middle class family. She marries to her parents' choice person Hemant. She has everything that a woman wants - children, a dutiful loving husband and comfortable surroundings. But she ends up having a physical relationship with a much younger woman, Pipee, the widow of a political activist. Astha finally throws off the fear instilled in her by her parents and her



husband. Husband wife relationship, children and parents relationship and lesbian relationship are the main focus of the novel. Before marriage like many other grown up girls, Astha dreams of a romantic world; Manju Kapur writes:

**Shadowy young man holding her in his strong manly embrace (Kapur: 2002, 1).**

She likes and loves Bunty; her effect of love is nicely narrated by the novelist:

**Day and night the thought of him kept her inside churning, she was unable to eat, sleep or study. Away from him her eyes felt dry and empty. Her ears only registered the sound of her voice. Her mind refused to take seriously anything that was not his face, his body, his feet, his hands, his clothes (Kapur: 2002, 8-9).**

In these above quotations, Manju Kapur's readers can understand that how minutely she has observed all the mental and physical actions and reactions of her characters. Love possesses and reigns Astha's mind and heart as narrated by the novelist. As generally happens in Indian society, Astha's affair with Bunty turns out to be a tragic end. When she enters into the college, lacking behind all her past memories, she again falls in love with Rohan, a professor of her college. She enjoys meeting with him at the same time enjoys physical relationship. Later on, Rohan refuses to marry her after sipping her body and left her alone for higher studies at Oxford University. Though, Astha is grown up with care and protection but she is crossing the limitations and boundaries of a traditional society. Finally, she agrees to marry Hemant, a man whom her parents traditionally arranged for her. At the initial stage of their marriage life was good but with course of the time their happiness has slowly melted day by day. Hemant cannot pay attention and love to Astha and he is now least concern about the emotions of Astha. He does not care for Astha to take any decision. Astha gets angry on her mother when she has taken a decision to offer some of the amount of her house to Hemant. Day by day Hemant's love for Astha decreases and Astha feels loneliness in her own house. Psychology believes that a person who does not get enough love from the family; seeks it from the outside the family. In the same way Astha is in need of love and care but her husband does not offer her so she joins a school and she engages with many extracurricular activities and also starts to write poems but again Hemant stops her from these activities but she now becomes revolutionary and she keeps her activities continue.

Asha is a woman who seeks a space of her own and also desires to enjoy her life not only within the house but also outside world. She is decided to go to the meeting of the Sampradayakta Mukti Manch to make protest and demonstrate outside Rashtrapati Bhavan as an anniversary of the slaughter and to condemn the decisions of building up the temple of Lord Ram at the place of Masjid, But, Hemant is against her wishes and tries to stop her. He claims:

**You seem to forget that your place as a decent family woman is in the home, and not on the streets (Kapur: 2002, 172).**

In spite of her husband and mother-in-law's constraint attitude Astha has decided to go to Ayodhya as the Munch insists to deliver a speech on the public meeting. Now she has made up her mind to fight against old oppression and suppression of patriarchal society. She takes personal interest in social issues related to the women. Finally, she visits to Ayodhya and her mind has changed. There, she meets Pipeelika, the wife of Aijaz. During their stay, they visit various places and temples and establish a new relationship called lesbian relation. Ashok Kumar asserts:

**Astha likes to have a break from dependence on others and proceeds on the path of full human status that poses in threat to Hemant and his male superiority. Although, she finds herself trapped between the pressure of the modern developing society and shackles of ancient biases she set out on her quest for a more meaningful life in her lesbian relationship Kumar: 2006, 134).**

Astha falls in love with Pipeelika. She finds satisfaction around the arms of Pipee. Unlike her husband, Pipee seems to be more understanding, loving and caring towards her. Therefore, their few meeting established a physical relationship and they become uneasy and restless if they do not meet for one day. Clashes between Astha and her husband rise because of her relation. However, their relationship rebels against man's attitude and his superiority by exhibiting their quest for freedom as well as asserting self independence in a male dominated society. Astha refuses being close with Hemant after she found condom from his bag and instead show more interest in Pipee. Her husband does not care for her emotions so more and more she attracts towards Pipee. On the other side, Pipee brainwashes her by saying that true love cannot be felt at bodily level only but it should ensure union of souls, emotions and ideologies. Thus, she feels:

**Men were so pathetic, so fucked up themselves, they only understood the physical, and in this way she felt soothed (Kumar: 2006, 219).**

When Hemant desires to make love with her, Astha tells him:

**Do I have to give it just because you are my husband? Unless I feel close to you I can't – I'm not a sex object, you have others for that (Kumar: 2006, 224).**

This shows her psyche that in the initial years of her marriage she loves her husband very much she was ready to sacrifice everything for him but when she comes to know about Hemant's affair she now does not care for him. Her association with Pipeelika gives a new turn to her quest for identity and self-fulfillment. There is a conflict between the roles and responsibilities of



a wife, mother, daughter in law and that of a lover. Astha is also trapped in dilemma between her desire for freedom and her obligations toward family, whether she should stay within the traditional family or she should run away for self-independence. But, Astha realizes a large part of her life belongs to her children and recognizes her traditional and social responsibility as the wife of Hemant. Therefore she feels:

**A willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day and an obedient mouth were the necessary prerequisites of Hemant's wife (Kumar: 2006, 131).**

On the other side, Pipee tries to separate Astha from her husband who neither appreciates nor understands her in order to give a full commitment to her love. Astha tries her best to balance both the relationships within the house and outside the house but as a wife and mother of two children, Astha tells Pipee:

**I love you, you know how much you meant to me, I try and prove it every moment we have together, but I can't abandon my family, I can't. Maybe I should not have looked for my happiness, but I can't help myself. I suppose you think I should not be in a relationship, but I had not foreseen...I'm sorry I am not like you (Kumar: 2006, 242).**

From the above statement, Manju Kapur expresses the psyche of an Indian wife. Being a wife and mother Indian wife or mother cannot abandon her family in any situation. However, there is no any relation as a wife with her husband; she feels hesitation to leave her family. On the other hand, when Astha gets all the comfort and affection from Pipee that she does not receive from Hemant, she thinks:

**...if husband and wife are one person, then Pipee and she were even more so. She had shared parts of herself she had never shared before. She felt complete with her (Kumar: 2006, 243).**

Therefore, the marital relation of Astha and Hemant turns out to be devastated. Astha feels that she is the responsible for her miserable married life, she blames herself for everything. Thus, the story of Astha winds up with her return to her family.

### III. CONCLUSION

To, conclude we may say that Astha's psychology is minutely observed by Manju Kapur. From each psychological aspect Astha's character is portrayed from the beginning of the novel. Her love, anger, pride, quest for self identity, lesbian relationship etc. have been deeply analysed by Manju Kapur in her present novel.

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