

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMATION**

In India, literature in English has emerged as a great literary force influencing the psychological, social, political, economic, moral and cultural fabric of Indian society. India is quite lucky to have produced a variety of literary figures who have made their significant presence in the gallery of world literature. Now, India is in a position to play a leading role in literature all over the world. Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Pankaj Mishra, Bharati Mukherji, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Manju Kapur, Shobha De etc., have shown the world their unique power of imagination in creative writing.

The description given to women in the present scenario is a sort of a paradox. On one hand, she is given the image of the ladder of success, on the other hand, she is noiselessly enduring the aggression afflicted on her by her own family members. As compared with past, women in present day have attained a lot. But in actuality, they have to still travel a long way. In the modern times, Indian women are given liberties and rights such as freedom of expression and equality, as well as right to get education, but still today, they are fighting for issues such as dowry, sex, selective abortions, health, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, molestation and even murder.

Feminism is an equal political, economic, and social privileges and equal opportunities for Indian women. It is the search of the women's rights within the society of India. Like their feminist counterparts all over the world, feminists in India look for gender equality: the right to work for equal wages, the right to equal admission to health and education, and equal political rights. Indian feminists also have fought against culture-specific problems within India's patriarchal society, such

as legacy laws and the practice of widow immolation known as Sati. The history of feminism in India can be divided into three phases, the first phase, opening in the mid-nineteenth century, initiated when male European colonists began to protest against the social evils of Sati. The second phase started from 1915 to Indian independence. During this period Gandhi incorporated women's society into the Quit India movement and also independent women's organisation began to emerge. Finally, the third phase started after the post independence. This focused on fair treatment of women.

Feminism has been the most prevalent theme used by novelists nowadays and its territory is increasing day by day. The writers through their writings emphasize feminism speaking for the betterment of females and raising issues related to women and society. There are many good writers who write on female issues. Manju Kapur is one such writer whose writings represent the sufferings of females in the contemporary society. All her novels emphasise on issues related to women, their education, identity, life, etc. She presents the protagonists who are mostly educated who yearn to do something in life but are confined within the limits of a conservative society. These aspired individuals have independent thinking and their education makes them prejudiced towards family and society.

Manju Kapur's novels are meaningful as chronicles of a larger narrative. Her novels are the microcosm of life itself, the life which she devotedly realizes around her. Her major themes include feminism, social consciousness, political happenings, modern, educated and career-oriented middle-class married women's dilemma. Kapur does not give her women characters images such as wage-earners or career women but mainly as married women - as wives, daughters, and mothers. It is in these roles or images, they wish to experience freedom and to become aware of themselves as

individuals and to be accepted as equals. All this is a pre-requisite for life to have some meaning for them and the man-woman relationship to be a fulfilling one. For men, women's role in a society is sexual and procreation. They are dependent and not individuals.

Manju Kapur discusses the problem of the image of selfhood in all her novels. In her *Difficult Daughters*, she deals with ten women characters - the narrator's mother, Virmati, Kasturi, Lajwanti, Ida, Swanalata, Shakuntala, Virmati's cousin, Kishori Devi, Harish's mother, Ganga, Harish's wife, Chhotti, and Indumathi. Except Virmati's marriage, the marriages of all the other characters are arranged in the traditional way. Virmati's marital life is not happy because her husband takes the superiority of the dominant role of the male. He never appreciates the idea of a woman being individualistic. Ganga is given a role of a woman of mild temperament. She is very much devoted to her family. Indhumati's marriage with Inderjeet is successful with the perfect understanding between them. Kasturi, the wife of Suraj Prakash is a conventional woman in her role. Kasturi and Lajwanti are poles apart in their nature and personalities, but Kasturi leads relatively a conventional Indian way of life. Shakuntala is very individualistic in her thinking. Both Shakuntala and Lata are patriotic and completely Indian in their attitude. Ida leads the role of a liberated and emancipated woman.

Kapur's *A Married Woman* presents the image of the young women who desire freedom and individuality. Astha and Pipeelika are the products of changed social condition. They have seen a total new world and have new ideas. Their tastes are modern and their attitudes are flexible. Astha, the only daughter of her traditional parents, is depressed with her husband, Hemant, and engages in politics. Later she develops a friendly relation with Pipeelika. She finds peace in the presence of

Pipeelika. But this comfort lasts for short time. Thus Astha finds her own way of giving importance to her individual freedom and decides to have a good relationship with Pipee.

Nina in *The Immigrant* gets the role of a scholarly woman but chooses a wrong husband, who does not appreciate her ideas. She suffers very much and feels lonely even if she is in the presence of her husband, Ananda. She tries to adjust with her husband but her efforts become futile. She is not able to voice her aspirations and longings in life. She is an independent woman who wants her husband to share everything. Later, she seeks warmth and affection in the friendship of Anton. Her mental peace is restored as Anton gives her a new lease of life.

The researcher focuses on the portrayal of female Nina who lives in an apartment at Jangpura Extension, Delhi with her widowed mother. *The Immigrant* can be read with two dimensions. In the former section, the life of unmarried Nina as lived in India in a conventional orthodox society has been presented. Another section describes in detail the life of married Nina, the wife of an NRI dentist husband as she lived in Canada. Actually Kapur in *The Immigrant* focuses on the NRI marriages where men and women both are uprooted and move to live in some alien land. In this novel Nina is not a silent rebel, but she has raised her voice against patriarchal society.

*Custody*, the latest novel written by Manju Kapur portrays today's scenario of Indian society. Through this novel the researcher reveals the unimagined uncertainties of matrimony. The wife's sense of suffocation, the husband's fright of loneliness and the stable shifting of the children, like commodities, from one home to the other, are reminded with painstaking sincerity. Shagun has perfect life; Raman has good

location in multinational company and two sweet children. Ishita is a characteristic Indian woman. Her infertility creates mess in her life.

The researcher aimed to scrutinize the writings of Manju Kapur and to examine her handling of the changing image of woman in the modern and the post modern era. Tradition, transition and modernity are the stages through which the woman in Kapur's novels is passing.

Woman in her novels seems to be a personification of a new woman who has been trying to throw off the burden of inhibitions she has carried for ages. There is a remarkable change and more confidence in thier walking, talking, working and almost everything. This remarkable changing image of women to support the feminist viewpoint runs as an undercurrent in all the novels of Manju Kapur. This is the irony of Manju Kapur's women. There comes a transitional phase in their life. They suffer from a dilemma and finally they tend to become different from a traditional woman and want to break out into new paths. However, the change is more of theoretical in nature. Though, some radical changes have been witnessed still women are cliche with conventional boundaries of our so called society.

The researcher has well explored how the protagonists of Manju Kapur change to adjust to a new culture, their turmoil at such circumstances etc. The fictional world of Kapur from *Difficult Daughters* to *Custody* shows her deep concerns regarding the state of women in the patriarchal society. Sex outside marriage gives a subordinate position to women and always treats them as second-rate citizens. The subordination of woman begins even before her marriage when she is groomed by her parents, and ironically more often by mothers who are orthodox in their thinking, to grow into an attractive commodity that can have many uses for her husband in future.

Kapur portrays the suffering and agony of women, which results from uneven power-division in marriage, privileging one sex all the time and marginalizing the other. In her novels, women decide to live on their own to fulfill the needs of their own self. The divorce laws have made it easier now for women to take off the yoke of an unhappy marriage yet it does not put an end to the woman's problems. After obtaining the divorce, she still has to struggle on various levels in the patriarchal setup. A single woman is not accepted by the society as a healthy, sane and normal person. She is seen abnormal or deficient and looked upon with suspicion. Kapur's women object not to wifehood or motherhood, but to restrictions traditionally accompanying these roles.

The present study takes up the **Female Dilemma: Explorations in Manju Kapur's Major Works**. The first chapter **Introduction**, is an effort of a common survey of the various stages and advancement in the study of Indian English Literature. This is followed by a brief introduction of Indian Writing in English. Further it gives an account of the status and position of a woman in the society and the family. The section of this chapter focuses on the fiction and the various themes, dealt with Indian English women writers. It also gives a brief introduction to the life and works of the Indian women writers. This chapter tries to set the context for a discussion of the novels of the select writer Manju Kapur by discussing her novels and her biography.

The Second chapter, **Tradition versus Modernity** deals with traditional women as well as modern women. In a traditional society, the concept of 'family honour' is threatened when the woman has an extramarital affair. Kapur examines this aspect of Indian society without pronouncing moral judgments. Two of her novels, *The Immigrant* and *Custody* deal with extramarital relationships. *The Immigrant*

depicts the repressed emotions of the protagonist, Nina, caught within a suffocating and unsatisfactory marital relationship. Ananda is money-minded and he is unaware of his wife's feelings and longings.

A close reading of the novels of Kapur candidly expresses female dilemmas, anxieties, and sufferings but at the same time she highlights that women are bold, outspoken, determined and action oriented. Traditional Indian society limits woman's individual development and growth. She has to follow traditional values and ideologies as she is controlled by man throughout her life. Kapur reflects the inner psyche of her protagonists' suppressed desires, alienation, disappointments and frustrations which activate their inner self and make them realize the significance of their existence.

Kapur's women characters indulge in premarital sex and it is in defiance of traditional morality or the sacred institution of marriage. Nina in *The Immigrant* gets involved with Rahul and has sex with him before her marriage. It is an attempt to fulfill her inner desire for physical love. Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* has premarital sex with Harish out of curiosity and the result of a hunger for experience - sexual experience.

Kapur's protagonists are bold and have no inhibitions in breaking away from the established norms of traditional Hindu society - it means marriage. They are seen rebelling against established social inequalities and life's ambivalence. The women who have strong and well-developed characters defy both conventionality and modernity. The woman like Virmati in *Difficult Daughters*, Astha in *A Married Woman* and Nisha in *Home* are not in modern real sense. They have merely adapted the façade of modernity. Kapur's fiction gives importance on Indian woman's search

for self-realization. Kapur has gone deep into the female psyche almost in all her novels.

Modern man is becoming more materialistic. He gives more importance to money and gives less importance to human feelings. For men like Ananda in *The Immigrant* money is the most important thing in life and this love for money becomes the root cause of his separation from his wife. Man has become so much money minded that there is no place left for human feelings and emotions in his heart. Women in Maju Kapur's novels want to stand on their own feet and enjoy individuality, self expression, and self dependence. It is Nina's longing for freedom and individuality that urges her to go for a job and she can easily stand on her feet.

The holy tradition of marriage has also come under the impact of modernism. In traditional Indian society, marriages are arranged by the parents. After marriage, the husband and the wife have to live with each other under all circumstances. It is considered to be a contractor bondage made in the presence of God which has to be obeyed. But in the modern society, people do not believe in arranged marriages and we see that Shagun remains unhappy with her married life. Shagun is also having a blend of both the traditional and modern elements. She wants individuality and freedom. She also feels suffocated and unhappy in the husband-centered world and finally takes divorce from Raman.

Kapur highlights patriarchal society through Harish's life that he is actively indulged in condemning imperialism, championing the cause of liberty and democracy. But he overlooks his own household where he has forfeited his wife's rights over him and treats her like a servant. Here lies the difference between the real and ideal world of male members of the society. Finally, Virmati is bold enough to marry the Professor has taken her as the second wife. After the marriage, Virmati is

very submissive like the traditional wife. In fact, marriage is one of the weapons against wives which are effectively used to silence them.

This chapter also describes the protagonist of *A Married Woman* Astha's loneliness, alienation, depression, and suppression and her detachment in married life. Further this chapter highlights Astha's revolt against the patriarchal society through projecting Astha's lesbian relationship with Pipeelika, the widow of Aijaz Akhtar Khan. This chapter gives a clear description of modern women. The modern women deal with the women's self quest and women in these novels try to establish themselves as autonomous beings, free from the restrictions imposed by society, nature, traditional values and also free from their own fears and guilt. The modern woman of Kapur presents a picture of independent, free thinking individual, claiming her life to be her own, who is no longer seen as the compulsive victim of the social roles assigned to her that of a mother, a wife, a daughter or a sister. Virmati, Ida, Astha, Nisha, Nina and Shagun are modern women journeying from ignorance to knowledge through several experiences in life.

Through Manju Kapur's portrayal of the Indian middle class woman's existence in India, she presents a balance between tradition and modernity as a working philosophy for the contemporary woman. By tradition, Kapur means those values of security and harmony that symbolize the Indian way of life, while modernity essentially refers to the assertion of the independent, individual self. In the beginning Kapur's protagonists have passively accepted their socially ordained roles. Manju Kapur advocates that to realize herself, the woman must be free to her own self. The sacrifice and nobility that is expected of a woman is a stereotype that only bogs down the woman in a mire of negation and suppression. Of course, it is very necessary that

the woman finds her potential as an individual and gives expression to her inner space and self.

Kapur describes the conflict between tradition and modernity in all her novels. She seems to be realistic in her approach because whatever she has presented, all things are happening in our society from time to time. Since Indian society is becoming more and more urban-oriented and we find there are so many Virmatis, Idas, Asthas, Ninas and Shaguns. They all belong to middle class educated women who are not inferior to her male counterpart in terms of anything. Kapur is of the view that such traditional values must be modified and there should be equality and liberty in the lives of woman as we find in the lives of men.

The new empowered modern woman character of Manju Kapur is constantly, and consciously engaged in a battle against the ideological impositions, and power operations of patriarchy which not only believes that men are, and should be, superior to women but also curtails the free growth of women, and reduces them to second class citizens. This new woman character undergoes this struggle of breaking her own psychological conditioning, and the gendered definitions of femininity. The novelist proves that this struggle is painful but unavoidable because nothing worthwhile in the life of women comes without a battle against patriarchal and political prejudices. For the new women characters like Virmati, Ida, Astha, Nina and Shagun their battle against self, and society seems to be an empowering process which later brings success as well as strength to them. Manju Kapur, by making her heroines undergo stages of self-introspection, and self-reflection, makes them evolve themselves into more liberated individual than what their biological nature or culture have sanctioned.

In the words of Batliwala as revealed in *Empowerment of Women in South Asia*:

It implies control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. The material assets over which control can be established may be of any type - physical, knowledge, information and ideas. Control over ideology signifies the ability to generate, capacity to propagate, sustain and institutionalize specific sets of beliefs, principles, values, attitudes, actions and behaviours. This control in turn, confers the power of decision-making. The process of challenging existing power relations and gaining greater control over the sources of power may be termed empowerment. (223)

The third chapter entitled **Culture and Conflicts** explores the human relationships within the age-old institution of the family. The underlying theme of all the novels by Kapur has redefined human relationships - mother and daughter, father and daughter, brother and sister and husband and wife etc. In all the relationship that a woman enters into the family, she plays the significant role in the family which is the culture of our country. The love and hate relationship between mother and daughter is a recurrent theme in Kapur's novels.

The truth is that the complete system of bringing about marriages has broken down in urban Hindu society but there is no comprehension of this fact. The old practice of arranged marriages continues but the arranged marriage of today is not the arranged marriage of traditional one. The form of marriage has undergone a steady deterioration from decade to decade, so that the old tradition which guarantees a successful marriage is not operative any longer.

In the article, "On Marriages", Nirad C. Choudhri expresses the importance of marriage as follows:

The traditional method of arranging marriages virtually took no chances about possible and calculable maladjustments, because there always was a fair amount of certainty about the character and personality of the prospective brides and bridegrooms. (37)

The most important thing for young men and women is to know one another, to find out whether they feel drawn to one another, and then to learn to respect one another. The unusual separation of men and women is the cruel and frustrating thing in the contemporary Indian society.

In India there is an age-old cultural concept of marriage and piousness which has been attached in the relationship between husband and wife. On the contrary, in the newly emerging society marriage has become a formality. Having highly influenced by the western concept in which independence of spirit is in dominant form, modern boys and girls do not want to tie themselves in the happy union. In contrary they want to remain free because the freedom makes them enjoy. There is a character, Shagun in *Custody*, who does not have a sense of credibility, morality, and respect for cultural and moral values.

The matter of sex is assumed to be the most expected in the novels of Kapur. She does not hesitate to converse about sex liberally and openly. There are two aspects of management of sex in her novels. One kind of management provides enjoyment and excitement and another kind provides a sense of dissatisfaction. In the novel, *Difficult Daughters*, Professor Harish meets Virmati very secretly and she becomes pregnant during this period. At that time, Virmati studies BT at RBSL College. The researcher has highlighted in this chapter how Kapur has attached sex with human psychology and physical satisfaction. In the article, “Manju Kapur’s

*Difficult Daughters: Powerful Story of Man-Woman relationship*”, Satish Barbuddle points out:

Manju Kapur’s novel is a story of a daughter’s journey back into her mother’s painful past. The daughter Ida does not want to be like her mother as she does not want her voice to be suppressed by anybody. She hates such attempt which denies her freedom. This novel is a story of a woman who is sufferer of male egocentric attitude. (77 – 78)

Manju Kapur has convincingly created wonderful portraits of the contemporary realities of womanhood in her fiction. She not only reveals the realities of womanhood in her respective social contexts, but also made ardent advocacy for a social change to alleviate the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual burdens of women. She stands for humanitarianism, and she expresses infinite compassion for women.

Kapur has used a lot of Hindi and Punjabi words in the novel. Kapur employs beautiful expressions of colloquial Punjabi and creates the cultural context of her plot. Her use of Hindi and Punjabi words indicates a vast area of experiences, but it is remarkable to make all the details of the novel realistic, thus increasing readability. In *Difficult Daughters*, Kapur uses colloquial phrases and expressions like, ‘Puris and parathas wrapped in Britannia – bread waxed paper’ (2), aalu ki sabzi in mithai boxes’ (2) and ‘. . . a pull her sari palla’ (213). In “Readability of Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters*” Manju Roy says:

The source of high readability can also be traced to the novelist’s use of code-switching devices. Code switching is normally defined as the use of more than one language in the execution for a speech-act. She

uses this device on the level of lexis and phrases usually noun phrases, to express herself in a better and satisfying way. (164)

Kapur's narrative technique and her sincere efforts to make the novel realistic also enhance the readability of the text. Traditional women are expected to be challenged with marital bliss and they are happy to play the role of woman as homemakers. But in the present scenario, things have changed women are not mere playthings in a patriarchal world. Virmati falls in love and is caught in hopeless illicit love. She breaks her engagement with a suitable decent boy Inderjit. In the article "Dichotomy of Character in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*", Rani Alex says:

The story of Virmati is shown through the eyes of her daughter Ida, who plays poignant role in re-defining the concept of the stereotyped woman. She is a representative of the new generation woman who is not ready to sacrifice a woman's desires and aspirations for making others happy. And it is clearly revealed through the opening lines and the closing words of the novel which reinforces that she never wanted to be a victim like her mother. (135)

Women are an essential part of civilization. No society or country can ever progress without an active participation of women in its overall development. Though the status of woman in society has differed from culture to culture, yet one fact common to almost all societies is that woman has never been considered the equal of man. Suman Bala uses Manu's quotes in "Defiant Daughters: A Study of Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* and Anita Rau Badami's *The Hero's Walk*" as:

In childhood a female must be dependent on her father; in youth, on her husband; her lord being dead, on her sons; if she has no sons, on the near Kinsmen of her husband; if she be left, with no kinsmen, on

those of her father; if she has no paternal kinsmen, on the sovereign; a woman must never seek independence. (150)

Right from birth, a woman is thrust with social images, rewards, and punishments that are carefully designed to ensure that she does not develop the qualities associated with men. Thus gender discrimination starts from birth itself. Unmarried girls feel constraints of parents and of the society to which they belong. Manju Kapur is a distinguished figure in the world of post-modern fiction as she has successfully left an indelible mark in the portrayal of women characters along with their culture and inner conflicts in her novels.

The fourth chapter, **Quest for Self and Exploration of Feminine Psyche**, discusses the different aspects of feminist issues. Kapur's novels encompass the whole spectrum of feminist concerns and probe themes such as women's oppression, male domination, victimisation, man-woman relationship, woman-woman relationship, mother-daughter relationship, divorce, infertility, gender discrimination and domestic violence. The feminism depicted by her first three novels is not forward looking in that three of her novels seem to end where they began with only a changed protagonist, who has followed the tortuous route of self-examination and self-realization, deciding in the end to endure the asphyxiating marital life uncomplainingly.

Kapur believes that feminism is not anti-men. She advocates an ideal family setup, where both men and women avail equal opportunities and privileges where cooperation, reconciliation and companionship prevail. One can understand that it is a constructive concept of feminism aimed at assisting contemporary woman in establishing her identity not only as a role-defined social function but also as an

individual functioning creatively and productively within the family and society. Kapur pleads to reject the ‘battle field view’ of man woman relationship.

After examining the women characters depicted in the by select novels, chosen for study, the researcher has come to the following interferences. Kapur’s protagonists are in the process of discovering their true selves as daughters, wives and mothers. They also question their traditionally assigned roles in the fast changing new world. Virmati, Astha, and Nisha endeavour to extricate themselves from the inevitable clutches of feminine mystique, introspect, discover themselves, but ultimately do not shun the societal roles within marriage. They try to find solutions for their problems in their married life as it is an important social institution to them. A balanced practical approach characterizes all these protagonists in Kapur’s scheme of things indicates to value human relationships, however restricting they might be, and not to run away from responsibilities of wifehood and motherhood.

The woman is often regarded as a sex-object and as a means of procreation. She is known only through her relationship with man and is not expected to have an independent identity. Even in modern times, when women have achieved economic independence and high educational standards, they are still regarded as inferior to men. After working outside the house, she still plays the role of housekeeper and cook. The man plays an important role in the house. In such a case, the woman’s subordination often results a terrible mental conflict for her as she is torn between social expectations and the need to realize her potential.

The woman today has her own quest, a personal quest for self discovery and self fulfilment. Before a fruitful discussion on the emergence of ‘modern woman’ it is necessary to understand the conditions and circumstances that led to the creation of such a type. Broadly speaking, the ‘new woman’ is one who is free from

conventional, social and moral constrains and who possess a heightened sense of individuality and self awareness. The modern woman does not find any sense in being acquiescent. It does not appeal to her imagination to be a suffering and sacrificing individual. As she feels the need for self expression and individual fulfilment, she begins to question the conventions and defies the traditions which tend to undermine her importance and individuality. Such women become non conformists in that they rebel against the accepted and existing moral codes and social norms, which either in theory or in practice tends to relegate women to a secondary place.

Modern women challenge the injustice which she has faced in day today life. The carving for individual freedom and happiness might lead to the breaking up of family and relationships or at times cause clash of wills and personalities and thereby paving the way to the breaking up of the age-old institution of marriage. If traditional bound women run the risk of losing their identity, non-conformists face personal and social conflicts. In their quest for self-fulfilment they may have to undergo the painful experience for severing the family bonds and re-establishing themselves. New woman is an autonomous being, not an appendage to man.

Manju Kapur's novels encapsulate her artistic vision of feminity. However, her protagonists are against a ritualistic and tradition-bound life in order to explore their true self. They are more concerned with the quest for an authentic selfhood and an understanding of the existential problems of life. Kapur's protagonists retain their individuality even then they face so many difficulties in their lives. Manju Kapur indicates the plight of the exceptional, aspiring modern woman fearing to violate traditional role but attempting it, all the same, courageously. The new woman has been trying to assert and ascertain her rights as the human being and is determined to fight for equal treatment with men.

This chapter depicts how the educated middle-class Indian women are searching for an independent identity. The Indian woman finds herself a victim of oppression at all such levels. She has no control over her body. She is taught from early childhood to suppress her will and aspirations. Her ideals are Sita and Savitri, and she is taught to emulate them to become an ‘ideal’ wife. As a wife and mother, she has no identity of her own. Her existence is geared towards pleasing her husband and bearing his children. As a childless woman, she suffers in many ways from the cultural fabric of society. In the novels, Kapur explores the different levels of oppression and their overt and covert manifestations. Her main trepidation is for the woman and how she fares in our society.

Manju Kapur describes feminism in the Indian context. She does not mean taking the militant anti-men and anti-marriage stance. It indicates mature and balanced gender relationship. Everybody has to work out her or his own strategy to overcome problems. At present, the woman bears the responsibility of making the attempt to free her from the oppressive patriarchal stereotypes that society has imposed on her. In the meanwhile, in Kapur’s vision, women must assert. They must not succumb to the pressures of patriarchy, particularly in the domestic arena, because they are educated.

Manju Kapur’s novels deal with the different shades of marriage and how marriages are transforming in the form of divorces and separation nowadays. She focuses on some of the everyday experience of man and woman or husband and wife. Kapur believes that marriage is such a union which is multifarious in nature. If it is good it gives incomparable pleasure, happiness, and satisfaction. If it gives in the wrong way, life becomes hell for both. She gives more importance to marriage. Kapur believes that the sacred institution of marriage is in the state of threat not only in India

but all over the world. She realistically reveals it in the novels *The Immigrant* and *Custody*.

Manju Kapur's novels have thrown light on some of the everyday interaction of human life. Almost in all the novels, Kapur illustrates the arousing, rational and edifying aspects of male-female liaisons. Being a postmodern writer, Kapur is quite dynamic in depicting some of the characteristics of human life in a straight way. Her inspections on love, marriage, separation, lust, man-woman connection etc., are being presented with firm practical consideration.

In Manju Kapur's novels, we find the presentation of husband-wife association, or lover-beloved connection in abundance. The husband wife rapport has been presented in the relationship between Ganga and Harish, Ida and Prabhakar, Virmati and Harish in *Difficult Daughters*, Astha and Hemant in *A Married Woman*, Pooja and Raju, Nisha and Arvind in *Home*, Nina and Ananda in *The Immigrant* and Ishita and Raman, Shagun and Raman, Shagun and Ashok in *Custody*. In the above mentioned relationships, we find a lack of mutual understanding, respect for each other, devotion for each other and sacrifice for each other and there is no sense of sublime nature of the husband-wife relationship.

The husband and wife shown in the novels of Manju Kapur are not the models of Sita and Ram or Savitri and Satyavan. Nina and Ananda in *The Immigrant* and Shagun and Ashok in *Custody*, go beyond the morality in establishing the physical relationship with another person apart from their husband and wife. Nina likes to be separated from her husband Ananda. Nina in *The Immigrant* has extra-marital relationships with Anton. There are two reasons responsible for her extra marital relationship with Anton; the one reason is there is no proper understanding of Nina and Ananda and the other reason is Ananda is not able to satisfy Nina sexually.

Shagun enjoys the extra-marital relationship with Ashok. For Shagun her individuality, freedom, and liberty are more important than moral, social and cultural values.

These characters have updated and upgraded themselves by making their writings universal in tone and modern in style. They are the representative writers unfolding some of the basic ingredients of human life in the page of materialism and technological advancements. In such milieu, Kapur has made her unique presence by showing, the literary world her power of sharpened imagination in the portrayal of various shades of human life, especially the life of the woman in the fast-growing and rapidly changing society. Culture set rules and regulations of living. Traditional and cultural values are on the verge of alteration.

After independence, India has become a great force in many spheres of life. There are massive industrialization, rapid technological advancement and above all, much-required transformation and change in outlook, attitude and lifestyle. People may talk the difference between India and Bharat, but the change in growth and transformation can be noticed everywhere and in each and every sphere of life. India of urban areas is quite different from the Bharat of Indian villages, the change may be noticed in the outlook, attitude and lifestyle of the people living in Indian villages which is regarded as the soul of India from the time immemorial, Kapur does not take interest in highlighting the problems of poor and the weaker sections of the society. It seems that she has her own purposes of writing and the purpose is to present the woman in conflicting modern perspectives. She thinks about women, feels about women and writes about women.

In the present study of Manju Kapur's portrayal of change in lifestyle, Kapur expresses that mutual understanding is essential to lead a life in a peaceful manner. Obviously Kapur belongs to one of the most critical phases of Indian social history. She belongs to the age which is highly characterized by transformational needs and various kinds of alterations in social life.

In India after 1980, we find the emergence of artificiality and paradoxical way of living due to the importance given to economic stability. Not only men but also women are in search of such kind of life which is free from any kind of traditional bondage. For such people, traditional values have become the matter of past. They want to mould their life on such setting and milieu. For the sake of modernity, they modify traditional values and principles according to their own choice. In such inevitable occurring, the emergence of Kapur on Indian literary scene adds more significance to her writings.

Manju Kapur's feminist stance is evident in her novels in frank and candid manner. She has not followed the complication of feminism in her novels. She presents the various facets and shades of Indian life in which women are in the conflicting situation. She has blasted the paradox by saying that high kind of sacrifice and sublimity are only attached to women but they have been denied by even enjoying fundamental rights. They are the victim of age-old traditional values.

Manju Kapur's feminism is quite different from her counterpart. She frankly shows the journey of her characters either from the conventional to the contemporary or from the present to the customary. She seems to be much obstinate in showing her attitude towards male dominated society in which women have less power but more responsibilities to perform. For Kapur feminism is a tool of uprising where women have to struggle very hard for their endurance.

In the last two or three decades, there is a devastating change in the attitude and feelings of the people. Educated people have comprehended the importance of daughters and they provide quality education, quality food and quality clothing to their daughter. Without making difference between daughters and sons, Kapur has realized the condition herself because she belongs to such a critical transformation period.

Manju Kapur's female characters are not weak in emotional, but they are intellectual ones. Virmati in *Difficult Daughters*, Astha in *A Married Woman*, Nisha, Pooja in *Home*, Nina in *The Immigrant* and Shagun, Ishitha in *Custody* are emotionally stronger in comparison to their male counterparts. Kapur shows her strong emotional as well as critical attitude towards some of the important facets of the human predicament like marriage, human relationships, divorce, sex etc. It is of course, she has presented all these aspects in the context of her concept of new woman. Marriage and human relationships seem to be the primary motive of her projection.

In *A Married Woman*, Kapur highlights her bold stance towards lesbianism. Lesbianism is a psychological reversal of traditional function of physical relation between man and woman which is necessary for the continuation of this universe. Physical relationship between woman and woman is not appreciated and should not be in practice because it might hamper the usual course of action between man and woman. Kapur reflects the physical relationship between Astha and Pipeelika and this relationship is opposite to the normal psychological behaviour of human beings towards sex. People have always mistaken the relationship between feminism and sex.

Kapur has projected through her novels feminism as a theory in which hopes and desires, failures and frustrations of women have been projected in order to produce betterment in their lives. In India, where there is a great role of tradition and convention, culture and morality, there is the little scope of the existence of lesbianism because it is neither practiced nor recommended. But in the West, we come across several cases of lesbianism and accordingly activists always plea for that as a right but West is West and East is East. East and West cannot be intermingled because of different civilization, cultural, traditional, social, moral and geographical setting. In India every relation is sanctioned by religion and morality.

Manju Kapur projects a woman, who is ready to maintain her dignity and retain her individuality. It has been observed that one set of value is appreciable in aristocratic society but at the same time, it is beyond the thinking of lower-middle or middle-classes. People set and follow different social, moral and cultural values at different places in different times. In their cases, they are not the victims of such things rather they alter and mould these things according to their comfort, status, and situation. Kapur, being a shrewd observer of social, moral and cultural aspects of human life, believes the fact that everything is in a state of transformation. So it is essential to redefine values and ideologies.

Manju Kapur as a modern Indian woman writer has presented a different kind of women in her novels. Her women characters are the narrator of their philosophy of women's liberation and freedom. She is quite exceptional in the presentation of women behaviour in her novels. She is supposed to be the real presenter of woman's struggle for liberty, equality and consolidation of women power in the society.

Kapur realistically portrays today's women who face various challenges in the Indian society which either tries to hold on to the traditional values or modern life style. Kapur is one of the major Indian writers who are concerned with the psychological stress, problems and sufferings undergone by women caught in a world of uncertain values of society and culture. A study of her works reveals her persistent concern with the themes of traditional values. Many of Kapur's characters, Virmati, Astha, Nisha, Nina and Shagun face the reality boldly and want to exercise their freedom in their life. It is described in the novels that the male characters are always educated while the female characters are very bold and active.

In *Difficult Daughters* the protagonist, Virmati, is in the dilemma whether to continue her love with the professor or not. Finally, she takes the decision to be true to his lover. In *A Married Woman*, Astha is in conflict whether to take care of the family responsibilities or to spend much time with Pipeelika. In *Home*, Nisha is in dilemma to continue her business or not. There is a dilemma in women regarding the mode of life they should choose for themselves. However, Kapur makes her heroines assertive; they have the courage to make their own decisions and they have the spirit to face life as it comes in their ways. The modern theory, cultural studies, and feminism are the techniques used to interpret the concealed meaning within the novels to understand the author's intentions better and to study the actions of the protagonists.

The modern woman does not find any sense in such self sacrifice and yearns for self expression, individuality and self identity. Women in Kapur's novels symbolize the lack of spirituality that characterizes modern age. Unlike other Kapur's heroines, Nina in *The Immigrant* and Shagun in *Custody* seem to suggest that women have not only the need to demolish the mythical and icon graphic images of woman

imposed by patriarchal structures but also they like freedom and equality which still goes unheard in the patriarchal world.

“Politics in *Difficult Daughters* and *A Married Woman*: A Comparative Study” Dr. P. Kannan says:

The comparison of the theme of partition in *Difficult Daughters* with the demolition of Babri Masjid in *A Married Woman* revealed that the Muslims were the culprits of communal violence in *Difficult Daughters* and the author backed up the Hindus. On the contrary, the culprits of communal violence in *A Married Woman* were the Hindus and the sympathy of the author was with the Muslims. (224)

The politics of India partition is incorporated symbolically and realistically. Its symbolic presentation is found in the division within Lala Diwan Chand’s family. The theme of national politics is presented more in the episodes of Swarna Latha. Mohini Data is the role model for Swarna Latha in her political life. Kapur candidly describes the atrocities of Muslims on the Hindus in various manners. Indumati explains that Amritsar has been attacked worst by the Muslims.

In *A Married Woman*, Kapur has handled the politics of demolition of the Babri Masjid with great care and skill. She introduces the subject of the controversy of Babri Masjid and Ramjanaboomi through a Muslim character as a history lecturer cum founder of ‘Street Theatre Group’ and also in his workshop in Astha’s School. The intensity of the communal violence is shown in the assassination of Aijaz by the Hindu extremists.

Nisha’s business flourishes within a year and she invests more money in her business and regains her lost self-confidence. Nisha hands over the business to Pooja’s care because of her immediate pregnancy and her physical condition and her

mother-in-law's silent disapproval. Nisha feels happy when her husband, Aravind assures her that she could restart her business again. She asserts her individuality. She steps towards freedom from patriarchal society. In "Between Tradition and Modernity" Preeti Bhatt says:

However, the basic difference between a traditional and a modern society is the claim the society exercises over the individual in a traditional society and the comparative independence an individual enjoys in a modern society. (222)

In the novel, *The Immigrant*, Nina who struggles for happiness, adjust herself in every stage of life, compromise for aesthetic pleasure, struggles to find herself in new world. Kapur reflects a picture of modern educated Indian woman who fights for her rights and get success. Kapur describes lots of twist and turns in the life of Nina. This novel describes Indian tendency of mother who is worried about her daughter's marriage. Shanti, Nina's mother, like other Indian mother, is always looking out for ways to find and fix a match for Nina. Thus inspite of being educated and independent, the prospect of marriage looms large on Nina and mother.

In *The Immigrant*, Nina refuses to submit herself to the patriarchal notions of her husband, Ananda, and maintains her own individuality and struggles to carve out her own identity. Another character is Alkha, sister-in-law of Nina. She is ready to send Ishan to abroad for further studies but is not ready to send her daughter because she has to get married.

In *Custody*, Kapur portrays the present scenario of Indian society. The novel depicts the issues of love, marriage, decisiveness, divorce, and infertility. Shagun has perfect family life, Raman has a good position in the multinational company and two

kids. Still, she feels suffocation in life and this leads her to choose another person as the life partner.

The researcher aims to study the writings of Kapur to examine her handling of the changing image of the woman in the modern and the postmodern era. Kapur highlights two different aspects of female characters - infidelity and infertility in the novel. Kapur presents extra marital love in the novel and uses this sexual freedom as an instrument of resistance to thwart patriarchal myths and values. The novel, *Custody* is not only just a social remark but also it shows the universal angst of modern marriage, with its burden of individualism. Shagun is a modern woman who fulfills her individual dreams instead of family life.

The women characters of Manju Kapur do not merely confirm to the male expectations or conflict with male world. Kapur's heroine negotiates for their independence and a respectable place in society. Her protagonists are mentally advanced in the real sense of the world, whether she is Virmati, Rupa, Nisha, Astha or Nina Kapur stresses the significance of adjustment and compromises in a family. It has been noticed that Kapur's protagonists like to assert her rights, but at the same time, they return to her roots whenever it is required by their family members. These protagonists neither they adopt aggressive steps in life nor they adhere to the stereotype role. They are balanced personalities who realize their potential and rise as good negotiators. Kapur presents women who try to establish their own identity.

Manju Kapur is certain that institutions in the society - family, religion, caste etc., reinforce, and sustain subordination of women. They do not question patriarchal values, and structures which maintain an unequal position of women in the family. Manju Kapur deems that empowerment of women is the solution to end subordination. Through empowerment women would acquire economic, social,

political power, and take part in the decision making. The process of empowerment to achieve gender equality can begin with a positive attitudinal change towards women as a whole.

Sandwiched between conformity and nonconformity, tradition and modernity, illusion and reality and the mask and the face, Manju Kapur's protagonists develop a dilemma and lead a life of restlessness. Progressing along the axis of delimiting restrictions, self analysis, protest, and self discovery, they try to create both physical as well as psychological space for themselves to grow on their own. It is clear that like the model new woman, Manju Kapur's protagonists are proactive and progressive, moving on fearlessly.

After scrutinizing the women characters portrayed in the novels by Manju Kapur, it is evident that women, even after undergoing domestic brutality, and societal violence, have internalized traditional values, exhibit rare courage to carry on the burden of life making minor adjustments. The protagonist of Manju Kapur's novels, undergo self realization, transcending the boundaries of the femininity, and finally emerging out with a new identity.

It is essential that women need not accept everything as part of their fate. There are instances wherein the family is responsible for the suffering. In such cases, they should learn to find a solution. In this regard, to awake women to their rights and powers, potential is the foremost need of the hour, because injustice against them will continue as long as they remain reconciled to the myth of femininity. As a woman, Manju Kapur is more sensitive to women's issues, and family relationships. The inner working of the female psyche holds a great fascination for Manju Kapur, and the reader is made to perceive things through a woman's point of view. Her novels

foreground the silence of women, the passive acceptance of the roles assigned to them.

Thus we can see that in all her novels Manju Kapur talks about the problems of women, and also gives the solutions for these problems. The solutions do not come from outside but from within. The protagonists undergo a transition, and accept the unchanged situation with self realization that they cannot change the situation but have to change their outlook, and attitude to make their life durable. In all her novels Manju Kapur demonstrates successfully, and convincingly the sources of traps, and violence awaiting women at various stages of their existence, and also suggests means of how they can possibly overcome the same through courage, and confidence.

Accordingly a careful study of the novels of Manju Kapur gives a clear picture of our culture. Her novels have faithfully recorded the challenges, and confrontation of values, and the process of transition, and transformation going on in the society. In particular, her novels have been written, underlining the essential dignity of woman in the changing scenario, and there is a strong affinity of her works with the best in world literature. The protagonists of Manju Kapur rebel the traditional roles forced on woman. Towards the end the protagonists would be transformed as a new woman with a new attitude.

Manju Kapur's novels show an admiration of fine arts. This gives a scope for further study for future research scholars. Future researchers can do their research on Women Empowerment, A Reading on the Changing Significances of Females, Position of Women in the Present Social Construction, A Study on the Communicative Intelligence of the Protagonists in the novels of Manju Kapur, etc.

To conclude, Manju Kapur is deeply interested in the complex fate of women in the modern world. Modern women are trapped in the violent world of dilemma which actually destroyed their real selves and have made them live just like a hollow woman without any feelings or emotions. It seems as if Manju Kapur was holding a mirror with her while writing her texts and at the end she turns this mirror towards the women of the society leaving a question if women are ready to change or not. She has written the reality of the real society with the help of imaginary characters. Manju Kapur has presented a true example of taking benefits from literature and making literature a revolutionary weapon to dig the ugly soiled maladies of the society. Finally it is proved that Kapur is a master of literary world writing in pure realist tradition and her writings are immortal in the world of literature.