

**QUEST INTO THE SELF - A JOURNEY FROM FEAR TO  
FREEDOM : A STUDY OF WOMEN PROTAGONISTS IN THE  
SELECT NOVELS OF MANJU KAPUR AND SHOBHA DE**

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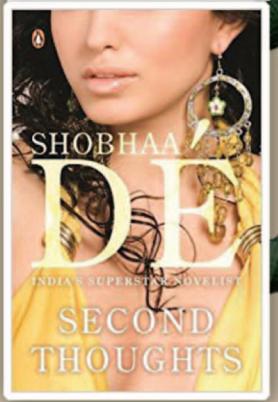
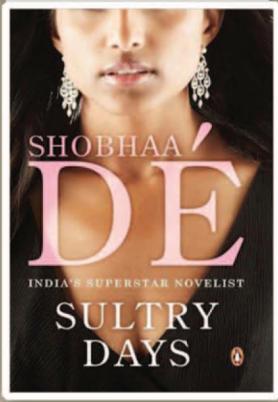
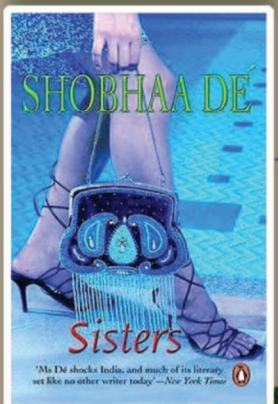
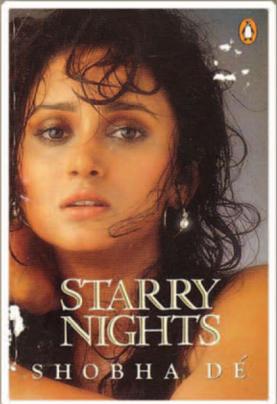
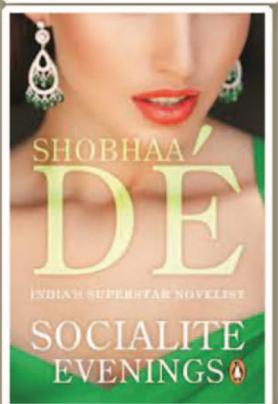
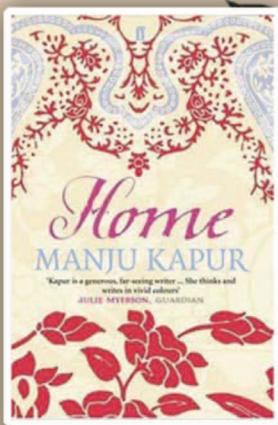
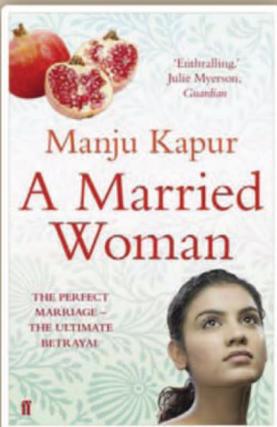
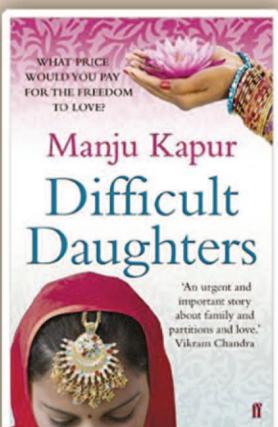
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## CHAPTER - V

### SUMMATION



## SUMMATION

The preceding chapters have been devoted to the study of women protagonists in the novels of Manju Kapur and Shobha de. They portray modern educated and career oriented women who are sensitive to the changing times and situations. Their female protagonists reveal a remarkable insight into the nature of women's mind as they are depicted in myriad roles wife, mother, daughter, career oriented, most of them are financially independent women who are right in their own way. Their women are always concerned with themselves in their search for their own needs and identities. Most of their women protagonists endeavor to establish themselves as individuals who break loose from the traditional constraints that grub them with fears of patriarchy and at times they shun to allow themselves to be socially, psychologically, emotionally be ostracized. Their women protagonists attempt to refine their identities in tune with the changed social ambiance of the modern times.

Tradition has a very strong hold over the Indian society and even a stronger hold over its women folk. Traditional rules and norms bind the Indian women in nearly every quarter. Woman is the preserver of the family and so she makes all kind of sacrifices for the welfare of the family. However the narrow outlook of patriarchy towards women has greatly changed with the passage of time. Education played an important role in bringing Indian women into the mainstream of development.

These women novelists describe the whole world for their women with stunning frankness. Their writings give the authors a glimpse of the unexplored female psyche, which had no accessibility earlier.

In the process of probing to dive in quest of their self, the women protagonists of Manju Kapur and Shobha De, do not depend on men and emerge them with a new identity coupled with matured thought process. These women do not hesitate to knock at the doors of modernity, and are willing to emerge themselves as New Women who seek unhesitatingly a new world of theirs, for their own self.

The emergence of the ‘modern woman’ and her quest for identity, her fortitude and endurance to define herself as a person of individuality and potential on par with man are depicted authentically in their works.

Manju Kapur and Sobha De being prominent post-colonial women novelists writing in English they have inched a special identity for themselves in the galaxy of Indian English literature. Manju Kapur and Sobha De are one who has created absolutely different patterns of female characters. Their female protagonists are fighting hard for their rights in a patriarchal society. Their women protagonists at times are struck between tradition and modernity they often reflect the changing paradigms of the society.

Manju Kapur and Sobha De’s novels portray the suffering of women from predestined fate that of being a daughter, a sister, a wife, a

daughter in law and even mother, it is pity to be living among one's own people on one's own land; therefore problems in their life arise out of sense of oneness and being self-possessive. Although, both women writers do not disown their traditional roles and life, they are found being disowned by their own people and own society. The issues of disowning and always being at the receiving end as far as the plight of disowning are concerned, they portray through their women characters.

All Women protagonists of Manju Kapur novels are self-reliant. A very striking feature of almost all her female protagonists is that they hold education at the highest pedestal with no air of superiority or contention. The very feature that differentiates Manju Kapur's female protagonists is their attitude towards tradition and modernity. Her female protagonists have daring desires. They can do or pay anything to fulfill their desires and want to live and lead with self-confidence. In the process they do not hesitate to face the subsequent trials and tribulations offered by life. Her female protagonists like Virmati in *Difficult Daughters*, Astha in *A Married Woman* and Nisha in *Home* do exhibit their inner strength who were initially with shrouded identities but learned to move from the edges of fear to freedom.

Virmati (*Difficult Daughters*) being a positive and courageous woman of the pre-independent India opposes the tradition of arranged marriage. Her education though brought in hope of living her own life within her traditional limitations make her fall in love with a married professor

Harish. The compelling circumstances which has driven Virmati to be his second wife. Virmati represents a woman torn between age-old traditions, individual views and bonds. Later she restrains herself from the precipitous action of felling from the domestic seen. Though she felt these bonds as unreasonable in the beginning gradually learns to endure them as a typical traditional Indian woman, for she knows that transgressing them will certainly rupture her family ties. At a point time, her realization that it could be wise to seek freedom without undermining her obligations and responsibilities and not to lose her identity. The story moves further bringing in the daughter of Virmati, Ida, who reflects the image of Women's condition but by denying to be like her mother, acquires her own self-identity. If Kasturi, grandmother of Ida remains to be within the boundaries of tradition; Virmati moves further to realize her limitations, while Ida, is a full blown individual who seeks her own identity unbiased by any fears of patriarchy.

Astha (*A Married woman*) represents the journey of an educated woman through hope and despair. It is her journey from a simple disparate unassured house wife. She is an individual who learns to recharge and ascertain an identity that is so independent and refreshing. Her marriage with Hemanth though makes her a mother of two children; unfortunately at every step of her married life she feels the emptiness of a loveless marriage within herself. This empty lacuna leads her to come in contact with Pipeelika a widow, and soon their

loneliness turns into an intimate relationship. Later her realization, as her life is caught in a traumatic situation of not being able to remain on any of the sides leads her to reconcile herself with her family.

Astha is portrayed as an individual who seeks change from the existing concommitments of life. The problems of women are not to be seen as products of patriarchal system but they seem to be individualized. She succeeds in realizing her selfhood through her profession and proves to the world that her submission to the family system is her new found confidence to confront with reality. Thus she achieves freedom and harmony in life without comprising on her obligations and responsibilities.

Astha realizes her own identity, and becomes rebellious for creating her own independent identity. But the patriarchal order slowly shapes not to be cruel and plays its role on women for not being aware their role play.

Through the character of Aastha which allows Indian women to shred off their hidden fears to survive as an individual and to tame their emotions as their heart desires.

Nisha is the protagonist in the novel *Home* who is caught between the clutches of age old patriarchy that hold an individual from their desired development and restricts their growth as a full bloomed individuals. It also deals with sexual abuse and domestic violence which is being perpetuated against Indian woman through the

character of Nisha. Nisha is sexually harassed; burden with household duties, lack of education brings down her self-confidence which is further steeped low by her forced marriage. In the process of empowering herself financially she starts her own business and continues even after her marriage. She protests and struggles to prove her identity by shouldering her responsibilities and doing something meaningful. Finally, she seeks emancipation from the patriarchal oppression. Nisha represents the mental conflicts, the restlessness, the percipient accumulated personal screams and mental revolts of a woman.

The women in Manju Kapur's fiction fall prey to the clutches of Indian patriarchal social system; hence they are always made to feel the secondary status in any relationship with men in their life. Manju Kapur's women are stalked with a further lower status on account of their status as secondary citizens in their home away from home. For the migrant women, with all their riches abroad, they enjoy secondary citizenship outside their homes abroad and while at home the men in their life despite their advanced, professional and educational set up, make them feel secondary beings as the male mind sets are shown scarcely improved to recognize independent existence and talents of the women in their life.

Shobha De, a modern Indian women novelist, who has the gift of exploring the subdued depths of women psychology. She portrays the psyche of her sensitive emotional and sensuous characters through

her novels. Her main concern is not with the society or social forces but the individual psyche and its interaction with social values. She raises her voice against the sufferings, aspirations, and assertions of women in a male dominated society.

Karuna (*Socialite Evenings*) is an ambitious woman turned hallow in the modern wasteland in search identity. She is a weary socialite divorcee allows herself to play different roles at different times to quench her emotional and psychic thrust. Being a model, house wife, a society lady and an actor, writer and paramour, she has independent thought and unhesitatingly chooses her ways and means. She unveils and unfurls herself to activate the creative urge stifled within her and this act of unburdening herself is a compromise with her Self. She emerges from the panic and scary yester year's self into a rebellious who learn to break out herself from the bonds of matrimony and steps herself into a profession of her own choice. This deviation of Karuna from traditional norms is pawned at the cost of loss of her individuality. Karuna's resistance and her refusal of accepting and institutionalizing of her personality makes her appear as a strong willed woman.

Aasha Rani (*Starry Nights*) the dream girl and the heart-throb of millions of cinema lovers suffered and humiliated much in her childhood agonized by childhood scars and pangs of hers parents unsuccessful marriage makes her to be a passive character. But she always learned to act upon. Her irresistible sexual desire is not

inherent but it is the manifestation of the suppressed scents of vengeance of the male world since her childhood. Though her career as a film actress gives her glory, fame, name and luxury and wealth, she seems to be missing her inner peace of genuine love. Her unfortunate association with the underworld though pulls her strings of glory away she ascertains her lost self by her marriage and she learns to take control of herself by once again looking for her lost treasure where she lost the film world. Representing the modern woman Aasha Rani etches her own independent self in the male dominated society.

*Sisters* the two leading female characters Alisha and Mikki Hiralal, though of daughters of the same father but by different mothers spare no opportunity to re-assert their identities as an empowered business women. Mikki's journey from her soft sympathetic and deeply human nature on sets allowing her to grow fearless, self-respecting and sympathetic individual. Failure of her marriage with a person who uses her as a status symbol makes her disillusioned. On the other hand Mikki realizes that male dominated world is aggressive and cheating. She feels that blood relations are more important than material world. She turns to be sympathetic and apologetic to Alisha her step sister who attempted suicide by donating her blood and assuring of sisterly love. Mikki grows to be a strong woman who learns to establish her own methods of surviving, when Binny her husband deserts her on false charge of adultery. Mikki fights against the

ruthless world waiting for her true love after a night in marriage. Though she is a modern, strong willed woman, Mikki is sure of her roots that are firmed in the cultures and tradition of Indian society. Unlike Mikki, life of Alisha is different, for her wealth and material pursuits are more valuable than human relationships. Alisha is rough abusive and curt towards Mikki. Being a victim of her own illusions she rises from rags to riches and seeks sarcastic pleasure when her sister Mikki is in trouble. Finally her realization that family bonds are more important than material pursuits makes her realize to have better understanding towards life. Through these two women protagonists, Shobha De gives a true picture of the fiercely ambitious modern women who pierce the age-old traditional values for their identity and emerge as an individual-self.

Nisha (*Sultry Days*) discovers herself through the character of Deb. She is very different and is not one who wastes her life in glamour and sex. Nisha's character and psyche as a single women, and girlfriend, her affair with Deb though does not result in marriage. However their prolonged affair that makes her stronger in understanding other disturbed women in her life. She along with her mother typify the courage that they muter to live in the male dominated society. Nisha remains indifferent to the happening around her though she is not different from some heroines in the other novels by Shobha De.

Maya (*Second Thoughts*) truly imbibes in her dream of becoming a journalist who intends reform the patriarchal societal system. She is

portrayed as a confident, talented and attractive young woman. As a young wife she expects to seek her husband's attention and confide in her by satisfying her physical and emotional needs. Disappointed and depressed by her husband's non-chiantis attitude she brings disaster to her life by associating herself with extra-marital relationships with Nikhil. Very soon her breezy dreams shattered with the end of their affair. Maya comes back to her own world that she learns to spend the rest of the life dancing to the chants of her husband and mother-in-law. It is her emotional state of affairs and psychological vacuum's that makes her feel sorrow that encapsulates self-pity that nobody and nothing belongs to her. As a traditional woman, she suffers a series of serious blows that make her feel resent about her status as traditional-modern woman who conforms and accepts traditional norms of the society but secretly breaks them when she finds them unacceptable and seeks for her individual identity.

By projecting, varieties of experiences of life, these two women writers do remind the readers that in all these variety experiences of life, women are subjected to exploitation and discrimination. They are pruned and submitted to ill treatment. Kasturi, Geeta Devi, Karuna, Nisha, Mikki remains to be at the threshold of patriarchal tradition. These traditional women can never think of social life outside the realm of traditions. But women like Virmati, Shakuntala, Aasha Rani, and Maya have moved an inch further though have not overcome the

fear of patriarchy and its strong hold on their status of survival. These women protagonists have learned to provide spaces that can change their destiny of remaining as victims of subjugation, oppression, domestic violence which is heaved on them from times by patriarchy. While Ida, Nisha, Alisha, Aastha are representatives of modernity as they do not hesitate to knock at the doors of opportunity and are willing to seek a new world, for their own selves.

Manju Kapur and Shobha De seem to be engaged in a constructive process of conscious rising. Their object is to enable the affluent women to share awareness of sexist experiences that create co-operation and pave way for uniting people to find themselves with the strong chord of sisterhood. Though the two novelists do not envisage this female bonding as a solution to male domination but are confident that it will certainly be a comfort to the oppressed women. Further the writers appear to believe that by not protesting and offering resistance, the women have to blame themselves for their own victimization. They, therefore, suggest that they themselves have to break the shackles that have kept them in a state of fear filled captivity for several centuries. Finding themselves trapped in the roles assigned to them, their women protagonists attempt to assert their individuality and confront their husbands, lovers in search of freedom. They manage to extricate themselves from male dominance though not always. But, at times and are willing to forego the security marriage offers them.

The two women novelists Manju Kapur and Shobha De have successfully viewed a pattern - a pattern with a strong message of 'hope through change' and the endings is revealed as the beginning of another.

The novels of both the novelists mirror the different faces of feminine treatment. The protagonists tend to travel from fear through the choices they opt and are willing for self-assertion that indirectly leads them to empower themselves by body and mind. Thus, allowing them not only to prove as individuals who can unhesitatingly validate the basic rights of fellow humans, but also show concern for the bonds of universal sisterhood. They travel from fear to freedom by escalating positivity expecting no royalties but, a life of promise all through. They tend to remain loyal to their own set of principles expecting with the promises in hand given by time and fate.

The writings of Indian women writers are significant in making the society aware of women's demands which are not exactly the demands but are the rights of women, which they deserve, and in providing a medium for self-expression to re-write the History of patriarchal India.