The entire scenario in her novels is feminine. Virmati in *Difficult Daughters*; Astha in *A Married Woman*; Nisha in *Home*; Nina in *The Immigrant*; and Shagun and Ishita in *Custody* are all middle-class educated urban Indian women struggling to establish themselves with their own independent identities in the patriarchal setup of which they are part and parcel. (Jadhav 186)

The chapter evaluates the feminine sensibilities as exhibited in the works of Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur. Both the writers converge in marriage, family life, freedom and individual identity and diverge in reaction and revolt. Deshpande’s women are submissive at the end of the novel, while Kapur’s protagonists revolt till the end of the novel. Kapur’s women select their own life style but as Deshpande’s women belong to the orthodox family they surrender themselves to the family bond. Kapur depicts her female characters in a more authoritative tone though Deshpande presents her female characters in a docile manner. Kapur and Deshpande give foremost importance for extra-marital love in their novels, however this does not provide a true solution to the problems of incompatibility. The succeeding chapter deals with the Techniques of the two creative writers, in order to evaluate an effective and proper expression of their artistic intentions.

Chapter - VI
CRAFTSMANSHIP OF SHASHI DESHPANDE AND MANJU KAPUR

“I think writing really helps you heal yourself. I think if you write long enough, you will be a healthy person. That is, if you write what you need to write, as opposed to what will make money, or what will make fame”.

-Alice Walker

Fiction has so far been the stronghold of Indian English literature. A large number of novels were published between the years 1930 and 1965. These novels disclose the influence of the western convention of the long prose narrative. One of the pioneers in Indian English novels is Mulk Raj Anand. Through his delicate style and subtle structure, he brought the western technique and structure to precision in his fiction. He employs the dramatic technique of storytelling. Unlike Mulk Raj Anand, the narrative style of R.K. Narayan generally follows the traditional pattern. His narration is generally free from jitteriness and contriving. There is a quality of spontaneity about it with a yearning for restraint and irony. There is an occasional use of symbolism but it is normally direct and plain. R.K. Narayan’s style and language are mostly functional and even bare. In The Guide, he uses modern fictional techniques such as flashback, interior monologue and stream of consciousness.
Raja Rao differs from Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand for his Indian locutions, idioms and usages are rendered directly into English. He infused his language with a technique which stays on in English Literature even now. His skill is incorporated into the body of the fable and writing is closer to speech and he is able to use the rhythms of speech to indicate character, feeling and a vast tissue of assumptions. Kushwant Singh’s narrative style is direct and unadorned. In a *Train to Pakistan*, he makes narration itself an echoing analogue of meaning and experience. Bhabhani Bhattacharya employs a wholly different narrative idiom and technique. By telling a single story he subdivides it into several subplots complementing each other. Manohar Malgonkar has a talent for lively narrative as he displays a sense of economy in detail and phrasing and writes in a strikingly British Indian English and admired narrative gusto and his plots are often taken from historical background.

Anita Desai went deep registering the disturbed lives of middle class women in an effectively poetic and evocative language. Arun Joshi, like Desai, explored the inner lives of unusual men. Later Deshpande and Kapur also recorded the sentiments and the sufferings of the domestic lives of the middle class women.
In the initial days, the stories and concepts were submerged in folklores and myths, written in many languages as India is always the land of tales. In the mid-nineteenth century, Raja Ram Mohan Roy had initiated social reforms and in the process, favored the English language for spreading the wealth of information and culture available in British publications. He is a master of Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic languages, believed that all renaissance knowledge was hoarded together mainly in the European languages. At first the Indians reacted with doubt towards the emergence of the English language, but later on they received it with open arms and English language was granted a special place in India.

The nineteenth century intellectuals began to pose rational questions on the conventional prejudices, doctrines and superstitions that prevailed in India. The impact of Western learning gave a new momentum to Indian renaissance, which led to the transformation of the Indian society. The restoration of Indian classical learning and the introduction and the study of European arts and sciences gave rise to an unprecedented awakening in India. For the first time in India, a middle class of intellectuals began to surface from the feudal society, which marked the rise to fervent nationalism. At this juncture, Indians struggled to articulate their ardent thoughts and feelings through whatever means available to them. Writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Swami Vivekananda,
Dinabandhu Mitra, and Saratchandra Chatterjee were charmed by the provincial patriotism and revived the regional languages. Meanwhile, others believed that the English rule had come to stay and consume their language. Only later on, they started using the language as a link language, giving rise to a new genre of Indian English, initially termed as Anglo-Indian literature.

The books like *The Rig Veda and the Upanishads*, *The Thirty Two Stories of the Throne*, Somadeva`s *Kathasaritsagara* and *Arthasastra* were translated into English. *Rajmohan`s Wife*, the first English novel in India was written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in 1864 followed by Lal Behari Dey`s *Govind Samant* (1876), Raj Lakshmi Devi`s *The Hindu Wife* (1876), Toru Dutt`s *Bianca* (1878) and many others.

The Indian English novel evolved as a subaltern conscious reaction to break away from the colonial literature. Hence the post-colonial literature in India witnessed a revolution against the idiom which even the colonial writers admired. Gradually the Indian English authors began employing the techniques of hybrid language and magic realism showered with native themes. Consequently, from a post-colonial era, Indian English literature got transformed into the modern and then the post-modern era. The saga of the Indian English novel therefore stands as the tale of changing tradition which was the story of a changing India. The obligation of the `foreigners` depicting India amidst their
writings were not needed anymore. Indian writers wanted to portray India through their own style of English which paved way for the beginning of the voyage and with time it gained maturity.

The burning social issues such as class conflict, gender discrimination, the rich poor divide, caste system, suppressive measures adopted by the upper class while dealing with the lower class have been highlighted in most of the novels. Novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Anita Desai, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala and Arundhati Roy have given voice to the voiceless women. Kamala Markandaya has given importance to the disastrous impact of industrialization on the rural people in her novels. The social realities characterizing the life in metropolises Delhi, Calcutta and Madras have been creatively articulated by Deshpande, Kapur and Shobhaa De in their novels. The post-Independence change in the attitude to women has led to the fortification of their status in the society. Now they are generally treated on par with men. Recently this concentration on the urban middle class life has become the prime concern of a majority of post-independence Indian English woman novelists. Of all these women writers, Deshpande’s writing is realistic and plain. As Jasbir Jain in her article “Gender and Narrative Strategy: Women Writers” notes that women writers “while evolving narrative strategies are faced with a double problem: how to step out of the
framework defined by men and patriarchal values; and how to identify and create a tradition of their own” (Jain 32)

Deshpande’s work focuses on the reality and truth of the lives of Indian women. She has described in an interview that her literary style is the one which is really a very simple and plain style, which rarely draws attention to it and believes that men and women have different notions and ideas while writing. They write differently and they write about varied subjects. Deshpande herself writes in English and her books are translated into Indian languages. She feels that writing in English has a dramatic effect on her writing style. Deshpande is the confident voice, which explores the individual and universal female psyche and she has gained reputation as a serious novelist with incredible potentials. Most of her protagonists are women who are educated and exposed to western ideas. Women of the present day society stand on the threshold of social change in an enviable position. They are intensely aware of the injustice mounted on them and their counterparts a generation ago. However, Deshpande does not believe that women are inferior beings who should remain passive and subservient. This awakening of the woman’s consciousness as portrayed by Deshpande in her novels deserves the extent of articulation of a woman’s point of view which needs to be assessed from a new perspective.
Deshpande's simple, realistic and transparent language neither draws attention to it nor confuses the reader in any way. It properly fits itself to all situations as her primary stress is upon the middle-class ethos and her language reflects this concern for she uses English of the middle class individual who knows English besides the mother tongue, and sometime the language is a little incorrect, by the standards of British English. This ‘middle-class English’ is a characteristic quality of Deshpande's work. The lives of the protagonists of Deshpande are without adventure for they take birth and get married and expire and the problems are those of any woman in real life and for them, marriage has become dull and monotonous with unwanted pregnancy or it has driven them towards an extra-marital relationship. One of the most important characteristics of Deshpande's art is the use of metaphors in the fiction. The recurring metaphors used in her fiction are ‘dark’, ‘sunlight’, ‘death’ and ‘life’. Though these metaphors are not too much in number, they have a very significant role to play in the plots. They clearly unmask the inner feelings of the minds of the protagonists and also the emotional waves in their hearts.

Deshpande uses first person narrative to register women’s protest against the male dominated society in the novel That Long Silence. She uses double narratives in The Dark Holds No Terrors to give a realistic portrayal of Saru’s inner self. Roots and shadows, her first novel, depicts the agony and suffocation
experienced by the protagonist Indu in a male dominated and tradition-bound society. *That Long Silence* is almost like a real life experience and it attains its trustworthiness from the fact that Jaya, the protagonist, is a well-educated person with a literary sensitivity.

In *That Long Silence* Deshpande tells about innocent bedtime tales told to children which made a delicate but stubborn impression upon their psyche. Jaya is scared to tell the fable of the foolish crow and the wise sparrow, which she had heard in her childhood to her children fearing that it, would distort their personalities. She uses the myths of Sita to articulate Jaya’s predicament. Kachru Braj confesses that ‘reduplication’ of words is found among Englishes other than American and British English (Braj 12) This is a typical repetition found in Deshpande’s writing and it is due to mother tongue interference of the characters that are typically Indian. The style makes the language appear more Indianized. Deshpande’s aim is to make the Indian readers feel at home reading her text. (Braj 78) The following instances confirm that she had achieved her objective:

'Yes, yes, of course, two daughters. (TLS 165)

Yes, yes...yes, I'm holding on.' (TLS 170)

'Yes, yes, go ahead, that's right, don't change your plans, the fourteenth is fine, yes, yes, yes...' (TLS 174)
'Don't, don't,' I cried out again, but it was no use; they could neither see me nor hear me. (TLS 175)

'You don't understand, you don't understand anything,' Rahul cried out. (TLS 131)

'No, no, don't.' (TLS 135)

No, no, why did I have to bring Appa into this? (TLS 150)

'No, no, not at all. (TLS 165)

No, no, this was nonsense - my 'writer's imagination' running away with me. (TLS 167)

No, no, no.... come home, I said. Rahul, listen, I'm in the Dadar flat, in Dadar,

‘Makarandmama's place, Dadar... Rahul come home...' (TLS 172)

Mieke Bal defines Narratology as the structuralist analysis of narrative and can specify in formal terms the ideological commitment, conscious or not, of a narrative text. Feminist narratology can identify gender-determined forms in traditional narrative and analyze feminist revision of narrative grammar. Ultimately, feminist narratology may help correct the ethnocentrism of narratology itself by clarifying that a certain dominant sense of story is culturally
determined. (Bal 89) *That Long Silence* serves as an interesting example within the Indian cultural context to test the authenticity of feminist narratological principles. Such an image from Indian women’s writing would also enable to deflect the accusation of Eurocentrism that is often levelled against feminist narratology. Indeed, *That Long Silence* speaks the language of feminist narratology to make an overtly eloquent comment on the practice of women’s writing. Kathy Mezei perceives the feminist narratological reflects over the existence of ‘a woman’s writing’ and ‘a female tradition’ and demands attention to “the context of how stories are told, by whom and for whom”. (Mezei 11) Significantly, these are the very questions that figure prominently on Deshpande’s agenda in *That Long Silence*.

In *Roots and Shadows*, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *That Long Silence*, Deshpande uses a narrative structure that does not progress chronologically. It moves back and forth thematically, thereby gradually narrating one incident after another till the whole story is revealed. *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, is all about male ego where the male refuses to play a second fiddle in married life. The next novel, *If I Die Today*, contains elements of detective fiction. The narrator, a young college lecturer, is married to a doctor, and they live on the campus of a big medical college and hospital. The arrival of Guru, a terminal cancer patient, disturbs the lives of the doctors and their families.
That Long Silence is about self-doubts and fears which Jaya undergoes till she asserts herself. The Binding Vine deals with the personal tragedy of Urmi, who is a clever, educated lecturer and a rebellious character and in this novel, she turns her attention on victims like Kalpana and Mira, victims of the lust of men and also the helplessness of women. In A Matter of Time, Deshpande for the first time enters into the world of metaphysical philosophy. It is about three women from three generations of the same family and the way they cope with the tragedy that overwhelms them. Small Remedies is about Savitribai Indorekar, the aging authority of Hindustani music, who avoids marriage and home in order to pursue her genius.

Deshpande’s writings hold a universal appeal that unquestionably germinates from her rootedness in day to day India. Her major concern emerges from our own environment and from our familiar world. It is like holding up a mirror to our own lives. In this era of verbal acrobatics and pretty packaging, Deshpande’s clear plain prose is genuine and bracing as she does not use superfluous words. This aesthetics in her writing can be understood by the depth of the content. She articulates her thoughts and ideas and transforms the very act of reading into a sharing experience. Readers encounter an intimacy, a kind of secret bonding with her as if she were speaking to them alone.
Deshpande’s heroines are stronger than the heroines of her contemporary writers. They refuse to sacrifice their individuality for the sake of upholding the traditional role models laid down by society for women and they attempt to resolve their problems by a process of temporary withdrawal. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita returns to her parent’s home in order to escape from her husband Manohar’s sadism which helps her to view her situation objectively. Besides, being merely a daughter, sister, wife or mother, she evolves into an individual with her own legitimate expectations of life.

In *That Long Silence*, Jaya undergoes great mental trauma because she has refused to go into hiding with her husband as an enquiry against his financial irregularities is on. Like the mythological character Gandhari, she kept her eyes shut to her husband’s illegal earning at office. Even her journalistic writings are circumscribed by her husband’s likes and dislikes and finally she is able to evaluate her expectations of life. After having rejected traditional role models, Deshpande’s protagonists display great strength and courage in evolving as their own role models as per the requirement of their social milieu. Her characters go through a process of self-examination before they reach self-actualization. Hence, Deshpande has been successful in creating strong women protagonists who refuse to get crushed under the weight of their personal tragedies, and face
life with great courage and strength. Comparatively, they appear to be more life-like and more akin to the educated, middle class, urban Indian women of today.

As far the narrative technique in *That Long Silence*, Deshpande avoids the simple technique of straightforward narration in the novel and employs the flash back method to draw her reader’s attention. The first chapter deals with the present, but the later chapters are more anachronic with the final chapter ending in the present. Shama Futehally writes: “It is a device which is useful either when some element of suspense is needed. For this novel chronologically clarity is essential as the reader already has to cope with an abundance of characters and their complex interactions”. (Futehally 66)

*That Long Silence* is very close to real life experience and achieves its credibility from the fact that the protagonist Jaya is a well-educated person possessing a literary sensitivity corresponding with her fictional role.

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Deshpande shifts the narrative from the first person to the third person narrative in every alternate chapter. The double narrative helps to lend great authenticity to the portrayal of Sarita’s inner self. Deshpande has commendably accomplished the task of giving a realistic portrayal of the mental trauma Sarita undergoes. In an interview to Lakshmi Holmstrom, she tells how she hit upon the idea of using double narrative:
The present is in the third person and the past is in the first person. I was doing it, throughout in the first. But that’s often a perspective I use in short stories – I wanted to be more objective. So, then I did it in the third. But it wouldn’t work at all, yet I really need not distance myself from the narrative in the present, otherwise it was going to be far too intense. And then I read an American novel by Lisa Alther where she uses this method. And the minute I came across her novel I thought let me admit it freely – Oh god, this is how I am going to do my novel. (Holmstrom 87)

Deshpande succeeds in the portrayal of Sarita’s mental state with remarkable objectivity and moreover, her art lies in amalgamating the past with the present impeccably through dreams, nightmares, flashback, reminiscences and the simple third person narration.

A close study of Deshpande’s novels reveals her deep insight into the plight of Indian women who feel smothered and fettered in a tradition-bound, male dominated society. She delineates her women characters in the light of their hopes, fears, aspirations and frustrations. They are aware of their strengths and limitations; but find themselves thwarted by the opposition and pressure from a society conditioned overwhelmingly by the patriarchal mindset. She
highlights their inferior position and the subsequent degradation in a male-dominated society. Deshpande’s women protagonists are victims of the prevalent uncultured gender discrimination first as daughter and later as wives. Although she has a small volume of literary works to her credit, her works have drawn great critical attention and acclaim for her sensitive and realistic representation of the Indian middle-class women. Deshpande’s sincere concern for women and her craft as a novelist is reflected strongly in all her novels for she is not against the institution of marriage, as her woman protagonists strive to make their marriages work in their endeavor to lead a meaningful existence.

Deshpande keeps her narratives female centered and gives an intimate insight into the psyche of the middle class Indian women who feel oppressed by their patriarchal socialization. She provides new ideals for better man-woman relationship, thereby broadening the scope of woman. She prescribes a balance between tradition and modernity as a working philosophy for the contemporary woman. To her, tradition is the values of harmony and co-existence that symbolize the Indian way of life, and modernity is the assertion of the independent individual identity. Deshpande feels that the woman must venture out of the familial framework to give full expression to her individuality and identity.
Deshpande’s novels are realistic depiction of the anguish and the conflict of the modern educated middle class women. Caught between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand, and self-expression, individuality and independence on the other, her protagonists feel lost and confused and explore ways to fulfill themselves as a human being. Deshpande’s concern and sympathy are essentially for the woman and she has given an honest portrayal of her fears, sufferings and disappointments. Apart from revealing the woman’s struggle to secure self-respect and self-identity, the author lays bare the multiple levels of oppression, including sexual oppression. The quest for identity of Deshpande’s protagonists gets largely accentuated due to their frustrating experiences born of the prohibitive nature of the Indian patriarchal Society.

In her novels, the male characters, namely husbands, lovers, fathers and other relations- display different aspects of patriarchy and oppression and she has constructed such motifs by employing the method of negation and affirmation. While the majority of husbands are patriarchal in their approach, the older men particularly the fathers are broad-minded. Surprisingly the male friends are ‘feminist’ in their approach and sympathize a lot with the protagonists a lot. Deshpande’s male characters only serve to enable the women characters to define their identities more effectively. Her protagonists are victims of the Indian patriarchy and after initial submission resist the oppressive situation, thereby reflecting the author’s view that a woman must assert herself within
marriage to preserve her identity. The heroines in Deshpande’s novels are on the road to self-discovery and usually some domestic crisis propels them in this quest.

The reader can see Deshpande as radical in using a language that appears like the 'stream of consciousness' technique. She unveils her precise observation in her bare functional and economic style. There is a shuttling back and forth in time that brings to light various stages of the development of the characters and the use of flashbacks is significant. In That Long Silence she begins the novel with blank pages, signifying the 'vacant spaces' or silences in the life of women that she is attempting to break by penning their stories. Her characters are in a state of flux, in the process of finding their true tradition.

Deshpande makes use of interior monologues and a sort of psychological introspection in order to reveal the workings of the ideas and thoughts of the characters. She uses the passive voice most of the time which is a typical Indian usage. Sometimes she expresses her ideas in lengthy, wordy and philosophic sentences, satiric in tone and content and she shows the influence of Western feminist writers like Virginia Woolf and Betty Friedan. There are quotations and allusions to Shakespeare, The Bible, Karl Marx, and from the Indian epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana in her works. She has experimented with writing mystery novels like Come Up and Be Dead and If I Die Today with its atmosphere of suspense. Deshpande uses contrasting, concrete images like 'brooding
darkness', 'walls of silences', 'stifling comfort' which are paradoxical, to render her meaning. She describes the relationship between extended and nuclear families and the characters involved in their power struggle in such family set ups. There is also a shift from the first person to the third person in her narration, for immediacy of effect.

Deshpande seems to have been influenced by writers like Chekhov, Tolstoy, Tagore and Dickens especially in *Come Up And Be Dead*, where images, symbols and metaphors are used profusely. For instance, Jaya's life with her husband in *That Long Silence* is represented with effective images and symbols such as "A pair of bullocks yoked together", "herself as a sparrow with her little ones", "protective and possessive", and the husband as "a sheltering tree" (TLS 7) She is a feminist theorist, in the sense that, she describes the predicament of mature married women and their problems after marriage and the silences of women, as well as the stories they choose to tell. She does not brazenly expose her views and has an indirect way of expressing her ideas through comparisons, but she is unsparing in her criticism. There is vagueness in her resolutions to the problems presented for her stories are open ended.

Like Deshpande, Kapur follows a unique style of writing and has a broad thematic focus. She has been consistently adhering to this norm right from the
time she published her first novel, *Difficult Daughters*. It has been said of her, and rightly so, that few writers have narrated the Indian middle class family with as much nuance and affection. Her novels are a kind of narrative on a woman’s incompatible marriage and resultant aggravation and the contemporary political turmoil in its historical context. The novels explore the complex terrain of the Indian family and reveal many issues that are deep rooted within the family such as the revolt against the age-old traditions, quest for identity, the tribulations of marriage and lastly the women’s struggle for her survival. The women’s question emerged essentially in the context of the identity crisis of the new educated middle class.

Kapur’s female characters are mostly educated, aspiring individuals confined within the limitations of a conservative society. Their education leads them to independent thinking for which their family and society become intolerant of them as they struggle between tradition and modernity. It is their individual struggle with family and society through which they plunge into a devoted effort to carve an identity for themselves as qualified women with flawless backgrounds. The novelist has portrayed her protagonists as women trapped in the conflict between the passions of the flesh and a yearning to be a part of the political and intellectual movements of the day. Kapur addresses many issues that are related to the middle class women. Whether or not a girl
has the right to make her own choices in life is a concern dragged this way and that, for a long time in our country. Facing equal assault from the chauvinists who declare that woman’s place is inside the house, and the feminists who condemn the idea of taking the husband’s surname after marriage, the idea finds a middle path here. There is after all a difference between possessing and protecting.

Kapur’s woman tries to be herself and yet does not wish to break up the family ties. Since many social reformers helped the women to cross the threshold of family life and move out into the outer world of freedom struggle and social reform, the woman is presented with varied opportunities not only today but also yesterday during freedom movement. Yet writing in 1998, Kapur, in her novels showcases women who try to establish their own identity. Kolodny proceeds to identify another feature of women’s writing as she points out:

Still another phenomenon I keep coming across in women’s writing is what I have labelled, for want of a better term, “inversion”—and it works in a number of complex ways. On the one hand, the stereotyped, traditional literary images of women—as, for example, the loving “Mom,” the “bitch,” the Sex Goddess—are being turned around in fiction, either for comic purposes, to explore their inherent absurdity, or, in other instances, to reveal their hidden
reality, though in new ways, not previously apprehended. On the other hand, there is a tendency to “invert” even more generalized traditional images and conventionalized iconographic associations so that they come to connote their opposites. (Kolodny 80)

The novels of Kapur are a sincere confession of a woman about her personality cult in the personal allegory of a bad marriage. In a realistic way, she has described the Indian male perception of woman as a holy cow even though women are not very interested in history and those in power trying to twist and turn historical facts to serve their own purposes. As a writer of the new generation in an atmosphere of the nation’s socio–political flux, Kapur has recorded the truth in her narratives. With zeal to change the Indian male perception, she describes the traumas of her female protagonists from which they suffer, and perish in for their triumph and her novels deal with women’s issues in the present context.

In its stylistic devices, Difficult Daughters presents Virmati’s plight in a straightforward, startling and evocative manner. The uses of Punjabi idioms and phrases manifest the linguistic color and contour of the novel and make it a wonderful work of art. Gajendra Kumar accurately observes: “Indo-English is developing a distinct character and identity as distinct as American English, British English, and Australian English. Style in a novel generally depends upon
the writer’s settled conviction of the single, unambiguous nature of his materials and of the novel’s adequacy as vehicle for their serious presentment”. (Kumar 112)

Kapur also has the ability to provide a thorough understanding of her characters without talking about them. She shows this through her presentation as to exactly who they are by the way they behave. So the philandering wife is lovely to look at, but instead of sympathizing her isolation one could feel a disdainful repugnance for her shallowness and self-absorption, even without a single negative word of description. However, in Custody, Kapur presents with a very strong narrator's voice and at times even derogatory and sometimes it is abrupt and grammarless but it is stylish and suitable to a speedy life style.

In A Married Woman, the main character is driven by a powerful physical relationship with a much younger woman. Due to that, she risks losing the acquisitions of the conventional marriage and safe family. The novel raises the controversial issue of homosexual relationship in a challenging way as gay and lesbian relationships are not mere fancies. This is getting more and more visible in modern societies though one may or may not accept it. A Married Woman displays a bold new dimension in Indian novels in English as it portrays another form of relationship. No force, no tricks, just plain love for Astha and Pipeelika who love each other and their physical intimacy is a proof of that. This makes everyone feel for them as they bring joy to each other’s life and treat each other with utmost love till situations separate them.
Kapur, frankly depicts the love affair between two women, but less attention has been paid to the historical and political context in which that relationship develops. The tale unfolds powerfully and explores how, in a still-traditionalist India entering the age of globalization, evolving personal relations on the micro social level are shaped by wider historical forces, yet can in their turn reshape that same history in an adumbration, potentially utopian even if partial and temporary, of new and more diverse forms of human relationship.

In her interview with Nivedita Mukherjee, Kapur articulates: “it is an attempt to inject an element of artistic and emotional coherence. Actually a relationship with a woman does not threaten a marriage as much as a relationship with a man.” (Mukherjee 59) Kapur has remained very truthful in depicting the women and the challenges they face in their personal, professional, religious and socio-political levels.

Kapur’s *Home* quite fascinatingly, if not very eloquently, shows the choking closeness and destructive limitations of Indian family values. It is a closet dark world where any hint of individual expression is swiftly trampled to death, to be substituted with deadened conformity. But despite the forlorn lives of its characters, this novel has an undertone of humor that comes across effortlessly, an attribute that must be traced to the easy style in which Kapur frames her sentences and to the uncomplicated narrative in which she structures her plots.
Like Jane Austen, Kapur also throws in some of her own comedy of manners as she very seriously describes in elaborate lengths the absurdities of traditions of middle-class housewives who have nothing better to do than to force young unmarried daughters to observe hunger-fasts for the long life of their future husbands.

Kapur’s talent lies at gently pushing the reader into the heads of her female protagonists. She manages to do so in *The Immigrant* too as she also provides a complex, if more ironic, portrait of the men in this novel, particularly Ananda with his unacknowledged sexual limitations: "He knew he still had miles to go before he reached his goal of pounding some woman to sexual pulp, but with marriage, he had gained in confidence. One day he might try again with a white woman. He loved his wife, but he didn’t want to feel that she was the only one in the world he could have sex with". (*The Immigrant* 283) However, while Nina comes across as the deeper character in many ways, her negotiation of Ananda’s ‘limitations’ and the immigrant’s ‘possibilities’ are best left to the reader to savour for neither Ananda nor the other men in the novel are reduced to caricatures. Kapur is, in her own way, a generous writer and Tabish Khair aptly declares:

Kapur is a careful writer. Both in terms of language and structure, she takes few risks, and the perils she takes are carefully calibrated. Kapur’s subject matter in *The Immigrant*, too, remains within the
domain of ordinary middle class experience. And yet her novels are surprisingly absorbing. They are read not just by thousands of ordinary readers, they can also provide much substance to literary critics, mostly from the gender perspective. She is what literary critics generally call as a talented storyteller, but unlike some other such ‘storytellers’, her deceptively simple narratives also engage subtly with issues. (Khair 4)

Like her other novels, this novel is about middle-class Indian immigrants in the ‘West’. Kapur uses a linear narrative, something that has come to be disturbingly associated with Indian English ‘women’s writing’ over the years. *The Immigrant* is a novel with a straight, broad, seemingly placid narrative flow, under whose surface lurk the currents of significant and, at times, disturbing issues. (Khair 5)

Kapur in *Custody* has a constant and almost poetic emotional tone, making this piece of fiction more than a social commentary and a true story of modern marriage that exists around us. Kapur writes about the labyrinth of women’s sexual experiences in order to interpret the multifold figures of violation that affect the body as well as the mind. She uses women’s body as a device to inspect certain indirectly constructed social determinants that deprive woman’s rights over her body. *Custody* set in the early 1990s examines the problems that creep into a middle class family with the overflow of money. The women aren't
particularly spectacular, ambitious or successful, but what Kapur brings out with sensitivity and perception is the conflict that arises when traditional Indian values that women are nurtured on come in contact with other worlds. She also exposes how courts and the legal systems delay and cause difficulties further in a fraught custody issue. Kapur's subtle narrative style is quite enthralling, and she writes with great simplicity that evokes sympathies with all the characters. According to Mithu Banerji: “Kapur’s book reveals the unimagined uncertainties of matrimony. The wife’s sense of suffocation, the husband’s fear of loneliness and the constant shifting of the children, like commodities, from one home to the other, are evoked with painstaking sincerity”. (Banerji 135)

Kapur is primarily concerned with the problems of the recently emerging urban middle class. The female protagonists of her novels protest against male domination and the marginalization of woman. Man has dominated woman to his will, used to promote his sexual gratification but never has he desired to elevate her to her genuine rank. He has done all he could do enslave her mind. A woman is a woman, and a woman she must remain but not a man’s shadow self, ‘an appendage’, an auxiliary and the unwanted and neglected other. A woman is held to represent the otherness of man, his negative. Kapur supported this idea that a woman is never regarded as an autonomous being since she has always been assigned a subordinate and relative position in our society. More than half
of the population of the world is made of women but she is not treated on par with man despite innumerable evolutions and revolutions. She has the same mental and moral power, yet she is not recognized as his equal. In such conditions, the question of searching her identity is justified. Actually in this male dominated society, she is wife, mother, sister and home maker and she is expected to serve, sacrifice, submit and tolerate each ill against her peacefully.

The individual self has very little recognition in the patriarchal society and so self-effacement is her normal way of life. The illustration of Sita, Savitri and Gandhari are always expected to be followed by her. But the noticeable point is that these ideal women existed only in epics, they were princesses and queens and much far from the pains and sufferings in modern world in which modern woman has no identity of her own. She lives for others and breathes for others and the situation becomes more deadly when we take it in the Indian context where women must defer to her husband and make the marital home pleasant for him.

The novels of Kapur voice effectively the sentiments of women and their self-introspections. Virmati, in *Difficult Daughters*, Astha in *A Married Woman*, Nisha in *Home* and Nina in *Custody*, are all searching for their grounds interestingly from a wrong threshold. All of them first fall in love and the search for the self-identity becomes the second thought. The facts raised by Kapur are
worth research and inquiry. She delineates an ideal image of women who amid all thick and thins maintain their chastity and humanity and do not leave anyone destitute. Kapur’s novels are full of instances of Indianisation of vocabulary, loan translation, use of repetition and linguistic creativity with regard to Indian English. She voices her joys and hopes by using colorful words of colloquial Punjabi and creates a wonderful cultural context for her novel.

The source of high readability can also be accounted for in terms of Kapur’s use of code-switching and code-mixing devices. The high lucidity of Difficult Daughters is also facilitated by the narrative technique used in the text. The major part of the story is told by the author herself at she appears to be omnipresent and does not take part in the story. This type of narrator is called heterodiegetic. Martin Gray explains the literary terms heterodiegetic and homodiegetic as “A heterodiegetic narrator does not take part in the narrated action. Only a very small part is narrated by Ida, Virmati’s daughter, who is a participant also. A narrator of this type is labelled as homodiegetic. A homodiegetic narrator is a character in the narrated world”. (Gray 82) Ida starts narrating the tale with a very cryptic statement: “The one thing I had wanted was not be like my mother”. (DD 1) From this very point the readers get curious ‘to explore, and analyze why she did not like to be like her mother. Surprisingly enough, the book ends as it began with the angry Ida’s comment: “This book
weaves a connection between my mother and me, each word a brick in a mansion I made with my head and my heart. Now live in it, Mama, and leave me be. Do not haunt me any more”. (DD 259)

Kapur is the Indian writer who prefers reality to magic realism and recreates an intimate world where Gee Maggie rightly comments “family groups sleep in the open air on the roof and wash themselves in the yard where love making is furtive and urgent because another wife may be listening and women’s lives move to a complex choreography of cooking, washing, weaving and mending, growing, picking, chopping and blending”. (Maggie 121)

Kapur is much concerned about the language she uses. In fact, her consciousness in using the vocabulary is found from her statement on Custody in an interview to Neha Dixit, “It’s my longest novel till date 109,000 words. I am an obsessive word counter”. (Dixit 45)

Kapur is quite distinct from her contemporaries as she has sufficiently brought regional influences in her writings showcasing the prominence of Indianization in the individuals. Kapur’s novels include a number of Hindi and Punjabi words, phrases and expressions and her influence in this respect is attested by the fact that since then progressively more works written in English by Indian authors have incorporated semantic items from the diverse languages of India.
India is the country of many languages and Kapur has presented a view of authentic India, inhabited by all regional people varying in their languages. Some of the examples from the text are:

with all the breads she could make, puris with spicy gram inside, luchis big as plates, kulchas, white and long, tandoori rotis, layers of flaky flour, parathas, crisp and stuffed. With morrabas, never soggy, and dripping juicy sweet. .....With sherbets of khas, roses, and almonds, with ....lassi....With barfis made of nuts and grains....With papad, ....the ones to be fried with dal.....With thread spun, with cloth woven, with durries, small stitched carpets, and phulkaris, with pyjama kurtas, shirts, and salwar kameezes. (DD 62-63)

‘achcha achacha, sorry. One for Vijay-one for Chacha-one for Chachi-one for Didi-one for Dada-....’

‘Arre, why? He is your Bhaiya...’ (Home 60)

“In the evening the men came home with kulcha-cholla, dahi bhalla, and rasmalai...” (Home 93)

Kapur reveals a real picture of the society by the treatment of the language and delineation of the characters and this is what impresses the
readers. As Khuman articulates, “Social Realism is an approach in literature that attempts to describe life without idealization or romantic subjectivity. It gives the impression of “recording” or “reflecting” the actual way of life in a particular society”. (Khuman 78) Through her Indianized language Kapur emphatically presents the real India as perceived by the common man.

Deshpande and Kapur have preferred to use their own style of language, which integrates the idioms, metaphors and the vocabulary in order to make their characters very prominent. They have discussed the sensibilities of women with a daring portrayal of their strong defiance against patriarchal domination and a clarion call for the protection of their suffrage. The final chapter summarizes the feminine sensibilities of both the writers, Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur, as identified by the researcher.

Chapter - VII

SUMMATION

“The true meaning of feminism is this: to use your strong womanly image to gain strong results in society”. - Pamela Anderson

The place of women today is no longer an issue confined to the position of women within the family or their rights to equality with men in different aspects of social life. It is part of the total, far broader domain regarding the direction of