

**WOMEN AND NEW CONSCIOUSNESS IN MANJU KAPUR'S HOME
AND THE IMMIGRANT**

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Master of Philosophy in English

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DECLARATION

I, **Mrs. M. Senthamil Kothai**, hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Women and New Consciousness in Manju Kapur's *Home* and *the immigrant*** is a bonafide record of the research work done by me and submitted to **Jamal Mohamed College (Autonomous), Tiruchi – 20. (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University)** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy in English.**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Women and New Consciousness in Manju Kapur's *Home and the immigrant*** submitted by **Mrs. M. Senthamil Kothai, M.A., Reg. no.: 08MPEN13** for the award of the Degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY in ENGLISH** is her original work and it is based on the results of the study carried out by her under my guidance and supervision. The Dissertation has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree / Diploma / Associateship / Fellowship or similar to any candidate of any University.

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Signature of the Guide

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(M. Senthamil Kothai)

Chapter I

Introduction

Literature is a mirror of life. The invasion of westerners into India has left an indelible paving way for hybridized culture and by and large it is the alien culture which rules India.

There was a carefree time in the history of the novel when the writer had nothing to do but to tell us what had happened. Experience in itself then pleased us; the description of experience was self-justifying. But nothing so simple now seems acceptable. It is the self, the person to whom things happen, who is perhaps not acceptable to the difficult and fastidious modern consciousness. Every writer reflects it and writer of India is no exception to it.

The Indian writer in English is the only writer who enjoys nation-wide and even international reputation because it is national and international as in science, psychology, economics or political thinking, is sustained by critical demonstration of the excellence of the work.

The East-West themes, ideas and information are well-known to Indo-Anglian novels, especially written after independence. The English reign over India and there were conflicts and tensions, for Indian patriotism and her pride in her own spiritual culture could not tolerate British control. But R.K.Narayan does not believe with Kipling who said that "Twain can never meet". India must be acceptable to the best western way of life, in western science and

technology. In this way India will be transformed and modernized and the two will come together.

It is an endeavour of showcasing the rare gems of Indian writing in English. From being a curious native explosion Indian English has become a new form of Indian culture and voice in which India speaks. While Indian authors, poets, novelists, essayists, dramatists have been making significant contributions to world literature since the pre- Independence era. The past few years have seen a massive flourishing of Indian English writing in the international market.

The Indian novel in English has won for itself international acclaim and distinction. The first book written by an Indian in English was by Sake Dean Mahomet, titled **Travels of Dean Mahomet**; Mahomet's travel narrative was published in 1793 in England.

The glimpses of the creative world of the great masters of Indian English novel would reveal that the novelists constitute a cosmopolitan group representing various religions, communities, professions and views. They come from East, West, South and North. They belong almost to every community in India- the Hindu, the Muslim, the Sikh, the Christian and the Parsi, and they represent every shade of opinion – orthodox, liberal, progressive Gandhian, communistic and socialistic. They interpret every segment and strata of human society – the luxurious life of Maharajas, Nawabs, industrialists and landlords; and the problems of untouchables, labourers, women and peasants. The conflict

between the old and the new, the East and the West also finds powerful expression in it.

The theme of national awakening under the stewardship of Mahatma Gandhi has been treated in epic dimension by many Indian English novelists. Various regions of vast Indian sub-continent with all their natural beauty and minute geographical differences have been represented with minute observation and rare vividness of expression in the novels of Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya and Dhan Gopal Mukerjee, R.K. Narayan, the immortal creator of **Malgudi** shines with rare radiance as the founder of regional novel in Indian English, and in this respect commands comparison with Sir Walter Scott and Thomas Hardy, the creators of **Waverly** and **Wessex**.

A majority of writers since 1947 evince no interest to recapture a recent historical past and have turned inwards to move private and personal concerns. These novels turn upon East-West encounter and the conflict between the old and the new. These novels deal with the personal predicament of a particular individual and existential concern. R.K. Narayan and K.Nagarajan have not been seriously affected by the intercultural tensions. But Manohar Malgongar's protagonists suffer from cross cultural conflicts. The quest of the self and identity, and despair and, despondency caused by the feelings of rootlessness and the solution of existential problems characterize B.Rajan's **The Dark Dancer, Too Long in The West**, Santha Rama Rau's **Remember in The House**, Attia Hussain's **Sunlight on A Broken Column**, Kamala

Markandaya's **Some Inner Fury**, Anita Desai's **Cry, the Peacock** and Nayantara Sahgal's **A Time To Be Happy**.

R.K. Narayan is one of the best known and most widely read Indian novelists writing in English. R.K. Narayan was a storyteller whose sensitive, well-drawn portrayals of twentieth-century Indian life were set mostly in the fictional South Indian town of Malgudi. Most of Narayan's work, starting with his first novel **Swami and Friends**, captures many Indian traits while retaining a unique identity of its own.

Mulk Raj Anand depicted the lives of the poorer castes in traditional Indian society. His first main novel, **Untouchable**, was a chilling expose of the day-to-day life of a member of India's untouchable caste. **Morning Face** won him the National Academy Award. Like much of his later work, it contains elements of his spiritual journey as he struggles to attain a higher sense of self-awareness.

The Renaissance was spearheaded by Salman Rushdie with his path breaking novel **Midnight's Children** in 1980. These contemporary writers are not confined to people living in India, but like Rushdie, a large number of them are part of the Indian diaspora. However, Rushdie, with his Pidgin English, signalled a new trend in writing as well as giving voice to multicultural concerns. Although his **Midnight's Children**, **Shame**, **The Moor's Last Sigh**, **Fury** received critical acclaim for their themes as well as his use of magic realism, the book that generated the most controversy was **The Satanic Verses**.

Amitav Ghosh, has won many accolades including the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Prix Medicis Extrangere of France. Although loss prone to controversy, he is responsible for producing some of the most lyrical and insightful works on the effect of colonialism on the native people. His books include **The Circle of Reason, The Glass Palace, The Calcutta Chromosome,** and **The Hungry Tide.**

Rohinton Mistry is considered to be one of the foremost authors of Indian writing in English. His books portray diverse facets of Indian socio economic customs and religion. Many of his writing are marked as “Indo-nostalgic”, he also exposes the seedy and grim side of life, not just the bright and cheer. Some of his better known works include such as a **Long Journey, Family Matters,** and **A Fine Balance.**

Vikram Seth is a prolific novelist of global status who produced some magnificent works like **The Golden Gate, A Suitable Boy, An Equal Music,** and **Two lives.** His first book is written in verse form and chronicles which portray the lives of young professionals in San Francisco his second book, **A suitable Boy** which was based in a post independent India.

Shashi Tharoor has a novelistic interests and the epic extent of his ambitions as a novelist. His first novel is **The Great Indian Novel.** His other novels are **Show Business, The Five – Dollar Smile and other stories** and **Riot.** His works are translated into many languages. Besides the male writers, plethora of active writings have been produced by women writers equally.

Toru Dutt was the first Indian woman poet to write in English, and her work depicts archetypes of Indian womanhood, such as Sita and Savitri, showing women in suffering, self-sacrificing roles, reinforcing conventional myths in a patriotic manner. Her first book, published when she was twenty, it was a book of verse translations from French, **A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields: Verse Translations and Poems.**

Kamala Markandaya is best remembered for her novel **Nectar In a Sieve**, published in early 50s. It is a touching account of the life of an Indian peasant woman Rukmani, her struggle for survival and her abiding love for her husband. It also reflect, the changing times and society.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala is a Booker Prize-Winning novelist, short story writer, and two – time academy Award-winning screen writer. She is perhaps best known for her long collaboration with **Merchant Ivory Productions**, made up of **James Ivory** and the late producer **Ismail Merchant**. Their films won six Academy Awards. Jhabvala's next screenplay is **The City of Your Final Destination**, based on the novel of the same name by **Peter Cameron**.

Anita Desai's works appearing in the 60's are aptly classified under Post Colonial literature. Published more than a decade after Markandaya, her **Voices of the City** is a story about three siblings, and their divergent viewpoints on life in Calcutta.

Nayantara Saghal's works has been evaluated from different perspectives as a feminist, as a political writer, as a writer of social documentaries and as an

advocate of Gandhian ideologies. Her novels are **Time To Be Happy, The Day in Shadow, Rich Like Us** (1985).

Shashi Deshpande is an eminent novelist, whose work reflects the whole Indian cultural issue. Her first novel **Roots and Shadows** is the story of Indu's inheritance. Her other works are **Dark Holds No Terror, That Long Silence**. All her works picture about the individualism, feelings and emotions and self doubt.

Bharati Mukherjee is an Award-Winning Indian born American writer. An early and popular work of fiction is **Jasmine**. Mukherjee strives in her novels to understand what is meant by the idea of an American identity, and whether in a world of hybridity and multiplicity, such a notion can exist. This is particularly evident in her more recent works **The Holder of the World, Leave It to Me** and **Desirable Daughters**. Her latest novel is **The Tree Bride**.

Shobha Rajadhyaksha known as Shobha De is an Indian columnist and novelist. She began a career in Journalism in 1970. In 1980s, she contributed to the Sunday magazine section of 'The Times of India'. She is a vocal critic of local Mumbai leader Raj Thackeray. Her important works are **Sweet Sixteenth, Speed Post** and **Starry Nights**.

Brinda Muherjee, a Calcutta born Indian English novelist, deals skilfully and convincingly with international politics and diplomacy in **The Fourth Profile**. The 1990's and the decades to come will see many more writers like Arundhati Roy of **The God of Small Things** breaking through the critical

acclaim, and with luck, large sales. To the Indian English novelist goes the credit of dismantling the false picture of India depicted by Kipling and his disciples.

New literacy voices such as those of Bapsi Sidhwa, Pulitzer Prize Winner Jhumpa Lahiri, whose plots, characters and themes deal with universal human experiences. The recent writers like Jhumpa Lahiri explore the cultural clash suffered by Indian women who is given Western education.

The experience of being caught between two cultures has remained a prominent theme in her writings. Jhumpa Lahiri's characters tend to be immigrants from India and their American – reared children, exiles who straddle two countries, two cultures, and belong to neither too used to freedom to accept the rituals and convention of home. Lahiri incorporated the stories into her debut collection, **Interpreter of Maladies: Stories** (1999).

The Namesake was a major national best seller and was named the New York Magazine Book of the Year. Jhumpa Lahiri has won a number of awards. These include: Trans Atlantic Award from the Henfield Foundation [1993], O. Henry Award for short story **Interpreter of Maladies** (1999). Novelist Jhumpa Lahiri is the sort of woman who makes being brilliant and accomplished appear effortless. Lahiri's short story **Unaccustomed Earth** (2008) scheduled for release on April 1, the eight stories in the book revisit the themes of identity and acculturation and grapple with the challenges of immigration and exile. Her other works were **Hell-Heaven**, and **Once in a Life-Time**.

Manju Kapur is a Professor of English at Miranda House College, Delhi, from where she had her under graduation. She did her M.A. in English from Dalhousie University in Canada and went on to do her M.Phil. from Delhi University. She is married to Gun Nidhi Dalmia and lives in New Delhi. Kapur lives in Delhi with her three daughters.

Her first novel, **Difficult Daughters** (1998) received the Commonwealth Award for the Eurasian region. The debut novel was short-listed for the Crossword Book Award in India. Her second novel **A Married Woman** was published in 2002. Her third novel **Home** was published in 2006. **the immigrant** (2009), the latest novel of her, has been receiving accolades from all the corners of literary world.

It is about an NRI marriage. "Happy that women's writing has come of age in India", she says. "Women have a lot of things to say. But, unfortunately not much is given to them. However, there is a lot of interest in what women have to say - and many, specially the regional women writers, write under tremendous personal pressure".

Difficult Daughters is the story of a young woman, named Virmati born in Amritsar into an austere and high minded household. The story tells how she is torn between family duties, the desire for education and illicit love. This is a story of sorrow, love and compromise. The major portion deals with Virmati's love affairs with professor and emerging her as a new woman. Virmati is the eldest daughter of Kasturi and Suraj Prakash. Kasturi has eleven children. One

after another she gives birth to children and thus the whole burden of household work increases over Virmati, being the eldest daughter. Due to her busy routine she does not do well in her studies and fails. She falls in love with Harish, a professor who is already married. He sublets in a portion of Virmati's house.

Thus professor develops an intimate relationship with Virmati. Virmati's parents decide to marry her to an engineer, Interject, but due to the death in his family, marriage is postponed for two years. During this period Virmati passes her FA exam and denies for marriage. Professor insists Virmati on being firm. Now Virmati becomes mentally disturbed and goes to Tarashika and drowns herself. She is saved by the servants of her grand father. Everybody inquires the reason but finally she declares that she does not like the boy and wants to study further. So this marriage is settled with Indumati, the second daughter of the family. Now Kasturi has to go with Virmati to Lahore for getting her admitted in college and Principal assures Kasturi that there will be no problem and she has her eyes fixed firmly on each student.

Shakuntala who has been a source of inspiration for Virmati, visits her regularly. Professor's course of meeting to her has yet not stopped and during this period she becomes pregnant. She becomes restless and with the help of her roommate, Swarnlata, she gets abortion. After completing her B.T., she returns to Amristar and is offered the principalship of a college at Sultanpur, she joins it but here too Harish visits her and these meetings are observed by Lalaji, manager of the college. She is dismissed so she decides to go to Nariniketan but

on the way she meets a close friend of Harish who is already aware of their intimate relationship. So he does not let her go and calls Harish. He performs all the rituals of marriage. Professor with Virmati returns home. During her conjugal life Virmati feels that it would have been better if she had not been married with Harish. After sometimes she gives birth to a daughter Ida. At the beginning of the novel this girl Ida narrates her mother's life.

Married Woman is the story of Astha, an educated, upper middle class, working Delhi woman. As a girl, she is brought up with large supplements of fear. She is her parent's only child. Her education, her character, her marriage, these were her parents burdens. But like a common school going girl she often imagines of romantic and handsome young man holding her in his strong manly embrace.

In her adolescence she falls in love with a boy of her age. Day and night the thought of him keeps her inside churning. She is unable to eat, sleep or study. In the meantime she is emotionally engaged with Rohan and they enjoy physical relationship. This relationship is finished within a few days as Rohan moves to Oxford for further studies and her marriage is settled with Hemant who belongs to **Difficult Daughters** is the story of a young woman, named Virmati born in Amritsar into an austere and high minded household. The story tells how she is torn between family duties, the desire for education and illicit love. This is a story of sorrow, love and compromise. The major portion deals

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In her adolescence she falls in love with a boy of her age. Day and night the thought of him keeps her inside churning. She is unable to eat, sleep or study. In the meantime she is emotionally engaged with Rohan and they enjoy physical relationship. This relationship is finished within a few days as Rohan moves to Oxford for further studies and her marriage is settled with Hemant who belongs to a bureaucrat complete his new life. When an arranged marriage

is proposed, Nina is uncertain. She cannot really give up her home and her country to build a new life with a husband she barely knows.

The consequences of change are far greater than she could have imagined. As the two of them struggle to adapt to married life, Nina's whole world is thrown into question. And as certain truths threaten the marriage, her fragile new life in Canada begins to unravel.

It will be interesting to note the man-woman relationship in the four novels of Manju Kapur. The emergence of new women in the realm of social, economic, cultural and racial aspects will also be probed in the novels of Manju Kapur.

The concept of new women in Indian society varies from the one in the west and therefore Manju Kapur has tried to evolve her own stream of emerging of new women grounded in reality. She has her own concerns priorities as well as her own ways of dealing with the predicament of her women protagonists. Her novels make a significant contribution in this direction.

The purpose of this research is to study women in the novel of Manju Kapur so taking into account the complexity of life, different histories, cultures and different structures of values, the woman's question, despite basic solidarity, needs to be tackled in relation to the socio-cultural situation.

Women under the patriarchal pressure and control are subjected to too much more burns and social ostracism. They are more discriminated and are

biased in lieu of their sex. The lives women live and struggle under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society are reflected in the writings of Manju Kapur.

We see the budding of new women in Manju Kapur's heroines, who do not want to be rubber dolls for others to move as they will. Defying patriarchal notions that enforce women towards domesticity, they assert their individuality and aspire 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.

All protagonists know they can not depend on others to sort out the domestic situation and proceed to tackle it on their own. But do these heroines blossom into new women in the real sense? Though they dare to cross one patriarchal threshold, they are caught into another, where their free spirits are curbed and all they do is 'adjust, compromise and adapt'. The conflict between the roots of imagination, women sensibility and their new consciousness are brought out well in the excellent novels **Home** and **the immigrant**.

Chapter II

Women and New Consciousness in *Home*

Ancient history of India records the glorious treatment of women in society. People who worshipped goddesses celebrated womanhood by calling the earth and the rivers reverentially with feminine names. In the course of time, with Aryan invasion, the status of women declined and they became victims of social evils. Child marriage, torture heaped on widows and widow immolation became prevalent. In the early decades of the twentieth century, sati was abolished, widow remarriage was encouraged and child marriage was prohibited. The middle-class women were exposed on modern ideas and education. The anticolonial nationalism, which followed the reform movements, drew women into the campaigns for rights of speech, education, and emancipation.

History boasts of the participation of women activists in various campaigns and struggles in India. Today there are women's organizations, and in many universities there are women's study courses, and many colleges have women's cells functioning in the campus, and students are exposed to the status of women in India today. In the media, there are many programmes that offer opportunities to affected women to express their problems. In spite of all these, the fact remains that only a few voices are heard and many voices are silenced. In practice, many Indian women are relegated to a secondary status; their lot in

general is far from satisfactory; and, they are still battling for their legitimate space.

In India, class, caste, and gender issues are interconnected. In this multi-ethnic and multi-religious country there are variations in the issues and agendas according to regions, religions, castes and communalities. The anguish of women may vary from family to family, but the basic social attitude towards woman is the same. Unjust systems like dowry make her life miserable, and discrimination against her starts from the womb and lasts till the tomb. Added to the dominance of patriarchal attitudes, the complexity of caste, class and religious identities in India subjugate women to stereotypical roles.

Manju Kapur's third novel **Home** is an engrossing story of family life, across three generations of Delhi shopkeepers. In the first few pages the story traces the lives of two sisters. Following episodes focus on the manipulations and politics of the joint family. The story revolves around second generation people also. The sisters are selfish, the husbands are lethargic, and the mother-in-law is a sassy old woman. Their family patriarch is too mild. The children are self-absorbed and conventional. The dark side of the joint family is brought out by Vicky—the only child of a deceased Banwarilal's daughter dumped by her suspicious death. Darkness sustains when he starts sexually abusing his cousin sister. The novel rightly brings out some of the truths that are always hidden in middle class family:

One is not born but rather becomes a woman. No

Biological, psychological or economic fate determines
The figure that the human female presents in society; it
Is civilization as a whole that produces this creature.

(Beauvior 457)

“Feminism”, as we known it now, originated in Simone de Beauvior’s epoch-making book, **The Second Sex** (1949), and gained momentum in the 1960s, though as early as 1869, J.S. Mill wrote about the problems of women’s inequality in society and pointed out that—“what is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing—the result of forced repression in some directions(22)”, it was the excerpt quoted above that started a debate which propelled feminist thinking in a new direction. Since then both feminism and feminist criticism have extended like ripples in a pond, constructing new meanings and deconstructing the older ones. It encompassed so many aspects that even the use of the term in a plural sense fails to do justice (Panja 59). We may best summarize the basic tenets of feminism by quoting Maggie Humm:

Feminism incorporates diverse ideas which share three major perceptions: that gender is a social construction which oppresses women more than men; that patriarchy shapes this construction; and the women’s experiential knowledge is a basis for a future non-sexist society.

These assumptions inform feminism’s double agenda: the task of critique (attacking gender stereotypes) and

the task of construction. Without this second task (something called feminist praxis) feminism has no goal. (194)

Feminism asks why women have played a subordinated role to men in human societies. Thus, a feminist perspective would enable both the critics and the readers to provide an understanding of the sexist ideology in the text. Theory is not an abstract intellectual activity divorced from our life, but intricately linked with it. Feminist literary critics try to explain how power imbalances due gender in a given culture are reflected or challenged by literary texts. While conceding that feminist criticism “seeks to expose patriarchal practices” (xiv), Morris points out that literary texts provide a strong powerful understanding of the ways in which society works to the disadvantage of women (7).

From time immemorial, woman has been chained with the concepts of softness, sympathy, beauty and sacrifice. This entrapment has limited her pitifully. Her image has been constructed upon man’s imagination. We cannot but agree with behavior when she comments: “it is not by increasing her worth as human being that she will gain value in man’s eyes; It is rather by modeling herself on their dreams”(68). Keeping the above discussions in view, this paper attempts to make an in-depth study of the theme of Manju Kapur’s latest novel, **Home** (2006), in the feminist perspective.

A number of Indian women novelists writing in English made their debut in the 1990s producing novels that revealed the true state of India society and its treatment of women. Their fictions remind us of the plight of women in contemporary Indian society and depict the emergence of “new woman” who tries to break free the shackles of patriarchy and speaks of love and sex frankly and boldly. Manju Kapur emerged in the Indian English scenario as one such write. Her debut novel, *difficult daughters*, published in 1998, won the commonwealth writer’s prize (Eurasia section)with its depiction of India’s emergence as a new nation running parallel with Virmati’s story of rebellion and her quest for independence. With her second novel, **A Married women** (2002), she went a step further. It deals with the debatable subjects of Hindu-Muslim confrontation and lesbian relationship, against the backdrop of the middle-class life of a Delhi-based family. A synthesis between women’s experience vis-à-vis the Indian context and theoretical framework of feminism helps in a proper feministic analysis of the novels of the outspoken writer.

Home begins with a sort of prologue to the joint-family tradition of our society and this sets the tone of the novel. Set in Delhi’s karol Bagh, it presents a simple of the “Banwari Lal joint-family” running a business in cloth marketing. In the very first chapter, kapur draws us into the lives of two sisters, sona and Rupa. In an interview with Ira Pande, Kapur said:

Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that I am exploring the space that women occupy in

domestic relationships. It is a world I know and understand ... many manifestations of the Indian woman's roles. She is a wife, a mother, a daughter-in-law- in fact there are so many aspects of a woman's life that I still need to write about that. (3)

Through many twists and turns Kapur explores this space and reveals the myriad issues that are deep-rooted within the family- revolt against the age-old tradition, the search for selfhood, woman's rights and the politics of marriage. Sona is married to Yashpal, the eldest son of patriarch, Banwari Lal . In spite her fasting and praying she remains childless for the first ten years of her marriage. Surrounded by relatives and family members, she faces humiliation and pity for her condition from almost all corners. While comparing Rupa's childlessness with her situation, she laments:

She (Rupa) was not subjected to sneers and taunts, she was not the only barren woman amongst myriads sisters-in-law whose wombs were bursting with perpetual pride. (3)

In the Indian patriarchal system wifehood and motherhood have been accepted as pivotal roles for women. Woman's prime function, as defined by our society, is to serve as the vessel that will bring forth the next generation. As a result, she faces two kinds of oppression. First, by the imposition of "motherhood" as a symbol of her status and second by the responsibility of

continuing the human race. Kapur portrays a realistic picture of the misery of multiple childbirth in her debut novel, *Difficult Daughters*:

For the eleventh time it had started, the heaviness in her belly, morning and evening nausea, bile in her throat while eating, hair falling out in clumps, giddiness when she got up suddenly. How trapped could nature make a woman? (7)

Our society forces motherhood as a social obligation and looks down upon sexuality that is removed from procreation. This is evident from the sarcastic comment made on Sona by her mother-in-law (known only as “Maju” and never by name—perhaps an indication of her identity only as the patriarch’s wife); “enjoying, enjoying” (12).

Ultimately, after a relentless psychological struggle for ten long years, Sona gives birth to a “mangle” daughter, Nisha. But her duty towards the family is not yet fulfilled because ours is a culture that idolize sons and dreads the birth of a daughter. Her prayers are rewarded once more and after a complicated “caesarian” she gives birth to a son:

That moment on the hospital bed she experienced as the most blessed of her life. The mother of a son, she could join Sushila as a woman who had done her duty to the family, in the way the family understood it. Gone was the disgrace, the resentment, gone with the

appearance of little Raju, as dark plain-featured as his father, but a boy, a boy. (49)

Later, after Pooja becomes the mother of a daughter, Sona herself(nowpuja's mother-in-law) perpetuates the same notion: "Raju says she is still young, but they may have to try two, three times for boy..."(335).

Through the ages, Indian women's history of suffering and rebelling against patriarchal dominance remains almost the same. There are old models and new models but the paramount questions of adjustment or rebellion in search of identity still remains. Entrapped by deeply entrenched attitudes, women themselves impose these on other women. Commenting on this issue Anita Desai rightly observes, "the conterminous constraints of widespread illiteracy and material dependence" make Indian women themselves "connive at patriarchal morals" "A secret convenience" (972).

The older women are presented in this novel as guardians of patriarchal values and institutions. Sona tries to inculcate the same values that made her suffer so much in both her daughter and daughter-in-law. Kapur takes great pain to depict the shifts in relationships and the power struggles within the family. With the arrival of pooja, sona feels threatened and aggrieved by her loss of control over her son. Completely forgetting her own experience as a daughter-in-law, she behaves exactly as "maji" had done when she first arrived.

In all traditions, irrespective of religion, country, race and the period in which they live, women have always been considered inferior and incapable of

any serious thinking. They have been assigned fixed roles to play in their lives. Society expects them to be meek, docile, silent and passive.

Kate Millet, in her **Sexual Politics** (1970), makes a distinction between “sex” and “gender” and argues that “sex” is determined biologically whereas “gender” is culturally / socially / psychologically constructed through sex-role stereotyping. Contemporary feminist theories have highlighted the immense psychological pressure created by this repressive ideology. Millet refers to this domination as a “a most ingenious form of interior colonization (25)”. Another critic, Ann Scott, describes it as

a cultural iceberg: for every one-tenth which is overt, or showing, the other nine-tenths are covert-submerge in a largely unquestioned tradition of women as inferiors. (qtd. in Hole and Levine 195)

The picture is not much different in India. Indu, the protagonist in Shashi Deshpande’s **Roots and Shadows** laments: “As a child they had told me I must be obedient and unquestioning. As a girl they had told me I must be meek and submissive. Why? I had asked. Because you are a female” (58). From her childhood, an Indian girl is taught that she is born to marry, procreate and serve others dutifully. Social institutions shape her to fit these roles ‘voluntarily’. The agony of women of our society who have to live their lives according to the dictates of the society finds a vent in these memorable lines by the revolutionary poet, Kamala Das :

Dress in sarees, be girl

Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
Be a quarreler with servants. Fit in. oh,
Belong, cried the categorizers. (142)

We find almost an echo of the above lives in the behaviour of Nisha when she enters the threshold of her new house:

Nisha first touched her mother-in-law's feet, then moved into the kitchen to see and to anticipate responsibility.... (322)

Education and career are meant only for male members. This notion is voiced by Sona time and again: "what does a girl need with studying? Cooking will be useful her entire life" (206). Kapur shows this disparity also in **Difficult Daughters**: "All the time in the lab, doing experiments, helping the girls, studying or going to conferences. I tell her she should have been a man" (16). Even outdoor activities like sports or going out with friends are reserved for the boys only. Whether it is the mother or the brother—all impose this code of conduct upon Nisha: "it is better for to remain inside"(52) or "Nisha is a girl, she has nothing better to do than sit around and read(122)." Beauvoir's pertinent comment on this form of oppression is worth noting:

The great advantage enjoyed by the boy is that his mode of existence in relation to others leads him to assert his subjective freedom. His apprenticeship for life consists

in free movement towards the outside world... he is aware of his body as a means for dominating nature... he undertakes, he invents, he dares... in woman, on the contrary, there is from the beginning a conflict between her autonomous existence and her objective self- (her being-the other). She is not given the freedom to grasp and discover the world around her... she does not dare to affirm herself as subject. (307-08)

This ideal of “femininity” (that teaches subservience and passivity) creates a huge psychological pressure on women by the enforcement of what Betty Friedan calls “ the feminine mystique... the notion that the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfilment of her own femininity” (13).

“Marriage” and “family life” provide, as if, the skeletal framework of all the novels of Manju Kapur. These two concepts form the kernel of the lives of Indian women. As expressed by one of the characters in Kapur’s debut novel, the “real business” of a woman’s life is to marry and look after her home” (22). Fasting (for example “karva chauth”) for the would-be-husband and his family from an early age is considered a virtue. When Nisha shrugs from observing the rituals in Home, she is told-“It’s never too early to fast for your husband” (94). Governed by stars, family background, caste and finance, marriage is more of a religious and financially secure, and than an emotional one- “in order to remain financially secure, and ensure the family harmony that underpinned that

security, marriages were arranged with great care. The bride had to bring a dowry...” (4).

The woman’s intrinsic value is considered to be less than a man’s and to make up for this disparity she must bring some valuables with her for her husband and her in-laws (in the form of dowry). If her parents fail to satisfy the inordinate greed of her in-laws, she is mentally tortured, beaten mercilessly and, sometimes, is even murdered. One example from the novel under discussion will suffice:

Pooja was bringing quantities of cash, a car, a fridge, an air-conditioner, a TV, a Godrej cupboard, a double bed with a deluxe foam mattress, a dressing table, twenty-one sets of jewellery, countless watches, saris, suit pieces, frocks, and little pant –shifts for the women, men, and children, and a honeymoon in Europe, all expenses paid. (254)

Yashpal’s sister Sunita faces perhaps a “dowry-death”! when she reached a marriageable age she was married to a man who was later found out to be a drunkard and abusive. In a stunningly matter-of-fact tone Kapur presents her death by burn:

There had been an accident in the kitchen, and Sunita had died of burns in the hospital. The cremation would take place the next day. She was only thirty-two. (18)

Our society is bound by a strange notion of family honour known as “izzat”. The politics of making women the repositories of the family honour forms a method of exploitation. Anita Desai’s observation in her “Introduction To Sunlight On Broken Column” -that the world of the novel is dominated by “the two ruling concepts of Indian behaviour –izzat/honour and sharam/dishonour (ix)”- applies to Home as well. When Sunita died, nobody registered a complaint to the police or filled a court case perhaps because in that situation family “izzat” would be ruined. Neither did she reveal her own humiliation after marriage to her own family members- “... that boy drank and became abusive was something the daughter did her best to hide from her parents. This shame was now her own” (6).

As already pointed out, women are most of the times debarred from taking up of any vocation for themselves. Kapur’s observations of the way in which women are devoured by this social system of exploitation are flawless. It is deeply held notion as “women’s work was allowable only in unconventional situations (no children), and that respectability demanded it be avoided as much possible” (212).

Nisha while pursuing her career travelled a largely uncharted course and violated the most deeply held conception of her proper role “.... Working was all right as a time pass... families wanted a daughter-in-law, life, and mother,

husbands were not looking for businesswomen” (297). “Nisha’s creation” was a search for an emotional independence rather than a financial one.

In our society, violence, when directed against women, takes many form. Subtle forms like denying a woman her right to productive work are difficult to control. Though Nisha finally succumbs to her role of an ideal housewife, it restricts her self development –first by taking away her freedom of thought and expression (emotional independence) and secondly by denying her the scope of giving a free play to her creative potentiality. Gone was her illusion that she “would talk, laugh, sing, smile.... Hers would be a modern relationship. Gone were the days when women needed to be so silent” (16) and within a few days of her marriage she found “every inch of the way to Karol Bagh covered with fragment of her broken future” (324).

Chapter III

Women and New Consciousness in *the immigrant*

Post independence Indian English fiction constitutes an important part of the World Literature today, and women novelists have made significant contributions to it. Directly, or indirectly, they are engaged in the vital task of formulating a new consciousness regarding women in our rapidly changing environment. In the past two and a half decades there has been a rejection of certain patriarchal traditions and stereotypes in the genre of fiction, in particular. In the modern era, gynofiction has raised a forceful protest against patriarchy and has been characterized by a new sense of freedom and assertion of self-sufficiency.

The novels of this period depict the emergence of “new woman” who tries to break free the shackles of patriarchy and speaks of love and sex frankly and boldly. Shiv. K. Kumar, a novelist himself apart from being a poet and critic, has made a pertinent comment on the growth of Indian English fiction during this period in the following words:

...It seems that in this vast corpus of Indian fiction written during the past two decades or so, women novelists appear to have distinguished themselves for their boldness in presenting man-woman relationship, and for their sensitive manipulation of language. (17)

Manju Kapur emerged in the Indian English scenario as one such writer. From her first novel **Difficult Daughters** (1998) followed by **A Married**

Woman (2002) and **Home** (2006) to the latest **the immigrant** (2008), she has evolved as a sensitive author. Kapur's novels show the struggle of women against the predatory male-dominated society.

The themes are, most of the times, very controversial and sometimes verge on the level of eroticism. **Difficult Daughters** was written against the backdrop of the Indian Freedom Movement, the Partition of Indian and the War between Allied and Axis forces, it delicately analyzed the modern dynamics of man-woman relationship, particularly in the Indian social background. The time frame was from the thirties to the present--India's freedom struggle and women's emancipation moving hand-in-hand.

A Married Woman (2002) has raised lots of controversies ever since its inception because it deals with the highly sensitive issues of communalism, gender confrontations and same-sex relationship. The third novel quite fascinatingly portrayed the destructive limitations of Indian family values which throttle the individual growth. Bearing semblance to some extent to all time favourites like **Sense and Sensibility** and **A House for Mr. Biswas**, **Home** essentially depicted the "family life" with all its power-struggles.

While **Difficult Daughters** ushered its characters from pre-Independence days up to the time of writing, **A Married Woman** and **Home** have a near-contemporary setting and **the immigrant** differs from all three in being located throughout in a period recent but not contemporary, the 1970s of Indira Gandhi's Emergency.

As the title of the latest novel suggests, its fictional locale shifts between India and Canada. **the immigrant** is set in the era when the great migration to North America had just started after the US and Canada changed their immigration policies for Asians. In an interview (Saturday, August 09, 2008) the author mentioned that the

genesis of the book was her desire to explore the NRI sensibility, as well as to convey a sense of the darkness that surrounded India around the time of the “Emergency” – when there was this idea that India was just not a place to be in, you had to get at, nobody could get anywhere here. It’s something I grew up with too.

(<http://jaiarajun.blogspot.com/2008/meeting-with-manju-kapur.html>)

The title of the novel (all in small letters) perhaps suggests alienation cross-culture, hybridity and globalization. Though the novel takes up the seventies as its background, the feelings of isolation and dislocation that Manju Kapur portrays would surely strike a chord with the present-day Indian immigrants trying to adjust to life in the west on the one hand and life of the west on the other hand.

the immigrant is the story of Delhi-based Nina Batra, a 30-year-old unmarried lecturer in English at Miranda House, Delhi University. The death of her diplomat father has left Nina and her mother struggling to make ends meet in strained circumstances in a small flat in Delhi’s Jangpura neighbourhood. The novel begins on her thirtieth birthday with a grim realization of her

diminishing prospects of marriage. But, a visit to an astrologer sets her life on a different path through an “arranged introduction” with an NRI dentist, who arrives from Halifax, Canada to meet her. Ananda, the prospective bridegroom, left New Delhi a few years back after his parents were killed in an accident.

Young, ambitious and determined to qualify as a Canadian dentist and citizen, Ananda has made his mark as a wealthy doctor in Halifax. It is thus a partially arranged marriage, promoted by Ananda’s sister and Nina’s mother. Nina is finally able to leave her colourless life behind to fly to a small-town in Canada, only to discover later her husband’s sexual and emotional dysfunctions.

Ananda brings to his marriage a kind of loneliness centred on his sense of sexual inadequacy. Suffering from premature ejaculation he has failed to have relations with Western women earlier. After an initial inertia, he secretly visits a therapist later and almost cures himself. But his successful experiences with the “Surrogate” make him more adventurous. He becomes the insensitive, straying husband, and takes on a young, white mistress. Nina is left alone to brood over her pitiable state. But, in a few days, she too joins a library science course and has an extramarital affair.

The couple seeks neither to understand nor love each other. Nina finds she is not only ill prepared for the cultural gulf she encounters, but also the gaping distances (intellectual, emotional and physical) in her barren relationship. Nina suffers a two-fold alienation. In a foreign land with no one to talk to but the husband, she feels rootless. This displacement is not merely a

change of address but is also socio-cultural. Immigration results in the physical as well as imaginative border crossing. In addition to this is the oppression that a woman suffers from in a male dominated society. The cultural dislocation, alienation and loss of identity related to “diaspora” thus open up multiple perspectives for writers (Jhumpa Lahiri makes a sensitive exploration of the lives of Indian immigrants and expatriates in **Interpreter of Maladies** and **The Unaccustomed Earth**) who wish to portray these experiences in their writings. The immigrants or the expatriates, in most cases, are citizens of two countries (their homeland and the new place of their settlement). So they somehow shift their focus between their social and cultural identities which are in a way unstable and fluid. Despite living in a foreign land for a considerable amount of time, their identities are connected directly or indirectly with their old homelands.

In an interview when the author was asked about the launching pad or the impetus that drove her to write about this particular novel, she replied:

That was an idea I had for a long time – partly as a response to the numerous NRIs (Non-Resident Indian) that any Indian is witness to.

They strike one as not quite Indian, yet not completely foreign, they inhabit an in-between space that they themselves are all too aware.

<http://www.faber.co.uk/article/2009/1/manju-kapur-on-the-immigrant>

Jabberwock)

With an amazing insight Kapur probes deep into the psyche of her characters and expresses her observations with a simple yet mesmerizing style. The couple plays out a simultaneous existence in two cultures and face varied problems at different stages on the road to their assimilation of a new culture. They suffer different kinds of losses – of identities, familial love, economic security, social status and feel insecure about the preservation of their own religion. Nina's initial failure to strike a balance between her American and Indian identity brings in an "identity crisis" in her life. This results in cultural isolation that leads to personal isolation as well.

Ananda had to face the awful loneliness of a recent immigrant when he arrived in Halifax for the first time. In his uncle's home he missed the intimacies of Indian life, the communal meals, rich spices and vegetarian diet he was used to. But soon his feeling of rejection faded away and he assimilated the western culture. Though he becomes a reputed dentist and tries hard to establish the fact that he is more a Canadian than an Indian by nature, his sense of alienation remains. He becomes Andy and starts taking non-vegetarian meal fairly soon after moving to Canada. But for Nina, it is harder to adapt. She believes that using the word Andy in her home is to carry alienation into the bedroom. Kapur explores the special challenges that the young immigrant wives face in their life. They are already so pressured in professional and reproductive terms, and life to them becomes an even more impossible balancing act inside a foreign culture.

The immigrant who comes as a wife has a more difficult time. If work exists for her, it is in the future, and after much finding of feet. As the novelist avers: At present all she is, is a wife, and a wife is alone, for many, many hours. There will come a day when even books are powerless to distract. When the house and its conveniences can no longer completely charm or compensate. Then, she realizes she is an immigrant for life. (124)

Nina's rootlessness in the new soil makes her pine for "home". She painfully remembers that "never, for a moment, in all her years at home, had she to think about who or what she was. She had belonged. "Only now was she beginning to realize how much that meant" (157).

The initial mortification that she faces at the Toronto airport makes her feel humiliated for a long time:

Nina has no idea why this is happening to her. She has a valid visa... She is decent, respectable, god fearing and worthy... She feels edgy; she is alone with a woman who makes no eye contact, for whom she is less than human... Though she was addressed as ma'am no respect is conveyed. Nina has been used to respect. It came with her class, her education, her accent, and her cloths. (107-08)

Pushed into the burden of staying at home jobless and being denied a life outside of marriage, she has to console herself that planning the weekly menu together secures the future in a way in which sex never can. As she changes

from sari to jeans and takes her first morsel of meal which she so hated, the readers realize how depressing it can be to dress every day entirely differently from how one is used to dress, to live on food the thought of which has always been nauseating.

One weekend Ananda is delighted when she accepts both fish and beef in her diet. While he is happy that life will be much easier now, Nina lets out the hidden truth -- her taking of fish and beef was the result of fragmentation and distress, not a desire for convenience. Nina's own slow process of assimilation results in changing from an easily recognizable Indian woman in an oversized overcoat to a student of library science at the local college.

The idyllic future-mother, daughter and grandchild united at last in a Canadian home -- that Nina had dreamt of, shatters when her mother dies alone in her apartment. She realizes that there is no going back for an immigrant, but at least she can establish an identity of her own apart from being Ananda's wife: "I feel like a shadow. What am I but your wife?" (237). She faces the problems of her marital life boldly, defies the role that tradition has scripted for her, and qualifies as a librarian. When she boards a Greyhound bus bound for another new start, the readers feel that she has found her own identity -- "Anchors. You had to be your own anchor" (328).

Through the ages, Indian woman's history of suffering and rebellion against patriarchal dominance remains almost the same. There are old models and newer ones but the paramount question of adjustment or rebellion in search of identity still remains. Male domination which leads to woman's subjugation, discrimination, exploitation and oppression presents sexism in its worst form.

Pam Morris, in the book **Literature and Feminism**, points out that literary texts provide a strong powerful understanding of the way in which society works to the disadvantage of women (7). A woman's prime function, as defined by our society, is to serve as the vessel that will bring forth the next generation.

From her childhood, an Indian girl is taught that she is born to marry, procreate and serve others dutifully. Social institutions shape her to fit these roles 'voluntarily'. Whether her family is poor or wealthy, whatever her caste, class or religion, an Indian woman knows that motherhood confers upon her a purpose and identity that nothing else in her culture can. In meeting the protagonist of the novel, Nina, realizes and says that

We are conditioned to think a woman's fulfillment lies in birth and motherhood, just as we are conditioned to feel failures if we don't marry. (233)

As a result, each Indian woman faces two kinds of oppression: firstly, by the imposition of “motherhood” as a symbol of her status, and secondly by the responsibility of continuing the human race. After marriage if the couple fails to conceive, it is the wife who is held responsible most of the times. As Nina laments:

Though medically speaking, infertility was not specifically a woman’s problem, it was she who bore the brunt of this particular deficiency.

(165)

Female-sexuality is never recognized and the desire of the body in a female is regarded as a perversion. Society expects women to be meek, docile, silent and sexually passive. Kate Millet, in her **Sexual Politics** (1970), makes a distinction between “sex” and “gender” which are psychologically constructed through sex-role stereotyping. This reminds Beauvoir’s observations in her **The Second Sex**:

One is not born but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature. (457)

Contemporary feminist theories have highlighted the immense psychological pressure created by this repressive ideology. Millet refers to this domination as

“a most ingenious form of interior colonization” (25). The omniscient narrator of the novel under discussion subtly introduces this within the body of the text:

“Welcome home, darling,” said Ananda, putting his arm around his wife afterwards. And that was the main point, wasn’t it? Not her orgasms, but the fact that she was home. (121)

Nina, thus feels pressurized to compromise on her own physical desires. Female body also becomes the site of forced colonization which the male master uses and abuses according to his own sweet will.

Thus, it is rendered “docile” under the domination of patriarchy. It becomes primarily a source of social control in an andocentric social order. Kapur uses her narrative to raise such important issues as a woman’s right to her body. Body has always been an important site for feminist discourse. As Susan Bordo in **The Unbearable** says that the body is “a practical, direct focus of social control” (2362).

Nina too has to submit, willingly or unwillingly, to the demands of Anand’s body just because she is his wife. Later, she is raped also by her white partner, Anton. Thus, she experiences the horror of being raped both inside and outside marriage. In a talk given on **the immigrant**, Kapur made it very clear that Indian women are still facing the trauma of exploitation:

In general a woman's role is often highly respected, even glorified especially in traditional families. We have a whole slew of goddesses in the Hindu pantheon that represent all kinds of female power. Yet, how can I say, with our history of crimes against women, our low sex ratio, our female foeticide, how can I say that we respect women more than in the West? I can't. We don't.

(<http://www.faber.co.uk/article/2009/1/manju-kapur-on-the-immigrant>

Jabberwock)

The need of female solidarity which was voiced by Bell Hooks in her essay "Sisterhood":

When women actively struggle in a truly supportive way to understand our differences, to change misguided, distorted perspectives, we lay the foundation for the experience of political solidarity.... To experience solidarity, we must have a community of interests, shared beliefs, and goals around which to unite, to build sisterhood. (67)

This also felt by Nina when she visits La Leche League or joins the co-counselling group: "We are going to counsel each other, but that's not all"... (220). She needed her support as sisters did in a male world" (229). With Beth's help she becomes aware of her maladies and focuses on finding their

remedies: “Without awareness, we can be both manipulated and manipulative, exploited, as well as exploitative” (223).

It will be perhaps worth noting what Diana Brydon points out in this context:

... a common heritage of oppression... To recognize what we hold in common is not to underestimate our differences, but to provide us with a context for understanding them more clearly. (6)

As they discuss their problems and comfort one another, an identity is struck which ultimately forges the bond of sisterhood between eight “white” and two “brown” faces.

Nina understands the necessity of having control of one’s own body; her transference from a vegetarian Indian to a more global citizen who tries to adapt to her new culture, brings about this realization:

That Monday Nina walked to the library, fish and beef indelibly part of her being. Feeling less Indian had its advantages. There were more possibilities in the world she could be open to. Her body was her own--and that included her digestive system and her vagina. (271)

Thus, in this novel Kapur dares to break certain conventional attitudes that are never questioned in our society. In the last three decades, Indian women writers -- novelists and poets writing both in English and regional languages -- have

shown a great deal of courage in dealing with the hitherto taboo subject of female sexuality.

Through many twists and turns Kapur explore this space and reveals the myriad issues that are deep-rooted within the family -- revolt against the age-old tradition, the search for selfhood, woman's rights and the politics of marriage. Nina's decision to forge an identity of her own away from her husband reminds us of the protagonist's words in Kamala Das's "I Shall Someday Leave":

I shall someday leave, leave the cocoon
you built around me with morning tea,
Love words flung from doorways and of course
\Your tired lust. (150)

Her realization that "when one was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home" (334) empowers her and we see in her a newly gained confidence, courage and identity.

Viewed from the angles of the gynocritics the narrative of the novel is authentically feminine. Like Showalter, the renowned feminist author Helen Cixous also subscribes to the view that writing is of the body and that

a woman doesn't write like a man, because she speaks with the body.

She advocates: "woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing". (320)

Kapur has indeed, written with her "self". The Post-Independence era has witnessed the emergence of a large number of novelists whose works offer "interesting insights into the many way in which the standard authentic notion of language has been subverted" (Ashcroft, et. al, 40). This reminds us of an important comment by B.K. Das in his **Postmodern Indian English literature: Indian English fiction has brought revolution in the whole range of Indian English literature, in the choice of subjects and language of expressions.** (93)

In her latest novel Manju Kapur has successfully created a new Indian English idiom that at once distinguishes it from the "English" and other "englishes". She uses much of the Indian expressions and colloquial terms without any hesitation. This gives her English definitely a local flavour. The brilliance of the novel also lies in Kapur's unique handling of the English language marked by her use of code mixing devices. Here are a few examples from the text: "She accepted tea... along with mathri and pickle" (229). "Aree, beta, last visit..." (26), "sweeping woman, long handled mop, salwar kameezed", "the surprised scooter-wallah roared off" (291), "ji, uncle" (26), and so on. A distinctively Indian lexicon is transfused with International Standard English to bring out the essence of familiarity for the Indian readers. Few

examples will suffice: “Dal”, “Chicken do piyaza”, “raita”, “naan”, “mishri”, “Palak Paneer”, “Mathri”, “Beta”, “Kameez”, “matka”, “Bap”, “bas, Bas”, “Arre”, etc. The novelist’s use of Indian expressions in the English sentences reminds us of Mulk Raj Anand’s coinage, “pigeon English”.

But as most of us in India mix ordinary conversation in our own language with a good sprinkling of English words, we naturally take the words of our language into our exchanges in English freely; and, to most ears, phrases like ‘Have you finished your khana’ (food) or ‘Jungli (barbarian), you don’t know anything! Become acceptable. (qtd. in Raja Rao, 28).

Kapur’s delicate writing depicts the human relations and their social context with great sensibility and close attention to the details of daily life. The novel has been very carefully researched and the text bears ample testimony to Kapur’s confession on how she became a writer:

I knew what I was interested in family, marriage, women and education but I had no notion of how to weave a story around this. Interviews, research, field trips- the tolls of an academi-these are what I used. I research as I wrote. “(qtd. in Khan 23)

Chapter IV

Conclusion

The Indian English novel has traversed from writing the tracts of cultural nationalism to projecting the paradigms of plurality. The initial preoccupations, with subject matters such as Indian freedom movement, patriotism, evils of feudalism and matters of national concern before the Independence; and social reforms and the birth pangs of feminine psyche afterwards, have given way to the arrival of Salman Rushdie and post-Rushdie generation of writers. Several new trends have emerged, new talents have made their mark, and new creative and critical moves have taken place in different direction.

Contemporary world is a complex world providing a formidable stimulus to creative imagination. Sensitive reaction to crises of different kinds--- political, historical, social and personal, living in the midst of migrations and multicultural ethnicities, return to history and reconstructions of history, dispossession and repossession, gender as politics; and media and modes of control and representation have become the focus of attention pleading for a basis that could project 'a new cross-cultural humanism. Postcolonial writing, from this angle, becomes a heterogeneous act of foregrounding' a genuine cosmopolitan humanism dismantling the essentialist models of identity'.

Post-colonial theory presupposes that post-colonial literature must be written in English (not Queen's "English") but the other 'Englishes' and it is these 'englishes' that give rise to African English, Australian English, Canadian English, Caribbean English. In the light of this theory Manju Kapur's **Difficult Daughters** has been successful in creating a new Indian English idiom that at once distinguishes it from Queen's English and other 'English's'. Manju Kapur uses English in a new way. **Difficult Daughters**, is written in live Indian English idiom and re-creates characters in their own situation. There are a lot of code mixings - i.e. Indian words used as such without being translated into English. This gives a kind of authenticity to the novel. The 'locale' of the novel is north India and the time is partition and independence- i.e. the beginning of post-colonial era. Apart from the medium in which it is written, historically speaking, it is a post-colonial novel.

Manju Kapur depicts love relationship between woman-student and married professor resulting in marriage in **Difficult Daughters**. The story is not very startling though a little unconventional. That a married professor with wife and children should fall in love with a student and eventually take her as his second wife, without divorcing the first wife, seems to be outrageous. But the merit of the novel lies elsewhere. That is in the fashioning of a new language (i.e. Indian English).

Socio-political problems of contemporary life portrayed in terms of individual's quest for identity and freedom along with a sensitive handling of issues like gender, sexuality and diaspora make **the immigrant** a novel with a difference.

Moving beyond Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande, the feminine psyche has blossomed forth into variegated constructs of 'femininity versus feminist beliefs' (Chitra Sankaran). General readers and discerning critics as well have observed that the media hype given to Indian diasporic writers-both male and female-seems to be a western strategy of absorbing, organizing, and consuming all "othernesses" standing as counter discourses to modernist epistemologies. It is very much dealt with in Kapur's **Home**

Readers may be aware of the debate on 'the anxiety of Indianness' and the controversies surrounding 'the cult of authenticity' vis-à-vis the positions and stances of late Meenakshi Mukherjee and Vikram Chandra. Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, among others, note, 'the postcolonial functioning within a global cultural economy—a bazaar for non-western artifacts—pandering to the needs of that global market, and producing ever more reified versions of "other" worlds'(Bishnupriya Ghosh) seems to be more true in the new arrivals of Indian English fiction but, a caution is necessary: mere donning the badges of diversity honed to western postmodern hybrids and localised cultures is unlikely to create an enduring impact in terms of redeeming postcolonial societies, vis-à-vis their

quest for national and individual dignity and plural identities. Makarand Paranjape notes that

Indian English literature today is a contest over the nature, identity and ultimately destiny of modern Indian. Of late, the realistic, modernistic, pessimistic mode of the first three decades of post-independence writing is giving way to a non-representational, experimental, self-conscious and optimistic literature. But the real challenge the writers of culture due to globalization and the new, easy and superficial internationalism which tempts Indian English writers to market themselves abroad. (**Economic and Political Weekly**, May 2, 1998)

These preoccupations are insightful, critical, creative, and thought-provoking. They hover around contours of identity in the midst of changing times and turning of the tides. Some of them are witty and humorous. Magic realism, neo-realism and figural realism interplay and interact. Metaphors and stylistic quirks abound. Dialogic imagination, multiple genres, intertextual narratives and othernesses of voices with subaltern and subversive dimensions project and foreground and celebrate contours of identity.

Tapan Basu's presentation on "contemporary literature in English and the Indian market" in a recent London literary workshop, Rajul Bhargava's Edition, Indian writing in English-the last decade (2002), Jaydipsinh perspectives on Indian English fiction(2006), M.K.Naik's (with shyanaa Narayan) Indian

English literature 1980-2000: a critical survey(2006), and my own critical survey in book format, the rains and the roots: the Indian English Novel Then And Now (2006) would be worth reading in order to have a right and holistic overview of the Indian English fiction.

Much of the world's literature has been dominated by a canon that nearly dismissed women's writing more than two centuries ago. The counter-canons that have emerged as the result of this exclusion have helped to establish women's writing in mainstream culture, but still in some way they fail to acknowledge women's literature coming from non-white countries. This project is an attempt to highlight (by way of cross reference to) some of the works produced by women in India over the ages.

Although India has a history of ancient civilizations such as the Harappa and Mahenjodaro, and of matrilineal societies in the south, no written records of women's literary prowess exists pre-dating the 6th century BC.

Feminism started in India during the country's struggle for freedom, and the onset of the "second wave" feminism in the seventies, when there was a mass participation of women from the lower sections of the society. Educated women with critical thinking emphasized the need for empowerment in society and involvement in politics. During the "third wave" of the Indian women's

movement, there is an onset of independent issue-based responses by feminist groups. Voices of protest are heard whenever women are denigrated or subjected to male aggression- be it in real life or in the media. Feminist debates have become complex and diverse in the scholarly arena and research has been done on feminism. Litterateurs cutting across national, cultural and linguistic boundaries have taken up women's issues as a major theme in their writings. Women writers have written works exclusively on women's issues to highlight to the world what the throbbing of women around the world are, and feminist critics have formulated theoretical base to analyse feminist works of art.

Though women entered modern literature at approximately the same time as men, in the last century, woman as a writer sometimes has to overcome insurmountable inconveniences. Facing challenges and overcoming difficulties, in Indian writing in English, women writers have considerably widened and deepened the areas of human experience, and they have transmuted into creative literature their sharp, feminine perception of life. They have no doubt enriched the body of Indian writing in English, and their contribution is significant. Tour Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Kamala Das, Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Despande, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Gita Mehta, Gita Hariharan, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Suniti Namjoshi, Anuradha Marwah-Roy Meena Alexander, Rani Dharker And Manju Kapur

And Many More Renowned Indian Writers Have Made A Remarkable Contribution To world Literature.

Women writers in our country have fought for their space and shown to the world that women are not condemned to silence, and that speech can empower them. Their work is significant in making society aware of women's demands, providing a medium for self-expression, re-writing the history of India, deconstructing stereotypical images, demythifying existing power relations, and reassuring the status of women.

Women's existence itself has been a challenge from conception to the time of her death. Every step has been a difficult one and every success is a milestone in the history of her emancipation. This project traces the growth of the struggle of women from early Indian women writers to the current authors.

The Hindu moral code known as the laws of Manu denies woman an existence apart from that of her husband or his family. A significant number of authors have portrayed Indian women as long-suffering wives and mothers silenced by patriarchy. Women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self-sacrificing women toward conflicted female characters. Their search for identity is no longer characterized but is defined

simply in terms of their victim status. Recent writers depict both the diversity within each woman, rather than limiting the lives of women to one ideal.

Women writers in India are moving forward, bursting out in full bloom spreading their own individual fragrances. They are recognized for their originality, versatility and the indigenous flavor of the soil that they bring to their work. A number of Indian women novelists who made their debut in the 1990s, produced novels which revealed the true state of Indian society and its treatment of women. Born after Indian independence, the English language does not have colonial associations for them. And their work is marked by an impressive feel for the language, and an authentic presentation of contemporary Indian, with all its regional variations.

We see Indian women writers like Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Kamala Das and Shobha De, just to name a few, who hold their own place in the women writer's world of initial rejection, dejection, familial bonds and domesticity.

Indian women writers have given the literary work in India an unmistakable edge. They are able to sensitively portray a world that has in it women rich in substance. Their women are real flesh-and-blood protagonists who make you look at them with awe their relationships to their surroundings, their children, and their families. They have grappled with complex issues such as sensuality,

servility, subjugation and society. They have handled them with a sense of balance, never disregarding Indian traditions. Many Indian women novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity that is not imposed by a patriarchal society.

The image of the New Woman and her struggle for an identity of her own also emerges in the Indian English novel. Such a struggle needs supportive structures outside the family to enable women to survive.

Nayantara Sahgal uses the theme of 'search for identity' in *Rich Like Us* (1986). While Rama Mehta's **Inside the Haveli** (1977), looks at the issue of traditional Indian culture, particularly the debate on female education. Another example of the western educated female protagonist's quest for her cultural roots is Githa Hariharan's **The Thousand Faces of Night** (1992).

Many of the authors, such as Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in **The Mistress of Spices** (1997), use magic realism in their novels. Suniti Namjoshi stands out for her use of fantasy and surrealism. Novels which deal with various aspects of college life, are Meena Alexander's **Nampally House** (1991), and Rani Dharker's **The Virgin Syndrome** (1997).

Anita Desai, in her psychological novels, presents the image of a suffering woman preoccupied with her inner world, her sulking frustration and

the storm within: the existential predicament of a woman in a male dominated society. Through such characters, she makes a plea for a better way of life for women. Her novels have Indians as central characters, and she alternates between female-centered and male-centered narrative. Her later novels, written since she moved to the USA, reveal all the characteristics of diasporic fiction, that is, a concern with the fate of immigrants, and a growing distance from the reality of India. The experience of being caught between two cultures has remained a prominent theme in writing by Indian woman, especially Indian women writers based in the USA, Canada, Britain, and other parts of the world.

In the past the image of woman was that of Kali, Uma, Durga, and Sita to whom man also gave full reverence. The images of the woman are basically drawn from the Hindu religious texts i.e. the Ramayana, and the Motherhood and offer an opportunity to the poetess to reveal the mysterious feminine nature. In Tour Dutt's poem "Savitri", Savitri, the ideal of Indian womanhood follows yama boldly and when she is asked to retrace her steps home and perform the duties of a widow, she strictly denies:

If fate so rules, that I should feel

The miseries of widow's life

Can man's device the doom repeal? (118)

Savitri again says:

No wearings, O death, I feel

And how should I by the side
Of Satyavan? In woe and weal
To be a help mate swears the bride
This is my place. (131)

Gauri Deshpande shows different feminine sensitivity. 'A lunch on The Train' reflects her views on the strange condition of middle class women when they are married at too young age:

The woman in front of me, a mere girl,
Too young to have been a mother of three
Is struggling vainly to feed one, control
The other, and the third is abandoned
From a weary care. (68)

Women have always had to struggle and fight for their existence and survival. The battle has been going on for centuries and will probably continue till the very end of time. Down through the ages, there have been several women writers whose works have been writings never saw the light of day and they were drowned forever in deafening silence. But, women the world over have been resilient and ingenious. They have always managed to find a way to overcome insurmountable odds.

Gender creates barriers. Gender also creates opportunities. The barriers and obstacles set up by a male chauvinistic world order make it necessary for women have been doing it for ages.

Significantly in her article, “A Wreath upon the Grave: the Influence of Virginia Woolf on Feminist Critical theory”, Barbara Hill Rigney, after having consolidated the feminist positions of Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir and Kate Millet, arrives at a logical culmination that literature by women... cannot be evaluated apart from the historical and political purviews. All these pointers are sharply echoed in the writings of Manju Kapur. This Professor has candidly made a bold attempt to portray the intricacies of the world of women and their female and feministic consciousness.

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