

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-55808

Title: Femininity in A Married Woman: Societal Influence & Norms

Recommendation:

Accept as it is

Accept after minor revision.....

Accept after major revision

Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

| Rating | Excel. | Good | Fair | Poor |
|----------------|--------|------|------|------|
| Originality | ... | | | |
| Techn. Quality | | ... | | |
| Clarity | | ... | | |
| Significance | ... | | | |

Reviewer Name: Dr. Ishrat Fatima

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The paper undertakes an examination of femininity as represented in Manju Kapur's novel *A Married Woman*, situating the discussion within the broader framework of patriarchal society, societal expectations, and evolving cultural values. The central focus on Astha's journey allows the author to explore how traditional norms shape, restrict, and at times challenge women's agency and identity. The topic is relevant and significant, especially in feminist literary studies, as it addresses themes of womanhood, autonomy, sexual self-determination, and the impact of Western ideals on Indian society. The abstract effectively outlines the paper's objectives by highlighting Astha's inner conflict between societal expectations and personal fulfillment. It clearly signals the paper's engagement with women's sexual agency, intergenerational femininity, and the influence of Western feminist ideas. However, while the abstract is conceptually sound, it could be strengthened by briefly mentioning the methodological approach or critical framework adopted, which would provide greater academic clarity and coherence.

In the scope and introduction, the paper situates *A Married Woman* within the discourse of patriarchal oppression and women's struggle for self-identity. The author convincingly presents Astha as a character trapped between familial pressure, marital expectations, and her desire for education, independence, and self-recognition. The discussion of Astha's parents, particularly the mother's lack of empathy, effectively illustrates how patriarchy is often internalized and perpetuated by women themselves. This section successfully foregrounds the novel's critique of gendered social conditioning. The analysis of Astha's post-marital life is one of the paper's strengths. The author clearly shows how marriage intensifies Astha's marginalization through emotional neglect and dominance by her husband and in-laws. Her entry into teaching and participation in cultural activities such as theatre, workshops, and reading clubs is interpreted as a temporary space of liberation and self-expression. The paper rightly identifies Astha's involvement with the Street Theatre Group and her relationship with Aijaz as pivotal moments in her awakening political and personal consciousness.

The discussion of Aijaz's death and its impact on Astha's transformation into a social activist is well-articulated. The author effectively links personal loss with political awakening, showing how Astha's participation in rallies and activism becomes an extension of her resistance to patriarchal control. The Ayodhya episode is particularly significant, as it connects personal emancipation with larger socio-political tensions, though this connection could have been analyzed more critically rather than descriptively. The exploration of Astha's relationship with Pipeelika introduces the theme of lesbian desire and alternative femininity. The paper acknowledges Manju Kapur's bold treatment of female homosexuality and emotional intimacy beyond heterosexual marriage. Astha's relationship with Pipeelika is presented as a space of emotional fulfillment and self-realization, contrasting sharply with her marital life. However, the analysis here remains largely narrative, and the paper could have benefitted from engaging more deeply with lesbian feminist theory or queer criticism to strengthen its interpretive depth. The paper's treatment of Astha's eventual return to her husband highlights the tension between resistance and resignation. The author

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interprets this return as a reflection of the harsh realities faced by women in patriarchal societies, where breaking free often comes at a high emotional and social cost. This conclusion aligns with Kapur's realistic portrayal of women's struggles, though the paper could have more critically questioned whether this ending reinforces or subverts patriarchal norms.

The literature review demonstrates the author's familiarity with existing scholarship on *A Married Woman*. It references a range of critics who discuss identity crisis, sexuality, marital conflict, and feminist resistance. While comprehensive, the literature review is largely descriptive and could be improved by synthesizing viewpoints and clearly positioning the present study within existing debates rather than listing scholars sequentially. The paper reiterates its central argument that *A Married Woman* is a narrative of female transformation, identity crisis, and resistance against gender norms.

Overall, the paper addresses an important feminist text and raises relevant questions about femininity, sexuality, and social norms in Indian society. Its strengths lie in thematic coverage, narrative clarity, and relevance to gender studies. However, the paper relies heavily on summary and repetition, contains linguistic and grammatical inaccuracies, and lacks a clearly defined critical framework. With improved language editing, tighter structure, and deeper theoretical engagement, the paper has strong potential for academic refinement and publication quality.