

**WOMEN'S SPACE IN INDIAN CULTURAL CONTEXT: A  
STUDY OF THE SELECTED NOVELS OF MANJU KAPUR**

**A THESIS  
SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN  
ENGLISH**



By  
**MANJULA GOEL**  
Registration No. 12- Ph.D-019  
Under the Supervision of  
Dr. Gunjan Agarwal  
Professor  
Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences

**MAHARISHI MARKANDESHWAR  
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)  
MULLANA –AMBALA-133207 (HARYANA)  
JANUARY, 2018**

## PREFACE

Feminism in India has been a long unsettled debate which is still persistently prevalent in various forms. The word ‘Femina’ derives from Latin which means woman and feminism means struggle for the betterment of woman. Feminism does not deal with a unitary system rather it means different things in different regional locations. The contemporary Indian women writers in English such as Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandaya and Manju Kapur are primarily dealt with individual identity, inner conflict, family relations, cultural differences and issues regarding feminine sensibility. The research deals with the situation of Indian middle class educated women, their confrontation with the old mind-set. Manju Kapur’s novels trace the different stages of women’s development in a particular socio-cultural context that marks the significance of Indo-centric feminist perspective. Women characters in Manju Kapur want to struggle against the concerning masculine ideology still persisting in the Post- Independence Era. In Indian culture and tradition, designed by patriarchal society for women, women were not supposed to raise their voice for their rights and protest against injustice.

Chapter 1st **Introduction** gives the clear picture of Indian Feminism through Ancient period, Medieval period, Vedic period, and Colonial period e.g. how Sita and Draupadi challenge the male ego to the epitomic limit. The stereotype culture of Sati Pratha, child marriage, ban on widow re-marriage was curtailed by the protest of many social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chand Vidya Sagar, and Jyotirao Phule. In Colonial period Muslims brought purdah practice, Rajput brought Jauhar, Devdasis were sexually exploited and polygamy was practiced in Hindu Kshatriya rulers. Despite all these practices Durgavati, Chand Bibi, Nurjahan were the feminine rulers. During Colonial period many women play the role of Freedom Fighters. India’s Feminine movement was initiated by male social reformers later joined by female NGOs. In Indian context Feminism challenges the patriarchal

symbolic order and control mechanism. This chapter explains the literary contribution and biography of Manju Kapur and the literary contribution of her contemporary female writers.

Chapter-2<sup>nd</sup> **The Choice and the Preference** deals with many vibrant issues as education versus marriage, struggle against victimization, cultural conditioning of girls, desire of identity, and liberty of freedom of choice, illicit relationship, confrontation of educated women with old mind-set, attitude of typical Indian women towards marriage. Apart from Virmati, all the heroines do not have their own choice regarding marriage and education. In this chapter, we can also observe the adverse effect of child marriage in case of Ganga, Professor Harish's wife. She suffers silently the ill treatment of her husband who is busy in having illicit relationship with Virmati. According to Simone De Beauvoir, the women are considered 'the other'. The reason behind it is that they have become so polished in patriarchy that they themselves becomes a symbol of female patriarch for their daughters. Kasturi, Sona and Astha's mother are the great example of female patriarch for their daughters. The culture of suppressing women works so deeply in mind that even in Canada, Ananda being an NRI marries an Indian girl, Nina with the thinking that an Indian woman will not suppose to raise the question of his impotency.

Chapter-3<sup>rd</sup> **The Phenomena of Suffering** reflects the sufferings of Indian Middle Class educated women as a consequence of their own choice and the choice made by their parents for them. Manju Kapur's protagonists confront both the oppressive mechanism of patriarchal society and the erratic moods of their individual selves. The Buddhism like Hinduism also regards the sufferings as the result of past misdeeds. Awareness of guilt, fear of public humiliation and human indifference, separation add to an individual misery. Virmati suffers due to her love affair with a married man. She feels guilty. "Her study was her passport to independence, not just her passport to sleeping with the professor". Education to women is good. But there are many who misuse the spirit of education and equate it with unbridled freedom. In *Home*, Nisha's inability to forget the memories of her erstwhile lover Suresh leads her

to mental agony and a temporary skin disease. The girls are made to suit the needs of patriarchal society. In *The Immigrant*, Nina's unfulfilled desires on the account of her husband's impotency ruin her marital relationship. Marriage has betrayed her. It has not provided all glittering things that she has imagined. In *Custody*, Shagun is driven to engage herself in extra marital relationship and is made to face its repercussions whereas Ishita suffers due to infertility.

**Chapter4th Mawkishness in Manju Kapur's Writings** deals with the inner feelings of the women protagonists of Manju kapur. Mawkishness means reliance on feeling, association with the heart. The feminist literature comes as a cry from their hearts. Valid sentiments and natural sentiments are curbed because of the panic of non-acceptance by the society and jeopardizing their place in the family as well as in the society. Mawkishness is reflected through under the following sub titles: Cranky Thoughts, Corporal Features, and Emotions in Panic, Determination and Endurance. In process to liberate from the first cage they enter into another. Virmati frees herself from the old bonds and marionette in the hands of new ones. Simone De Beauvoir has defined women biologically, "She is a womb, ovary. She is female." Infertility and infidelity are the factors for the damage and its reconstruction. Shagun divorce due to her physical passion whereas Ishita divorce due to her infertility. Ishita repairs what Shagun damages. Manju Kapur has penned down characters differently. They are bold, daring and in search of their identity and recognition. No doubt, sometimes they become self-centered as Kasturi becomes for bringing up her children, Virmati for getting married with married Professor. Astha keeps a lesbian relationship with Pipee, Nisha overcomes from the grieves by starting new business and then marries to Arvind, a widower, Nina keeps extra-marital relationship with Anton and Shagun breaks up her marriage with Raman and goes with Ashok.

**Chapter5th Feminine Emotional Rejoinder** develops the personality of suppressed woman into new woman. What is necessary is to destroy the patriarchal mold, and for Virmati to have tried to do that in the forties was a great achievement. Astha conflicts between the domineering patriarchal customs and her creative acumen

and awareness brings out the feminine receptivity is exhibited in the novel. Nisha appears to be a New Woman. She wants to be the embodiment of the woman of the new millennium into actual sense. Kapur tries to probe the emotional roots of her protagonists. Their education leads them to independent thinking for which their family and society become intolerant of them Through Shakuntala and Swarnlata Kapur emphasizes their yearning to be a part of political and intellectual movements. The circumstances in which they are forced to live make them to protest against the existing patriarchal norms. They want to change the society. But the society has not changed for them. That's why their struggle sometimes goes in vain. It is the family members who can support their daughters and daughters-in-law.

**The Last Chapter** concludes the research with a great hope to maintain a new social order which is congenial to the physical, social and psychic well being of women. They will be appearing as New Women. They are obsessed with total fulfillment rather than accepting the submissive domesticity. They wish for their emancipation and striving for some space and demolishing the existing myths. However Mrs. Kapur is aware of the fact that the women of India have indeed achieved their success in seventy years of Independence. We see the emergence of New Women in Manju Kapur's heroines, who do not want to be the rubber dolls for others to move as they will. Defying Patriarchal notions that enforce women towards domesticity, they assert their individuality and wish for self reliance through education. They nurture the desire of being independent and leading lives of their own. They want to shoulder responsibilities that go beyond a husband and children. They are not silent rebels but are bold, outspoken, determined and action oriented. Inspite of getting education and freedom the women's protagonists of Manju kapur's novels do not blossom into new woman in the real sense. Though they dare to cross one patriarchal threshold, they are caught into another, where there free spirits are curbed and they do is adjust compromise and adapt. Their struggle for identity is an unfinished combat.

## **CHAPTER-6**

### **Conclusion**

The present research reveals Manju Kapur's efforts to sketch the image of new woman in stereotype patriarchal Indian tradition. In all her five novels, Manju Kapur strongly opposes those aspects of patriarchy which still exist in Indian social set-up. In this male-oriented society woman's struggle for economic, social and political emancipation from the bondages of suppression and control to achieve a progressive state of mind has become a thorny path. Manju Kapur's writings add a viable contribution to Indian feminist literature in English. It is a straight reflection of morals, ethics and values of modern India with traditional roots. Her contemporary writers like Shashi Deshpande, R.P. Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal and Kamala Markandaya successfully portray this patriarchal Indian society in their works.

In her works, Kapur presented Indian woman not the hushed victim and follower of old traditions and customary ideals of family and society. They develop the longing of leading a life of their own. They desire to go beyond the domestic life and aspire to adopt a brave blunt and firm attitude. These women are no longer mute dissenters.

By analyzing the fiction of Kapur, researcher has seen that the position of women in Indian social structure has been marginalized. Manju Kapur has however, created women protagonists who have tried their best to liberate themselves from the trap of patriarchal culture. Women protagonists in these novels do not accept the role given to them by patriarchy as their identity suffers from a male biased attitude. Due to male dominance, they seek to demolish the existing myths of womanhood as prescribed by the male ideology. These new women are obsessed with total fulfillment rather than accepting the submissive domesticity. In their attempt to raise the consciousness of women, Kapur's contemporary novelists provide a glimpse into the female psyche and deal with the full range of women experiences. Demolishing

the existing myths, they have tried to bring a new social order which is congenial to the physical, social and psychic well-being of women.

Manju Kapur's female characters Virmati, Astha, Nisha, Rupa, Nina, Shagun and Ishita question their secondary position which compels them to lead in a suffocating atmosphere and restrain their autonomy. With their viable efforts they want to live on their own. They want to reconstruct a new society and curtail the old patriarchal system which gives them nothing but mental distortions. The heroine Nisha in novel *Home* defies and challenges the ideological restraints of the society. With her dedicated efforts she wants to reform the principles and social structures to re-establish her life in an evocative manner. Kapur effectively recognizes the claustrophobic boundaries in which women are compelled to live. They claim emancipation to come out from these confinements to achieve a free state of mind. Her writings provide an effective contribution to Indian feminist literature in English.

Kapur's writings are a valuable input towards the sphere of Indian writings in English. *Difficult Daughters* is a novel based upon the pre-partition scenario of India and it is a story of three generations of 20th century traditional Punjabi family. The protagonist Virmati takes birth as a granddaughter here. The political and social issues are successfully woven in the story with the issues concerning women like education versus marriage. The novel opens with Ida, the daughter of Virmati who tries to find out the past of her mother which was always elusive to her. Ida comes to Amritsar at her relatives' home from where she is able to get all the past details. In *Difficult Daughters*, the protagonist Virmati falls in love with her professor, who is already married and has two children. Even though he marries Virmati and takes her to his home. After this Virmati's parents cut off all relations with her. Even at her

new home she obviously has bad terms with professor's first wife. Soon she finds her way to get little freedom, by having further education with M.A at Lahore. By the end of the novel, one can see India achieved freedom and even Virmati too is happy with professor at her home. She even has reconciliation with her family. Freedom struggle of the country and Virmati's fight for her study and her desire for marriage with her lover goes parallel. Eventually she feels the taste of wine of freedom, mentally and socially.

In the college Harish feels for Virmati as "flower like against a backdrop of male student". As a new woman she defies the practice of professor of luring her on one hand and making his wife pregnant on the other by arguing: "You think you can do what you like so long as you go on saying your love". Eventually we observe arising "New Woman" in Kapur's heroines as they do not desire to be rubber dolls in the hands of others. Condemning this male oriented society that compelled woman to live in a claustrophobic confinements, Virmati rebels for freedom of education and longs for an independent well being. Gradually she coolly and decisively shuns Harish, neglects his urge and restrains his longings. She decides not to meet him again as she has a great care for her family prestige. She makes him aware about her family's esteem through a letter from Lahore. Kapur portrays her characters with self confidence, who believe in themselves only. They have qualities like, self assertiveness and have rebellious spirit. Kapur has presented her woman with full of self esteem:

When I first heard, how I suffered, I cried. I thought this is the real punishment for what I have done..... I did not want them to believe I was so stupid that no matter what you did, I would go on fighting with them over you. (DD 109)

Manju Kapur's second novel, *A Married Woman* talks about different phase in women's life, after and before marriage. Having traditional thoughts Astha's mother always had just one wish to get her daughter married to some nice guy. This can be clearly depicted in the novel, "when you get married our responsibility will be over. Do you know the shastras say if parents die without getting their daughter married, they will be condemned to perpetual rebirth?" (*AMW* 1) Being a senior bureaucrat her father takes a great care for her studies. He has views, "...her future lay in her own hands, and these hands were to be strengthened by the number of books that passed through them" (*AMW* 2). But Astha's life since childhood had been controlled by her mother, even her decisions were imposed upon her daughter. After having two short affairs, Astha got married to Hemant, an M.B.A from U.S, an arranged marriage. Astha becomes an enduring wife, having good husband and two children. Still she has some inside cravings for something else, which make her, feel lacking something. The point which belittles her in her in-laws house is that there is no value or ear given to her ideas and opinions. She is not allowed to take any financial decision. Her only duty is to look after her family and husband and fulfill their basic needs. In this process her life becomes monotonous in performing selfless job towards family and always "adjusting to everybody's needs" (*AMW* 227). Being torn between her duty and responsibility, she thinks that tired women cannot make good wives, and has to struggle for emotional freedom. Meanwhile she encounters a young street play artist, named Aijaz. He approaches her and appreciates her talent for being a good painter. He even asks her to write down the script for a play centered on Babri masjid turmoil, which is the center political issue woven in the novel. Later Aijaz is cruelly murdered for his play with issue of Babri masjid- *Rambhoomi*. Astha meets much younger women Pipeelika, a social activist and thus begins a relationship that breaks all

conventions. Thus Kapur brings out vibrant issues rising out of a socio-political upheaval in India. Manju Kapur boldly represents woman with her desire and aspiration under patriarchal society. *A Married Woman* carried the feminist movement a few step ahead. It is a seductive story of love; set at a time of political upheaval. It has the issue of Babri Masjid- Ram Janambhoomi and the frenzied reaction of the people as the focal point. The political dissatisfaction of this issue and Astha's attempts to present it on the canvas are somehow sidelined due to Astha's sexual forays. She brings new turn in women's writing.

While reading the novels of Manju Kapur one gets the impression that a woman's life is like the life of a nation which is passing through various trials and tribulations. As the narrative skeins together the different strands one realizes that Manju Kapur is a skilful wordsmith. Kapur writes, "She knew this was impossible, and that people who expect the impossible are setting themselves up for misery and Astha would rather die than be such pathetic woman" (*AMW* 159). In *A Married Woman* Manju Kapur once again is underlining and articulating the central concerns of Indian woman. In this novel Astha, the young heroine, is the representative of the woman striving to gain their space in life and socio-cultural domains. The protagonist is shown as an educated and fiery young woman, who dares to venture into uncharted waters and is comfortable with the tag of iconoclast. The daughter - mother conversation is just an opening gambit. Astha goes too far in her quest for love and sexual gratification. There is sex in a house boat in Kashmir on their honeymoon; there is sex in a hotel bathroom at Disney World, Florida. The images in the novel of Manju Kapur are so oppressive that they leave you feeling completely on the edge. After her boring and fatigued routine she finds temporary respite in the arms of Pipeelika, a social worker for an NGO named Ujjala. There is no doubt that many

women who have sought to be independent through their work will recognize this situation very clearly. Certainly, the despair that Kapur describes is also real. What is depressing is the way in which her heroine wallows in it. It is not even that she is obsessed with herself or that she is an object of passivity that she enjoys being trampled over. It is the contradiction in her wanting something more and settling for less because that is all she is worth it. Besides the feminist term some oblique references are given to the contemporary events concerning socio-political sphere like the demolition of Babri Masjid and Rajiv Gandhi's assassination.

Astha is the woman of 21st century. She has calculated everything very clearly. She might have calculated that where she will get more freedom, honor, economical safety, and power of taking her decisions by her own self. Astha legally belongs to the place of her husband, and she has a lot of rights there. But if she chooses to live with Pipee, she will have to live there on her own risks. Because living with Pipee, there is no legal rights and security on the part of Astha. It may also be assumed that Astha's life is a search of totality of experience in which one's body and spirit are simultaneously satisfied. In all her affairs with men she finds that her body is the fulcrum of those relationships and her spirit remains unsaturated. Her lesbian relationship with Pipeelika can be regarded as an experiment in which she fails again. Therefore, she is disillusioned with all human relationships and ultimately gets solace in the world of art epitomized by the painting exhibition organized by her husband. Astha is really a very courageous, smart and intelligent woman. She possesses almost all the characteristics of a 21st century rebel woman. And Manju Kapur, through the character of Astha, has proved that increasing education, better job opportunities and awareness of rights bring the woman out of their threshold, so that they can take care of their individuality and self-respect. At the same time they

should be conscious of the fact that their postmodern sensibility and self-centeredness may make their life as well as of their family.

Kapur's third novel *Home* represents the stereotyped upbringing of females that still exists in Indian society. This novel is an excruciating journey of the protagonist Nisha. *Home* is a minutia of her search for asylum and protection. Home is considered a place of console and repose. But it does not provide any poignant safety and physical protection to Nisha. She is the central character who appears as an independent and iconoclast girl. She openly rebels against patriarchal social norms and struggle to maintain her individuality. As a child Nisha splurges a suffocated life full of checks which restrains her to remain inside. She has to follow the strict rules of Banwarilal's house. She is fully accomplished with all the beautiful attires, eatables, toys and everything what she desires but not freedom of playing outside, "unfortunately her outfits did not match her inclinations, I want to play in the park, she whined periodically" (*Home* 53). With penetrating and keen insight the novelist webs the story of her novel and hatches it with full size and shape and with much hammering on the anvil attuned to the family voices of Lala Banwari Lal, patriarch of cloth business at Karol Bagh in New Delhi. The protesting breeze of search for identity also keeps on flowing in Manju Kapur's *Home* where Nisha, the sole protagonist raises her voice for education and marriage. But she never crosses the boundaries of moral values.

Like a great artist she paints the sufferings and annoyances of educated middle class Indian females who are trained to sustain the customs and principles of patriarchal Indian society. In *Home* the wielded cry of Nisha for identity is quite evident. Her struggle against old traditions and customs within those claustrophobic

confinements is remarkable. Her aunt, Rupa proves a shield and a protective cover for her in the field of education when Sona wants to push her in the kitchen to seek culinary skills. Rupa is also much conscious of her freedom and identity. Once Nisha joins her school, her progress coming off with soaring colour in all her exams. It reveals out that Nisha has brilliance for studies. Prem Nath and Rupa commit and prepare for every arrangement to make certain her bright recital in school. When Prem Nath is busy teaching Nisha about books and all, Rupa does not consider it essential to commence the little girl to the lessons of upcoming womanhood. Neither does Rupa teach her to keep fast for some intangible future husband, nor does she tell her about menstruation, since such outlawed are not so stern in her house. Irrespective of all probability at home Nisha accomplishes her board exams with a talented seventy percent in Humanities. With no forthcoming bridegroom at hand, the entire family thinks about over Nisha's next step to future. With much conjecture it is resolute to let her opportunity of education a bit more. Thus Nisha is divulged to Durga Bai College- a college for girls: "The family felt that it would do nicely for a girl waiting to get married" (*Home* 140). Nisha is timid since she is much conscious of the real traditions of her family. Higher studies are just a time pass. She is not allowed to use her education. Working is out of the question and marriage is around the corner. Nisha is bright in studies but she is very carefully tapered and kept under control.

In the fitness of the things, it can be quoted that very genuine problem of one female being reflected by another female is the outcome of the novel and the novelist gives the message to the society that females are not always at the fault for which they are treated and rejected. When Manju Kapur makes a little fish speak, it speaks

like a whale. When she discusses a point, she lectures like a stern teacher and stares her readers in the face. It is very rich and intricate novel and each successive reading reveals new significance and new layers of meaning. Its complexities are endless and so equally are the interpretation it has received at the hand of critics. In the post-colonial era, the modern outlook of women as well as their potent protest against the age old tradition, norms and customs that have been governing and even oppressing them in the closed society of ours is chiefly tackled by most of the novelists. Manju Kapur seeks to establish in the patriarchal Indian society that there are women like Nisha and Rupa who due to their inclination towards protest against male dominated world constantly struggle between the physical and the moral and if they prefer the lives of their own, they will have to bear with the travails of illicit relationship, social antipathy and defame and also have to run against the currents of social and moral dogmas. Nisha turns into a business woman who deals in Salwar Suits. She decides to be successful in this business and feels:

She would be better than Pooja. She would not only be the daughter of a prosperous man, but be responsible for wealth herself. After all, her father's flowed in her, the blood of traders. (*Home 287*)

*Immigrant* is the fourth novel which again is set in 1970's, and talks of the lives of a newlywed NRI couple. Nina, a 30-year old, an unmarried college lecturer at Miranda House College, Delhi. Her childhood was spent in Brussels, where her father was at the foreign office. After his death, the mother-daughter both returns to India. Her mother believes Nina deserves a better lifestyle. Nina continues to see the dark end of the tunnel. Ananda, Halifax-settled NRI dentist, had left New Delhi after his parents were killed in an accident. Ananda's sister and Nina's mother take the

initiative and soon, Ananda and Nina meet and later, correspond via letters. Nina finally consents to the marriage. Soon after marriage, she leaves India to join her husband. The story starts from here and explores the emotional and physical aspects of a married relationship. Ananda goes all the way to make Nina feel comfortable by helping her with household chores, attempting to help her find a job, gives her the freedom to do multiple things she likes and so on. Marriage is all about adjustment and compromises, but Nina is not keen on adjusting much like her husband. She is searching for her identity in Canada. The romantic notion which she has for arrange marriage eventually sweeps away, which creates rift between the couple. In the first half of the story Nina holds value for Indian identity. In second half she joins the library. She even leaves Ananda after knowing his infidelity. Here she eventually finds her own identity and independence in Canada. Manju Kapur has well-explored how people change to adjust to a new culture, their turmoil at such circumstances etc.

She didn't care so much about having a child now. These walls, this room was inimical to it. She wanted to be outside; she had had enough of inside. Slowly she left the apartment block, and started walking. The sky grey, a few brown leaves still clung to trees otherwise bare. (*T*  
*I* 172)

Kapur examines the issues encountered by immigrant wives. Even at foreign land young women's life, so pressured at domestic and official front, is a very strenuous. As Nina comes to know the sudden demise of her mother, she breaks down with uncontrollable grief. The death of her mother has made her alone. The pain was so terrible that all her dreams of her future prospects and her mother dreams of her grandchildren- all get demolished. She realizes at once her rootlessness.

The idea of search for identity mainly for woman has become a phenomenal and controversial aspect as it heaves the throne of male world. The literary figures strive to break the confinements of old Indian tradition and raise their voice in favour of women to set them free from the shackles of patriarchy which they face in their surroundings and Manju Kapur comes under this category of geniuses. The women characters in *The Immigrant* and *The Custody*, are having imaginative mind, longings and aspirations to soar high and high, the impressionism of new education and teaches and incessant urge to establish her identity, have been the potent causes of the revolt against tradition. Manju Kapur has focused on two contradictory characters of women protagonists in her fifth novel *Custody*. Shagun who runs after her desire and love while Ishita who is living happy marriage life with Suryakanta and she is granted divorce for her infertility. *Custody* sketches the varying family picture of modern Indian homes with a tinge of globalization. Shagun, the gorgeous wife of Raman, cascades in love with his enigmatic, attractive boss Ashok Khanna, who has never been in love before and is resolute to seize the woman he now loves. It does not issue to him how but he goes about exultant Shagun's mind, body and soul like a veteran, convincing dealer. He stands for everything that a woman of today would find complicated to refuse to accept. The novel is a touching presentation of decaying Indian marriages and its after effects in form of isolation and emptiness faced by Raman, Ishita and Shagun due to extra marital affairs, money-oriented quests and so on. It also suggests important impending into the susceptibility of children of broken marriages and new gleefully divorced and remarried status of Indian couples.

In *Custody* Ishita's awaiting job applications were brushed sideways to respond to the good propose in the marriage front. Ishita's ambitions with her B.A and B. Ed degrees were at chance with the beneficial offers of a husband ominous

great and overwhelming her in totality. Even her parents undergo that marriage is more necessary than any small job. For them, educational degrees and job prospects are a substitute when marriages are unsuccessful which looked to be a quite propitious notion to be cultivated. Ishita too pursued the footsteps of any common Indian woman. Shagun's was not astonishing either. Mrs. Sabharwal, Shagun's mother had nurtured her only one child daughter without help of anyone after the death of her husband. Shagun has preference in her career of becoming a model was met with a frozen accusation from her mother. She was sturdily divergent to a career that would permit all types of lechery near her pretty daughter. Thus once out of the college Shagun was married off to Raman. With all her degrees close, the preserves of husband, family and friends made a career rigid to substantiate, particularly since money was not a matter. *Custody*, the fifth novel of Manju Kapur presents a contrast between infertility and infidelity. The incompatibility in Shagun and Raman becomes the reason of divorce. Shagun is an ultra modern girl and fulfills her dreams at the cost of her family. She is bold, assertive and doesn't care for her children. On the other hand, Ishita suffers due to her infertility. She has a great love and respect for her husband. But she has to leave her husband's house. The blame is attributed to female. Infertility is recognized as a ground of divorce. The new women are sexually liberated and feel no qualms of conscience in establishing premarital or extra-marital relations as in the case of Shagun. The new women often refuse the ethical principles connected with sex just as both of them have done. It is felt that a woman can avow her individuality and at the same time follow her interest without intimidating the family composition as far as feasible. What she should essentially endeavor at is superior inter-dependent partnership. She can lift her voice if she feels subjugated and stifled. A new woman should be conscious and self controlled self dependent and

self-contained. Kapur projects emerge of new woman in her protagonists Shagun and Ishita, Shagun who dares to cross the threshold of her husband's home, reveals as a modern woman and Ishita who rises after her broken marriage emerges as a strong and independent woman in *Custody*.

As it is crystal clear to mention that prominent Indian women writers like Toru Dutt, Cornelia Sorabji, R.P. Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Shobha De, Kamala Das, and Manju Kapur have been primarily concerned with the issue of man-woman relationship, which is nothing but a sad and realistic tale of a persecuted mind and physical and psychological torture in male-dominated society governed by rigid traditions and restrictions. The sole objective of these novelists has been the portrayal of the new image of woman, who fights against dejection, anger, oppression, exploitation, seduction, betrayal, rebel, longings, search for happiness, ironic social system and paradoxical tradition. Manju Kapur is affected by her surroundings as we can see in some of her works.

There is also discussion on her style of writing. We can get the idea of her writing, how she adds Indian spices in her writing. There is also one aspect is necessary in language and style, is readability. This is very much important in any literary work. She shares her opinion about Indian Writing in English.

Manju Kapur through the dealing of the language and demarcation of the characters represents a realistic depiction of the society and this is what astonishes the readers. She is one of the most prominent women writers of the contemporary period in India. Throughout in her novels Kapur elevates the decisive problems of women in a very relevant method and describes the harsh and feeble reality of Indian women in present day. She has supported the conceivable realism that education brings self-esteem, reputation and supremacy. Hence development and growth of a society

depends on the liberation and empowerment of both the sexes male and female. In *Random Reads* interview when Kapur is asked about her characters, she says,

These are the lives I observe around me. Women's lives - at least here - I can't really speak with authority about other places - are complicated and a source of endless interest. In India women are often caught between the traditional and the modern, caught between the family and their individual desires. As a novelist this is where I place my stories.

(Kapur, *Random Reads*).

Being a novelist of twentieth century of Indian English fiction, Manju Kapur's writing has consciousness which appears because of her ample association with the gradations of life in the East as well as the West. Her high educational and academic principle has kindled her examination of life and has conveyed a psychological intensity in her writings. Therefore, Manju Kapur is competent enough to produce remarkable female protagonists who successfully describe the tyranny imposed on women in society. Her women protagonists symbolize life and escalation as well as malfunction, abandonment, collapse and slaughter. Feminism, a swiftly increasing considerable dogma, represents chief fragments of the existing writings. It has appeared as a notion that includes both a philosophical and socio-political outlook which clearly examines the actual status of both the sexes in Indian patriarchy. Feminism in literature is basically concerned with the depiction of women in society and their equivalent flowing place. Mainly of the endeavors to describe what it is to be a woman, suppose a universal implication; in that, the woman is measured more as a creation of cultural customs and contains rather than as a formation of nature. Manju Kapur pampers in discovering the feminine consciousness of the women characters in all her five novels, their development towards an inspire conscience and

how ultimately this escorts to enhancement of their internal self in a male subjugated society. Self introspection and self sighting help the women characters to comprehend their implied inner potency. When the women characters pamper in self-introspection that escort to self sighting but the consequence is anecdotal.

The struggle for identity remains an unfinished combat. She mentions in all her novels about self independence. The author demands liberty for female world that has to undergo the psychic pain of mental disturbance due to their marginalized and subordinate position. Her protagonists have to undergo the system of suppression and that unfavorable surrounding gives them the energy and direction to raise their voice to make the system favorable for them. The protagonists of Manju Kapur are expert in handling the adverse circumstances. Gradually they seek how to make understand others according to their will. For example Virmati is successful in persuading her mother to go to Lahore for doing B.T. Nisha is successful in taking admission in college.

Kapur proves a real feminist who stands in the favour of those women who are fighting for their individual rights. The protagonists Swarnlata and Shakuntala, Rupa, Nisha emerge as the exemplary figures that have learnt to live on their own. Their role is totally different from Ganga, Kasturi, Sona and Sunita who are fully submissive and ignorant towards their rights. No doubt the Indian woman has achieved a lot in post Independence era with their consistent efforts but that is not enough to give them total satisfaction. Still they are subjugated in family, society and even on their work place. Education has given them better prospects. They want to be economically independent and aspire to reach a respectable status. They long for appreciation for their enduring efforts. They are fully aware of their subordinate position. Kapur presents this awareness through the frustration of her protagonist,

"Well, Astha was a woman, and she was sick of sacrifice. She did not want to be pushed around in the name of family. She was fed up with the ideal of Indian womanhood, used to trap and jail. Excuse me. Stop the juggernaut and let me off. I have had enough" (*AMW* 168).

She portrays new woman, who changes her identity from delicate darling to determined, independent and belligerence self. By analyzing the fiction of Indian feminists in English, they have created women protagonist, who have tried their best to liberate themselves from the trap of patriarchal culture. Despite being subjugated and dominated by male chauvinism, all the writers have exposed the exciting irrationality in the patriarchal metaphysics in the respect of women's status in society. Throughout their exposition of the ills in the society, the novelists have tried to raise feminist consciousness thereby aiming beginning in new social order. Women protagonists in these novels do not accept the definition given to them by patriarchy. As their identity suffers from a male bias due to male dominance, being sick they resolute to demolish existing myths of womanhood as prescribed by phallocentric ideology. These new women are obsessed with total fulfillment rather than accepting the submissive domesticity. In their attempt to raise the consciousness of women, these novelists provide a glimpse into the female psyche and deal with the full range of experience.

The theory of the feminism when applied to such novels for the proper critical evaluation may lead to different results. Portrayal of Shagun's character clearly shows the triumph of feminism. Beauvoir suggests, "the young girl has hardly more than her body which she can tell her own: it is the hardest treasure; the man enters her takes it from her; she is overpowered, forced to compliance, conquered" (Beauvoir 405). The novels of Manju Kapur create a new vision on the world of female, in her novels

female protagonists projected as, women in India want to seek their identity within those surroundings in which they live and struggle. They show their impeccability in maintaining a balance between the outside world and the world at home, between the traditional and modern. They want to redefine the old value system with their viable efforts. But any attempt taken by their choice is condemned and rejected. This brings disastrous effect on the lives of women. It clearly indicates that educated women have their own choice of career. Such women do not bother the unfamiliar surroundings in which their lives are curbed. They do not want to believe in servility. They aspire to be a strong well-being that is only possible through education and skill development projects.

Throughout the world Indian women are considered great upholder of tradition and morality. But now the change has come. They are no longer the passive victim. They are self assured, well assertive and making the society aware of their demand. Their future prospects are very clear. Manju Kapur heroines have come with the assertion that they will not be treated as puppets in the hands of others. They strongly condemn the patriarchal opinion that forced them to lead a subjugated life. They sustain the longing of being an independent woman and aspire to achieve an autonomous status. What is important in life to reach the ultimate goal is to be aware of all the expected obstacles and problems confronted by everyone and Kapur's protagonists are fully aware of their positions in the male-oriented society and understand how to tackle with these problems. They are no longer the mute sufferers and don't want to allow others to curb their spirits. In present scenario they are on the path of achieving the status of 'New Woman' but still the heroines of Manju Kapur are not fully developed into 'New Woman' in actual sense. After passing through one adverse situation they are entrapped into another. They want to reform this patriarchal

society but the society does not allow them to do so. Still a ray of hope is there. They will continue with their battle of maintaining a dignified status in the society. Manju kapur recommended the idea of Beauvoir that a woman is never regarded as an autonomous being since she has always been assigned a secondary status in our society.