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**Title of the Book:** *Home*

**Author:** Manju Kapur

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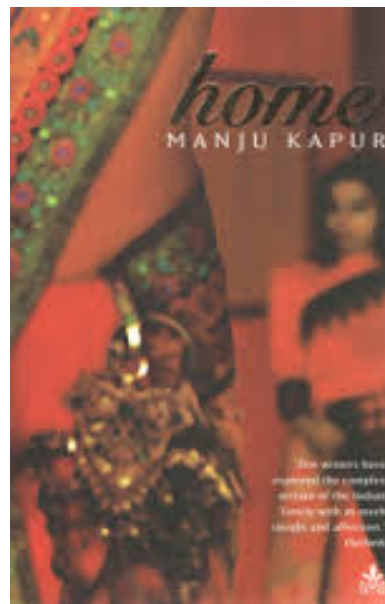
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Manju Kapur's *Home* is not a place of happiness for women but a place of innumerable problems affecting the interests of women of all ages. It preserves traditional values of women but at the same time, it destroys all the desires for their mental growth. Such problems become acute when a married woman is not blessed with fertility. It is quite natural for women who become mothers to look down upon the women who do not have the blessings of God to become mothers. Nobody bothers to

verify whether it is the only woman who is sterile or the man whom she marries is one who has actually no ability to create. However, all mothers and men only find fault with the woman for being childless

Sona, the daughter-in-law of the Banwari Lals, is the one who suffers mentally for the first ten years because of her barrenness. The mother-in-law of Sona feels uncomfortable that the woman married to her eldest son Yashpal is unable to beget a child as an heir to the family. Being a woman of traditional values, she has neither sent Sona back to her mother for being barren nor made any arrangement for the remarriage of her son. All the members patiently and hopefully wait for the god's mercy for making Sona a mother. As far as Sona is concerned, her sterility is not a permanent one as it is in the case of her younger sister Rupa who goes childless till her death. It is a temporary one because after a period of ten years she becomes a blessed woman with a female child of her own in Nisha.

Almost all women, whether they are married or not and whether they have children of their own or not, are bestowed with the virtue of motherliness. They all have the tendency to show love and affection to any children even though such children are not theirs. During her period of childlessness, Sona performs all rites to her God of faith and prays to Him for His mercy on her. "Please, I am growing old, bless us with a child, girl or baby, I do not care, but cannot bear the emptiness in my heart" (20). However, as a woman, she lacks the virtue of motherliness. The absence of this virtue in her is clearly seen in her attitude when Sona is entrusted with the care of motherless Vicky. Her hatred towards him is inherent and implicit because of her inability to become a mother in time. What she shows Vicky is quite unbecoming of Sona and she should have shown motherly attitude to him in her behavior. Her implicit hatred towards him continues even after she becomes a mother.

A home is a haven for every woman at home but the home of Nisha is the home of terrifying and intimidating nightmares for her because of the immoral behavior of her cousin Vicky towards her. Vicky is not to be blamed for his bad conduct towards Nisha. It is the bitter experience he has had at his home and his being a witness to the sufferings of his mother at the hands of his drunken father, which has left in him an indelible impression in his heart. This impression has made him Dr. Jekyll in his mental make-up. This, in turn, is reflected in his behaviour towards Nisha. Had Sona shown

great concern for him when he was entrusted to her, he would not have been a thorn in the flesh of peaceful life of both Sona and Nisha.

Rupa the aunt of Nisha is a good woman and being childless, she takes care of Nisha as her own daughter when she is under her custody. She has been brought up with traditional values of life. Being the only heir of the family, she has been showered with love and affection too. But as a woman, she becomes completely different from her mother and aunt. It is her individuality that makes the difference in her character. Nisha is no way different from a modern day woman. Just like any other modern woman, she goes to college, meets a boy and falls in love with him. In doing so, she does not foresee strict objections from her family against her wish; neither does she know what her god of faith has decided regarding her marriage.

Nisha knows that she cannot go against her familial traditions and values. Yet she does, because she wants to assert her individuality. Her love for Suresh does not materialize on two reasons. One is that Suresh informs her that he will decide her course of life himself after his marriage with her. But Nisha is not ready to fall in line with his thinking. If she accepts his condition, she will certainly lose her individuality for which she has strained her relationship with her family. Moreover, her skin is completely discoloured due to some infection and is not ready to marry with anyone. It is God's will that she should not marry Suresh and her skin disease prevents her from marrying Suresh. When Suresh is gone and her family relationship is cut of, she does not lose confidence in herself. She wants to act to establish her individuality.

Nisha's strong confidence finds best expressed in starting a business of her own in the form of garment stitching. Her successful business also paves the way for her to find a man in Arvind a widower as her life partner. As a gift of her happy marital life, she gets one boy and one girl as twins. Thus, she has a happy home of her own after having braved all types of difficult situations in life, coped with them and come out matured to lead a life of her own. Instead, she has gained hope and confidence in her sufferings and come out of it to face life with courage. Many women in her position would have resorted to extreme steps for their permanent escape from their physical and mental sufferings. Manju Kapur through Nisha has brought home a message to the entire suffering womanhood, "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" (Shelley, line

70). Hence, every woman should live with hope and positive mind even in the midst of her sufferings.