

## BREAK AWAY FROM THE CLAUSTROPHOBIC HOUSE IN SEARCH OF ECSTASY

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### ABSTRACT

Nisha in “HOME” is an exemplary example of how a woman is made the subordinate and how her destiny is controlled by others treating her like a rubber doll. She is deprived of the choice of freedom right from the beginning where her lover Suresh was rejected due to caste, and her education was ruined as the consequence of it. After long struggles she finds her path to liberation that is through her career. Here comes how a woman could achieve happiness and self-fulfilment through her career and how her dreams are shattered because of her family duties. And all these setbacks make women prone to after their forlorn journey with heart breaks, skin issues, negligence and their desires to become a to establish themselves or to or to pursue their passion

**KEYWORDS:** Karvachuth, Mangalik, Eczema, Patriarchal

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### Article History

**Received: 30 Dec 2019 | Revised: 14 Jan 2020 | Accepted: 31 Jan 2020**

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### INTRODUCTION

A woman has to cross multiple barriers like gender bias, infertility, and denial of educational rights, economic dependency, and boredom of routine life which destroys her identity. In the novel ‘Home’ Kapur portrays the struggle of women for recognition and survival through the protagonist Nisha. She represents of how sexuality becomes a site of woman’s oppression even as a child. It becomes a province of restrictions, danger and repression.

The birth of Nisha was a boon to her mother Sona who was otherwise torn and tattered, the almighty smiled at her and gave her some replete in the form of delivering a bundle of joy at their little dwelling. The joyous little creature was supposed to give solace to her mother who was until then taunted by her in-laws for being barren. It is more than a taboo in our society, it is rather considered to be a curse, for not being able to bear a child, even if it is the mistake on the part of the man. In spite of being a dutiful wife and an obedient daughter-in law, the daughter in law is first seen as a vehicle to propagate the progeny of the family and also is considered very divine and good omen if she delivers a baby boy. A married woman childless will have to lead a difficult life degraded to a mere state of shame and has to go through a lot of humiliation and mental trauma, fit enough to break any strong-willed woman to shackles. Gender differentiation is a heart wrenching fact that the Indian Society embraces. Birth of a boy in a family is only valued as the progeny and not of a girl. Nisha’s brother’s birth was more welcomed by the family than hers. Right from childhood the differentiation between genders is explicit. Nisha was forbidden from playing outside with her brothers. Sona’s remarks, “It is better for girls to remain inside.” (Home, 51) Sona was keen on preserving the beauty of Nisha just to get her wedded depriving her childhood play. This is again another tantalising factor, where the parents believe in keeping the girl child, indoor until the

time she is handed over to her husband in the most pure and chaste manner possible. As parents are more obsessed about chastity more than anything else in this world, they would walk the extra miles to safe guard values. Parents teach child to play indoor games so that they would not venture out and attract the attention of the men folk in the outside world. Just in case of such occurring it is like having multitudes of problems, off chasing away the unwanted suitor or the road side Romeo. `

Girl child! Some wondrous creation supposed to be cherished and celebrated like an angel is unfortunately made to undergo the most disgusting, demeaning things in life being physically and mentally abused not in the big bad world outside, but within the confines of her own house, a supposed to be dwelling place for absolute safety for any human being. Unfortunately, it turns out to be more of a shocker and breaks down her mental immunity. Being on guard and safeguarding oneself when she is out on the streets or at a public place is understandable. But if she has to be on guard 24/7 even within the four walls of her house, then it is the worst thing that could befall anyone on a toddler or on an adolescent. The sad part is that the girl child is never able to outgrow out of this traumatic stage, where the petrifying, horrendous incidents come back in time and again to haunt her. She is driven to a stage where she believes fervently that all men only lust woman and not love them. It takes a real man to convince and reaffirm her that there are people who really love for who she is and not what she is. It is the inner beauty which matters and not her external endowments and curves alone that matter. The tragedy is such men are rare and minuscule in number.

The beautiful, naive and godly childhood is messed up forever and the psychological impact of the scathed and scarred survivor will last for more than a lifetime thereby instilling perennial fear and hatred in the mind of the innocent little heart. Nisha, the little girl's journey of life started in such an unfortunate and not so congenial atmosphere, nowhere else in the world but in her very own house. Nisha was sexually assaulted by her cousin Vicky who left a scar in her memory. As a child her innocence had been taken advantage by the boy Vicky in the house. There is a difference between house and home. House is made of stone and cement, but the home is made of love and affection. It is her very own home, which metamorphosis into a house and there is an emotional burglar in the name of Vicky, her cousin who robs her of her blissful and fun filled childhood. As Vicky takes advantage of the house and her easily accessible state molests her. She is not comfortable and the fear of being admonished, she chooses not to open up to her parents. Hence the little girl withdrew and had to endure this pain and suffering for quite some time. After a point of time she started throwing tantrums and expressing her displeasure in ways and means possible which was not interpreted by the parents and the extended family members. Parent's lack of attention to the little girl had paved way for Vicky to abuse her. Sexual and emotional harassment over Nisha as a child resulted in screams during her sleep and lack of appetite. Her suffering began at the early stage of her budding childhood which is supposed to be a period of play but became a nightmare to her. Her wretched cry to her grandmother shows the trauma she is undergoing, "*Why did you let me sleep? I had bad dreams, I had bad dreams.*" (*Home, 63*)

Sleep! The God given gift for every individual in this world to resurrect ad face the cruelties of the traumatic life becomes crueller when that peaceful few hours of sleep is jeopardised by nightmares. That too an innocent naive little toddler going through such trauma is unwarranted in any part of the world. Little Nisha was agonised, and her distress was resolved as she was sent to her aunt Rupa's house for a change. Rupa and her husband who were childless showered their love and care and as days passed her screams during sleep slowly ceased. On the other hand, Nisha as she was declared as manglik is forced to observe her first Karvachuth fast for her future husband even as a child. Misuse of religion over the innocent child to clear the obstacles in her path to achieve her destiny in marriage tossed and turned the child's heart.

Women are predetermined to sacrifice after marriage, an essential duty of every wife. This is the societal demand placed on a married woman. Nisha as a young girl when refused to fast was chided by her mother reminding that it's her duty to learn to sacrifice.

Nisha had been insisted as a child to repress the demands of her body and take up the fast. Her mind which had to be preoccupied with studies was forced to think of husband and she was taunted by the fault in her horoscope labelling her as a mangli. Nisha had a flair for studies, but her intelligence was not appreciated by her mother Sonu because she was a girl who was destined for marriage and nothing more and nothing less. The repeated insisting of sona that real education is in the kitchen torments Nisha who had great aspirations. Nisha was totally deprived of the freedom to do what she wanted. Even cutting her long hair was considered to be an indispensable act against womanhood.

*“Who gave you permission to cut your hair suddenly you have become so independent, you decide things on your own, where did you find the money, the time, the beauty parlour, where did you find all these things? Her hair was opened, pulled, tugged, stared at, and wept over.” (Home, 150)*

She was not given the space even during her adolescent age. Kapur has mirrored how women are controlled throughout their life by their parents and later by their in-laws in every aspect even a trivial act of Nisha's hairstyle was scorned by her mother. Her love affair with Suresh when came to limelight caused so much stress to Nisha. She was made to feel guilty for the shameful act of loving a guy of low caste and status. She became the butt of ridicule in her family and was asked to wipe out the feelings she had for Suresh. Suresh's denial of accepting her because the families disapproved of their marriage was a shock to Nisha. She found it hard to digest his betrayal as the love episode comes to an end, and the man of her life vanishes. All that she was left behind was eczema because of her emotional stress.

Horoscope matching is one of the vital aspect of matrimony in a couple tying the nuptial knot. That is the most important formality is an arranged marriage if the manglik is not identified at the right time the girl has to go through the constant turmoil of earning the sympathy and becoming a symbol of ill-will, kind of looked down by society. She is singled out in the society and considered to be not normal. Nisha's unmarried state being a mangalik and with eczema left her in a pathetic state as she had to confront all the fuss and insults during her brother Raju's wedding. She felt suffocated and as she was stressed her skin issues worsened. She desperately wanted to leave the house and the father in spite of the tradition of the house suggested Nisha to work as a teacher in a nearby kindergartner school. Though Nisha was not interested she succumbed to the compulsion of her father. She was deprived of the freedom of choice even in deciding her profession. Nisha's father Yashpal with all difficulty permitted his daughter to step out for work just because she could not survive within the house in stress. Nisha was so depressed in spirit, mind and body that she could not feel the joy of welcoming the good news that her brother's wife was pregnant. Instead she sympathised with her own pitiable self,

*“Other people go on with their lives, having babies, while all she could do was teach the children they produced. When was her life going to begin?” (Home, 273)*

The excruciating pain began gripping her every moment and it reached its heights when she was treated as an untouchable after the arrival of the baby in the house. With a heavy heart she finally convinced her father and started her own boutique Nisha's creations in the basement of her house. Sona her mother disliked the idea as she kept hinting a woman's destiny is only marriage and not career,

*“She is going to get married, why waste time and money in all this? A business was not like teaching, resignable when the bridegroom reached the door.” (Home, 289)*

Nisha was doing well in her business with hard work and dedication in 2 yrs span she began enjoying the success of a business woman. Career for women was a herculean task in the patriarchal world. Women were destined to the confines of the kitchen and for childbirth in a conventional society. Nisha’s career was interrupted by her wedlock with a widower named Arvind. Her condition of continuing her work was not practically possible as she became pregnant after marriage. However ambitious a woman is her dreams, aspirations, career everything is shattered because of her role as a dutiful wife in producing heirs. Nisha was blessed with twins, a boy and a girl which resulted in giving up her boutique to her sister-in law.

The life of a woman is not angelic or like that of a flower in the garden to be cherished, nurtured or nourished. She is always being branded as the weaker sex, is in fact more than swaddled to the brim, thereby making her a mule in the household she is stepping into. Marriage! The very word is supposed to bring sparkle and excitement in the mind of any girl in her adolescence. But unfortunately, the bubble of the whole hungama and excitement is broken when she has to witness the brutal reality once she is within the confines of her new world. All the characters are absolutely alien and they don’t look at the new entrant, with the much-needed love and care. She is expected to tow the line and is to cater only to the whims and fancies of the family. She is most importantly expected not to have any dreams or her own ambition, her likes or dislikes in life. She is only to diligently follow like a doggy, obeying meticulously to the commands of the master disobeying at any juncture, the poor little creature will only be chided, or punished and put back on track, with a strong warning that she never ever dare to trespass.

She successfully begins her tailoring “NISHA’S CREATIONS” in the basement of her flat after a long struggle with her family members because of the stringent traditional taboos. Like a bird released from its cage she soulfully gets engrossed in her work which becomes the ultimate cure for all the scares she bore so far. She flairs in her work of designing suits and gains popularity with her unique collections. Her managerial skills exercised at her employees calm and composed adds to the success of her business. Life seems exciting and challenging to her until and unless a proposal from a widower comes. As Marriage is what destined to a girl invariably however, she succeeds in her career she is compelled to accept the proposal. Being a daring woman, she agrees only after her condition that she will be allowed to work after marriage. In a typical Indian Scenario after marriage a woman has to cross many hurdles to pursue her career. It is not as smooth and easy unlike before her wedding. Consent from her life partner, her in laws is mandatory to pursue her career path which she had walked with bliss till her marriage. Pregnancy which is a bliss to woman also turns out to be a stumbling block in her career path as the society expects her to just give up her work for the sake of bringing up the off springs. Nisha who was blessed with twins, who was firm in being a career woman even after marriage had to succumb to the decision of her family of quitting her work. Her job which once gave her solace, which liberated her from the suffocating life of rejection becomes a path not to be trespassed. The familial hindrance of woman is lucid through the life of Nisha whose career comes to a standstill because of child bearing.

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