

## CHAPTER III

### SUBMISSIVE AND ASSERTIVE WIVES

One of the greatest blessings of a woman is to become a wife of a professionally well-placed man through a traditionally arranged marriage. Then, she is to settle in a safe and secure marital life for her happy and prosperous future. Becoming a wife of a man is thus every woman's second assigned status in life after crossing the first status of a daughter. She marries the man whom her parents select as her husband. As a married woman, she leaves her parents and enters into the household of her husband as a wife as well as a daughter-in-law. It is her duty to see that she preserves peace and happiness in the household of her husband.

As a wife, she should understand the nature of her husband, accept him for what he is, and change herself according to the prevailing situations in the house of her husband. She should never try to change her husband and others to her way of thinking. She should follow his way and praise him then and there for what good he has done to the family. She should not be a fault-finder in her actions. She must be a wife of good understanding, affectionate and loving, and very co-operative. If she possesses all these virtues, she will become an embodiment of womanhood. As a wife of an exemplary character:

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and she does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed and her husband

praises her ‘many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.’

(Prov. 31: 26-31)

A woman being a good wife mainly depends upon the circumstances in the house of her husband and the positive attitudes of the members of his family. She goes to a strange house to live forever as the wife and daughter in-law and so it is the sole responsibility of all the in-laws and her husband to keep her happy and comfortable. Otherwise, the home of her husband will be a hell on the earth. Every wife has many virtues inherent in her:

As a wife, she is worth far more than rubies . . . She brings only good, not harm, all the days of her life . . . She gets up while it is still dark and she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls . . . She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hand to the needy. When it snows, she has no fear for her household for all of them are clothed in scarlet. (Prov. 31: 10-21)

As a wife, she should see that all these virtuous qualities get revealed in her dedication to the marital life and the household.

Nowadays, both the traditional and modern wives can never reach the idealistic and exemplary status because of their individual and independent conduct. They change their characteristic qualities according to changing situations and the attitudes of the people with whom they co-exist. They always appear to be opportunistic and self-centered and sometimes, they become the silent spoiler of the happiness of the entire house. They fail to realize that “marital adjustment is the state in which there is an overall feeling of happiness and satisfaction in the hearts of both the man and his wife during their marital life” (qtd.in Fatima 108).

All those married women who are traditionally brought up from their childhood lead their marital life within the limits of well established conventions. They think twice before they do anything and when they execute, they carry it out only with the consent of their husbands. They do not become emotional if anything happens quite contrary to their expectations and plans. They never think of anything other than their families and their welfare. They make their life as one of genuine love, happiness, amicability, adjustment and sacrifice. Such wives are perfect ones and for being so, they are duly recognized and respected in the society. They accept whatever untoward happens to them and live silently without making any grumbling about such happenings. They feel blessed when they think that God has given them the earthly avatars only to act as dutiful helpers to their husbands.

As wives cum helpers, all traditional wives are well aware that catering to the needs of their husbands and those who are near and dear to them is their one and only earthly obligations. They carry out their assigned duty submissively, positively and happily. They always charm their husbands not through external appearance but through internal beauty:

They do not let their beauty come from outward adornment, such as arranging the hair, wearing gold jewelry and putting on fine apparel. Instead, they make their inner selves [heart], which is the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, become more precious [in the eyes of their husbands].

(1.Pet. 3:3-4)

It has been their regular life since the dawn of civilization. But the advent of highly educated and professionally well placed modern women under the guise of New

Women has changed even the mentality of the educationally advanced and traditional women. As a result, they take tradition, culture, and faithful familial and marital life for granted in order to enjoy their independence.”Through the violations of all norms of morality and womanliness, all New Women turn out to be the deep rooted and indelible scars on anything that is good and virtuous” (Amalraj 7).

Modern women as wives are totally a different lot in their thoughts, words and deeds from the traditional ones. Their world is not their home but the world outside their homes where they meet men and women other than those of their families and mingle with them freely. Some women are more than equal with regard to their professional status. Hence, they are always governed by their ego, which in turn determines their attitudes and behaviour at home and in the society. They also think of themselves, their advancement and fulfillment of their personal desires, besides their duties to their husbands. Just like their ego reigning supreme in their hearts, their emotions are governing their attitudes and accordingly their behaviour is determined. Each of such women does not want to be addressed that she is the wife of so and so. Instead, she likes to be given an important individual identity such as “she is a famous doctor in medicine and the District Collector is her husband.”

Katrina Onstad, a Canadian journalist and novelist, has expressed her own experiences as a wife. She has also revealed her individual feelings in her article entitled *Can a Modern Woman be a Wife?* What she has said about her real recognition of identity as a wife is quite applicable to all modern wives. The marital life of Katrina is one of pure happiness and she finds her husband fantastic. She does not experience any unpleasantness during her marital life too. But she feels quite upset at not being

identified as an individual as long as she is with her husband outside her home. She is always identified only with the identity of her husband. She is against being addressed as the wife of so and so. Hence, she does not like the word “wife” because she feels the word becomes itchy and ill-fitting:

When I am with my husband, all his colleagues cannot but take notice of my presence because of his individual identity. Looking at me, they address me saying, ‘Oh, you the wife.’ When they brand me as his wife, they do this with a smile of tolerance, even kindness, but not with any kind of excitement. Hence, each time I am branded as a wife with the identity of my husband, the word ‘Wife’ eclipses all of my other individual and professional identities: Writer! Runner! Mother! Parking - ticket fighter! No further investigation is required: Wife is my beginning and end, alpha and omega. (11)

This is the feeling with which all modern married women lead their marital life. They do not want to be mere shadows of their husbands. They decide themselves what they should do and their decisions are made on the basis of their emotional selfishness. If they feel that they are ignored, they become inscrutable in their behaviour.

Every modern wife knows that she is equal to her husband in educational and professional status. Hence, she expects her independent individuality to be respected and recognized. If her expectations boomerang without bringing any fulfillment as she wishes, she feels emotionally upset, raises her voice of protest and tries to make it heard through her rebellious attitudes and behaviour. While doing so, she does not mind about the consequences of her deeds. She looks forward to the fulfillment of her personal

desires through her independent actions and if they are fulfilled, she remains satisfied with.

In this chapter, the wife characters of Manju Kapur's novels such as Kasturi, Virmati, Ida and Ganga from *Difficult Daughters*, Astha from *A Married Woman*, Nina from *The Immigrant* and Shagun and Ishita from *Custody* have been taken for critical analysis. This chapter has highlighted how these characters in their assigned status remain as submissive and assertive wives and behave expressively in their familial situations. This chapter has further explained how their behaviour turns to be quite contrary to the expectations of men and other women at home. This chapter has also pointed out what kind of modus operandi each wife character has followed to assert her individuality.

Kasturi as a wife was a voiceless being and 'Tradition' was her name. She was very submissive and she danced to the tunes of her husband all the time and in all the situations. She had never said no to his marital sexual relationship nor did she show any traces of dissent to his desire. As his obedient wife, she cooperated with him during their love making. Her attitudes as a traditional wife led her to become the mother of eleven children both female and male but she failed in her motherly duty to her children. Being traditional, she was tacit and patient.

As a wife, Kasturi acted as per the desire of her mother and that of the other family members in her husband's household. This kind of attitude was expected from Kasturi in her husband's family and from her mother. She did everything as expected without any traces of disobedience and non-cooperation. Moreover, it was her belief

that a wife's duty was to beget children and to remain submissive. In short, she became only as a child producing machine in large scale:

She [Kasturi] could not remember a time when she was not tired and when her feet and legs did not ache. Her back curved in towards the base of her spine, and carrying her children was a strain [unbearably] even when they were very young. (*DD 7*)

Kasturi's incessant pregnancy for ten times had resulted in her getting physically very weak. Without minding her physical exhaustion, she became pregnant for the eleventh time too. There was a limit to everything including her continuous pregnancy. Only during her eleventh pregnant state, she voiced her anger to Virmati but not to her husband and others. She also asserted her individuality only to her daughter and not to the other members. She should have expressed her concern to her husband but she did not. She should have controlled herself and her husband for frequent pregnancy but she did not:

If she had avoided continuous pregnancy, she would have taken herself towards the goal of her freedom. Her avoidance would have given her equal status on par with her man and both being equal would have striven for human emancipation. (*Sanger 4*).

Her traditional brought up, her lack of proper education, and her ignorance of the ways of the world had placed her in an irrecoverable predicament at her husband's home.

Kasturi attached more importance to the desires of her body that was filled with only weakness than to her soul, which was armed with firmness. Her weakness lay in her satisfying the sexual needs of her husband and so she unwisely suffered. She did not

enjoy any other happiness and carry out any other activity other than being a very submissive wife to her husband. She should have used her brain to avoid a situation of her own creation but she did not. In this situation, she had no right to question others. She had miserably failed to comprehend why God had given her body with a soul:

Thou {daughter] should realize that thy parents have given thee a body and have furnished it with weakness; but God who has given thee a soul has armed it with resolution. If thou use thy soul instead of thy body, thou art wise and if thou art wise, thou art happy. (Akhenaton 5)

Her non-realization of this fact led her to cultural suffering. It resulted in her becoming angry and she directed her anger to Virmati thoughtlessly. She should have shown her gratitude to Virmati for acting as the second mother to all her children. Instead, she targeted her daughter and burst out her feelings on her for anything and everything. She was also an indirect motivation for Virmati that she should not be like her mother in her status as a wife but she should be different in her marital life.

Virmati's role as a wife would have been better and happier if she had been the only wife of her husband Harish Chandra. Since she became his second wife, her marital life was a bed of thorns and not of roses. She had lost all her assertive qualities as soon as she married him. She was first ostracized by her family for her unconventional act. She should have opposed the attitudes of her family to her and established her individuality assertively but she did not. Then, she went unrecognized and affronted in the house of her husband's family. Gridhar, the son of Harish Chandra born to his first wife, showed his disrespect to Virmati because she had entered his house as the second wife of his father. Pointing out his finger towards her, he asked his

father irritatingly, “Who is this grand lady? Send her away” (*DD* 208). On hearing his words, she felt very bad about her position in the house. She was also emotionally offended at his rude behaviour. But she could not behave aggressively as she had behaved as a daughter.

Virmati became conscious of her loss of individuality and assertion. She looked distressed greatly when her new identity as the second wife was taken for granted. But it was too late for her to set right the wrong she had committed. However, she understood her situation and felt that what she had done could not be undone. Even there was no use on her part wishing that she had not married him. She had to adjust herself to her new situation with her new status. In spite of adjustment, she could not enjoy any freedom in her husband’s house. Neither did she feel happy there. She was not allowed to carry out her wifely duty to her husband such as cooking, or washing his clothes. She never understood the words of her husband when he informed her that he did not want a washer woman but only a companion. He also told her that she should allow his first wife to have her kitchen for herself since she had him forever. She could feel as a free individual only in his presence and with him.

Ganga, the first wife of Harish Chandra, along with her grown up children treated Virmati as someone unwanted and unnecessary intruder. His grown up children hated her like anything for having shared the love of their mother as the second wife. They also went past Virmati as if she were a non-entity. Virmati had miserably failed to give voice to her rights as the rightful second wife. In such situations, her actual status in the household was no way better than that of a “pariah . . . with every averted look” (*DD* 198) of the inmates of the house. She had to live both with compromise and

adjustment, and without any identity of her own. She had to go on living like this by keeping in mind the words of her husband, “It will take time to adjust, dearest. Naturally you feel strange in their midst” (*DD* 212). In this way, the character Ganga adjusts herself in her familial way of life and thus the term ‘Polyphony’ can be very well applied which bring harmonious situation in the family.

As an illicit lover, Virmati thought of her personal interests only but as a woman, she never thought of another woman’s predicament in Ganga. Achievement of Virmati as the wife of Harish Chandra for her individual identity through legal marriage could be considered as her victory. But it was nothing but “a hollow victory, mirrored in her final fulfillment of her desire” (Poojathalani 13). Her act of marrying the married man had been condemned socially and it had led her to be an object of humiliation and misery in the house. By being selfish, she had defied the established familial relationship. However, she had her voice heard by breaking the social taboo. Gur Pyari Jandial has confirmed this view of Virmati, though it was viewed as the loss of her individuality:

Virmati’s attempt to give a complete fulfillment to her heart’s desire was a total failure. Yet her struggle for voicing her rights should not be considered as a mistake. But what mattered most was that she had at least made an attempt to break the patriarchal mould and the attempt itself was a great achievement in the forties because no one had ever dreamt of it. (11).

Virmati consoled herself with the hope that if she became a mother of his child, every unpleasant situation in which she was placed would change for her good. As she had wished, she became pregnant but unfortunately her unborn baby died in her womb itself

due to natural abortion. It looked like adding fuel to the fire of her predicament. Her abortion made her think that she was punished for having possessed the husband of another woman for herself and for having aborted the first child herself. The Professor as a husband should have been her consoling friend but he was not like a friend in need and he was only a partner to her in sexual relationship.

Virmati lost her assertive individuality and turned out to be very quiet accepting everything that had happened to her. She was very happy when she had been her husband's secret lover during her education. After her marriage, her marital happiness appeared far from reality. Since she looked dejected and lonely, Harish Chandra motivated her to pursue Philosophy at Lahore for a change. At once, Virmati found her husband's motivation as a way out of her trauma and left her house of emotional torture. At Lahore, she felt completely a free individual and yet she could not erase from her mind inimical attitudes of Ganga and others. Her roommate Swarnalatha compelled her to take part in the protest against the British rule so that she could, for the time being, escape from her emotional turmoil. She had miserably failed to assert her individuality with the reply that her husband would not like her involvement in politics. This reply was quite unbecoming of a real character seen in her when she was a daughter.

Since Virmati's stay at Lahore for her study, meeting between husband and wife had become rare. She also stopped visiting her husband's home at Amritsar frequently and in this way, she displayed her voice of individuality. She decided against visiting her husband because "she had a rival in Ganga whom she did not want to see" (*DD* 235), "she was the wife, whereas Ganga was the pronoun" (*DD* 241), and she would not be allowed to be with her husband all alone. Hence, she did not feel very sad

for being away from her husband but her husband did. Her long absence created a love longing in his heart. He wanted her to come back but she emotionally refused to concede to his request. Her refusal to carry out his desire showed that she could still feel assertive and her assertive nature could be due to her feeling that she was not in the house along with Ganga and others.

However, the partition riots became a blessing in disguise for both Virmati and her husband. She returned to him because he was all alone. Ganga and her sons were packed off to Kanpur for security reasons. Instead of feeling happy to be with him and minding her own business as a wife in her privacy, Virmati started behaving thoughtlessly. She found the belongings of Ganga in the room of her stay with Harish Chandra. She did not treat Ganga's things as just things. She found in the things Ganga herself. Seeing them had affected her mind greatly and such things reminded her of Ganga's animosity too. Hence, she removed the belongings of Ganga from her bedroom to the dressing room. Feeling free of her emotional torture, she began to act like a newly married woman. For the first time and in the absence of Ganga, Virmati carried on her duty as a house wife and his bed partner without any inhibition. Her being together with her husband all alone paved the way for her to become pregnant for the third time. Her pregnancy had resulted in her becoming a fruitful wife and the mother of a female child Ida.

Virmati's many years of studying and working alone away from her family did not give her any self-confidence and independence. She had to depend either upon her own family or that of her husband. She had broken from the old prison of her natural house, when she married Harish Chandra thinking that she had established her

independent identity as a married woman. But in doing so, she had unwittingly locked herself in a new prison, the house of her husband, where she had lost her identity, individuality and independence. Simon de Beauvoir's view of an attitude of a woman also mirrors the true status of Virmati:

Man can think of himself without woman. But woman cannot think of herself without man. She has to simply obey what her man decrees . . . She appears essentially as a sexual being to the male. For him, she is sex . . . absolute sex, no less. (171)

By being the second wife, Virmati was simply the shadow of her husband. All her rebellious attitudes, which she had showed before her marriage, had disappeared soon after her marriage. Her voice of rebellion, which was the strength of her character before her marriage, had lost its power soon after her marriage. She could never assert her power or freedom as a wife. Had she married a bachelor, she would not have met with unpleasant experiences in her marital life but the pity was that she had married a married man.

As Virmati had lived as a daughter, she established her individuality by doing what she wanted and what her inner voice dictated her. After her marriage, she had lost her sting. However, she died as the wife of Harish Chandra. On the verge of her death, she revealed her voice of individuality and left it to her daughter Ida to fulfill her last desire. Her final desire was an emotional one and she asked her daughter to donate all her organs after her death but she should not invite any mourners to her place of burial:

When I die, I do not want to be mourned in any way as used to be done. No traditional rituals and no rites of any kind as a mark of my death. I want my

entire body to be donated like eyes, heart, kidneys, and other organs, which will be of great use to the needy. That way someone will value me after I have gone. . . . When I die, I want no shor-shorr. I don't want a Chauth. I don't want an uthala. I want no one called, no one informed. (*DD 1*)

However, Ida did not follow her mother's instructions but her own inner voice because she cremated her mother's body with all organs intact. Thus, Virmati's request went unheeded in the end and she was not alive to know the non-implementation of her last wish.

Ida as the wife of Prabhakar never had any kind of strained relationship with him. Her marital life went on very smoothly as she had expected till she became pregnant. The moment she started showing the signs of pregnancy, her husband behaved strangely. Prabhakar gave voice to his feeling of individuality when he forced her to abort the child in its fetus stage itself. Ida did not know the reason behind his insistence on the abortion of the unborn child. She tried her level best to know his heart but she failed miserably. She knew that she was his legal wife and it was he who had made her pregnant. It was he who forced her to abort and so she did without any resistance. But she was greatly confused at his behaviour.

Ida felt uncomfortable and disturbed at her husband's strange wish. During night time, she became restless and so she did not have any sleep. Keeping awake, she started thinking about his assertive nature for aborting the child and the loss of hers to keep the child alive:

She had been keeping awake at nights on her bed, wondering why he wanted her to have an abortion. She looked worried not knowing whether he was

having an affair, and whether he did not have any genuine love towards her as his wife. She looked confused why he did not want a baby from her. (*DD* 144)

Ida knew that if her mother had heard that Prabhakar was forcing his wife to terminate the new life within her through abortion, she would not have allowed it to happen. Since her mother as a pregnant wife knew the pain of abortion, Ida did not like to put her mother in trauma again. Therefore, she did not bring it to her notice. She had gone for the abortion as per the wishes of her husband silently. After the bitter experience of abortion, she began to wonder how much the death of the fetus formed in her mother's womb would haunt her and how she would go through the trauma all alone:

I knew Mother and her feeling of pain when she was to have an abortion herself and it would have been a painful experience. Prabhakar insisted on me to have my new life in the form of foetus inside her womb aborted. When I denied that incipient little thing in my belly, he sowed the seeds of our [marital] break up. (*DD* 156)

Ida did not accept her fate as her mother reconciled herself to hers. She had even gone one step forward to assert her individuality. As Prabhakar did not like his child to be born, she had firmly decided to throw him away from her life. Therefore, she had terminated her marital accord with her husband soon after the termination of the life of her unborn child. In taking this decision, she not only showed her voice of individuality but also made it heard in her divorce. She had never brought her marital breakup, which was the natural consequence of abortion, to the knowledge of her mother. Had she

informed her mother that she had to abort at the behest of Prabhakar; the mind of her mother would have been greatly affected:

Mother, I never told you this because you thought that Prabhakar was a wonderful match for me and I was glad that in the choice of my husband I had pleased you. Since you had enough of your own, I should not burden you with my heart aches. (*DD* 156-157)

Ida would have remained with her husband even if she had been physically abused. She left him once for all because of his oppression on her emotion and gender culture. She decided to remain single till her death. She never bothered about gender oriented violence to a woman like her for being single. She had mustered courage to brave her situations. However, she could not escape from the sympathetic attitudes of all those near and dear to her:

I know that my relatives feel sorry for me. I am without [my] husband, a child or parents. I can see the ancient wheels of my divorce, still grinding and clanking in their heads, He [Prabhakar] was such a nice man . . . so educated . . . But with Virmati and as a mother, it is not so strange that such a thing should happen. (*DD* 3)

No woman would leave her husband on that account because she can beget as many children as she likes, and as and when her husband wants. Ida thought otherwise and she did not want to repeat the kind of life her mother lived as the wife of the Professor, the married man. One redeeming virtue in Ida was that she did not opt for a second marriage after her voluntary divorce. She did not also enter into any extra-marital relationship with another married man or unmarried man. She was really a radical

feminist in giving a concrete shape to her inner voice without violating any traditional norms.

Ida knew that her mother had illicit sexual relationship with her father even before marriage. As a result, she got pregnant, had to abort it, and then married him to save her face. In doing so, her mother lost her individuality in the midst of the members of her husband's first wife and died an insignificant death. Ida wanted to be different in voicing her individuality and in asserting her independence. As a result of her forced abortion, she began to lead her life as a childless divorcee and a single woman. Thus, as wives, both Virmati and Ida had two different views about their life. However, Ida came to know of her mother and her marital life whereas Virmati did not know the reasons for Ida's assertion of her individuality for remaining single:

The one thing Ida has wanted is not to be like her mother. Now she is gone and Ida stares at the fire rising from the shriveled body of her dead mother Virmati. Ida looks dry-eyed, laden, half-dead herself, while her relatives cluster around the funeral pyre and stand weeping. (*DD 1*)

The position of Ganga as the first wife of Professor Harish was different from that of Kasturi. She became his wife when she was just three years old and when the child marriage was in vogue. She never had any education but she learnt the art of managing her house from her mother. Until she reached the age of twelve, she remained with her husband. After that age, she stayed with her mother and learned all the skills of cooking and sewing from her. She became a very good house maker but being an illiterate, she was unfit to be a suitable companion to her intellectual husband. Till her husband married Virmati and brought her as his second wife to his house, Ganga did not

say anything nor did she assert her right as his first and legal wife. Even after his marriage with Virmati, she continued to have great respect for him. Moreover, she felt content when “her husband continued to be Ganga’s public statement of wifedom. Her bindi and her bangles; her toe rings and her mangalsutra managed to suggest that he was still her god” (*DD 278*).

Only after the arrival of Virmati to her house, Ganga as his wife began to show her voice of assertion. She never allowed Virmati into her kitchen, a territory, meant for her. She alone cooked food for her husband and served him. She only washed his clothes and she never permitted Virmati to touch his. She was also very bold to raise her protest when Virmati’s plan of going for higher studies with the consent of the Professor. When she denied Virmati admission into her territory, her act could have been accepted as her right to a certain extent. Virmati also respected her feelings and her rights, and she had never created problems to Ganga in her household duties.

Ganga had asserted individuality in the household. She had also very assertively displayed her rights against Virmati going for further studies at Lahore with the consent of Harish Chandra. Ganga had no right to voice her protest against Virmati going for study but she did. However, she entertained a happy thought in her heart that she would be alone with her husband during the absence of Virmati at home. She could have her husband for herself temporarily for some time. She did not protest against her husband going for second marriage and object to him for having brought her home when she was alive and still with him. In doing so, she was no way different from other traditional married women whose husbands had also had kept their second wives in the houses along with the first ones.

Ganga failed to understand the God's ways, when she entertained the happy thought that she should be alone with her husband and she would enjoy her conjugal bliss without any botheration. But due to violent riots, erupted after partition, she had to make her exit suddenly from her house, leave her husband and take shelter at Kanpur with her sons. She left her home with the fond hope that she would get united with her husband as soon as normalcy returned. She never saw that day during her earthly life. Being traditional and ignorant, her inner voice was not at all heard and redressed till the end of her life. Her separation which appeared to be temporary had been made permanent because of her death at Kanpur.

Ganga should have adjusted herself to her life as the first wife and entertained very cordial relationship with Virmati, her husband's second wife but she did not. It was God's purpose that she should get separated from her husband, leaving Virmati with him. No human being knows what will happen next and both Ganga and Virmati were quite unaware of the will of God. Knowing full well that Ganga was uneducated, Harish Chandra should not have married her. But he was helpless and he had to marry her when both were children. But after his marriage, he should not have given a long rope to his lustful heart to search for young women for his sexual satisfaction. He was mainly responsible for the predicament of both his wives. Ganga should have moved away from him with her children by leaving him to live in public disgrace but she did not. It was her destiny in the form of Partition riots that saw her leave him once for all never to return to him.

Astha in *A Married Woman* became the wife of Hemant Vadra through arranged marriage. In the beginning, her husband was not very open. His appearance was very

deceptive. He did not appear to be what he was. He seemed to be a man of free thought at the time of his marriage. Soon after his marriage, he turned out to be a man with strong patriarchal attitudes towards his wife. In the beginning of her marital life, everything went on as Astha had expected. She enjoyed marital bliss and physical pleasures without much ado. As days passed, everything in marital relationship was a topsy-turvy. Hemant began to be different to her and he used to come late under some pretext or other. Hence, Astha's waiting for his arrival in time, being together and making love ended in her disappointment. After a few months, "dullness began to taint Astha's new [but uneventful] life" (*MW* 46). However, their sexual relationship was very casual and as a wife, she became pregnant. She gave birth to a female child first and all her in-laws showed their indifference to her for being a mother of a female child. When she begot a son next, all expressed their happiness.

Astha could not stand seeing gender discrimination in their attitudes nor did she keep it in her heart hidden. She felt restless and stressed, and she gave an outlet to her feelings by writing poems about her predicament. Hemant objected to her explicit expression of her inner-self and asked her not to behave like a neurotic. Then, she resorted to expressing her feelings in painting but her husband did not have any sense of appreciation too. She looked like a wife bereft of all pleasures of marital life. She felt companionless to comfort her in her hour of darkness.

As her husband, Hemant should have recognized extra-ordinary talent inherent in his wife and encouraged her. Instead, he ignored her individual excellence and failed to recognize it. Hence, Astha felt very bad for the inherent weak trait to assert her individuality as a wife. In every traditional family, such happenings become normal in

marital relationship. Simon de Beauvoir has rightly pointed out the real attitudes of a husband towards his wife:

A husband regards none of his wife's good qualities, which are particularly meritorious. He is always ignorant not only of her dreams, fancies and nostalgic yearnings but also of the emotional climate in which she spends her marital life. He also fails to realize that his wife is a real human being with flesh and blood and having her own inherent weaknesses. If she is taken for granted, she has the chance of becoming a helpless victim to temptations. In spite of that, her patience, her chastity and her propriety are difficult to be conquered. (492)

Astha was no exception as a wife to a husband with superior patriarchal attitudes. She stayed a voiceless being till she met Aijaz. It was he who had awakened her real spirit and brought her talents to light, which remained inactive for being ignored and untapped for want of opportunities. It was he who had showed her an eventful life outside her house and motivated her to realize the meaning of her existence. It was he who was indirectly responsible for her to establish her assertive nature.

Aijaz was a theatre artist and his troupe enacted dramas based on the prevailing socio-political issues of his time. He visited the school where Astha was working and he wanted to conduct a workshop there. Their meeting at the school brought them very close. He recognized her talent in writing and praised her to the skies. He also asked her to write a script for his stage play about the current political turmoil. At once, she felt some meaning and value in her life. She also thought of Aijaz as someone special and different from her husband. When he spoke to her, she felt that "his voice was coming at her, his eyes were looking at her and his teeth started glowing at her" (*MW* 110).

Astha suddenly realized that she was a married woman and she should not entertain any such thoughts about any man in her heart other than her husband. In spite of her realization who she was, her inherent voiceless sexual urge made her become emotional towards him. She was always haunted by his thoughts all day and all night. One night when she was lying on her bed awake, thinking of what he had said, she felt like his body being very close to hers. She could not but drive away the thoughts of Aijaz from her mind and his image greatly affected her mental frame. This feeling of a married woman was mainly due to the lack of close relationship with her husband.

As requested, Astha wrote a script for the drama to be enacted by the troupe of Aijaz. Through this script, she had brought out the feelings hitherto remained dormant in her heart. Hemant saw the drama enacted, understood its message, became critical of his wife and discouraged her with his authoritative patriarchal tone:

Please, you should know where your duty lies. All your activities such as writing a script and participating in political and social issues of the country do not suit to your status. You should take care of your home, rear your children with love and affection and concentrate on your teaching with all seriousness. (*MW* 116)

She became forgetful of her status as a married woman with two children and acted impulsively to assert her individuality in carrying out her personal interests like participation in political activities. But unexpected and cruel death of Aijaz at the hands of the rioters emotionally unnerved her. She began crying and expressed her anguish. “What a way to die, what a horrible way to die [burnt alive]-and for what? Only for his attempt to reach people and do some good” (*MW* 139).

Hemant as a husband could not stand his wife crying for a man who was a total stranger. Aijaz was a stranger to him but not to his wife. But for him, she would not have come to know what a genuine love relationship between two souls outside her home. He was the first person in her life who had appreciated her talent in writing and painting. Since his death, she had devised how to carry on with her independent life assertively. She wanted to live a life, which could please the soul of Aijaz. Shedding tears profusely as an open display of her sadness over his death was not alone as a token of her remembrance of Aijaz. Dedicating her life for the social cause for which he had sacrificed his life should only be a kind of her gratitude to him. She actively took part in all the activities to cherish the memory of Aijaz being alive. She neither minded her husband's patriarchal attitudes nor thought of her home and her two children. She went out as she had liked and came back very late in the night. In this way, she had her voice of individual asserting nature heard. She also contributed her share of money earned through the sale of her paintings to the social cause. Her identity as a painter cum social worker was more recognized than as the wife of Hemant.

Astha's timely encounter with the widow of Aijaz by name Pipeelika gave her another identity as a lesbian lover. Her lack of conjugal love and the dominance of patriarchal authority at home motivated her to maintain her gay relationship with Pipeelika. In the process, she had emotional satisfaction and realization of her physical enjoyments. She was her complete self and it also made her realize that her sex with Hemant was just mundane activity and it reflected more a power than real love. Both Astha and Pipeelika used to meet regularly at the fixed place and time regularly. They enjoyed pleasure from their gay relationship unnoticed. Astha knew about her husband's extra-marital relationship and similarly Hemant was aware of his wife's

unnatural love affair with another woman. However, both did not accuse each other of their different love relationships with others outside their home lest both should lose the pleasure of sexual enjoyment and face public disgrace.

Many a time, Astha realized that she was sinning more against established marital conventions through her act of gay relationship. Yet, she continued her relationship because she wanted to be an independent individual like Pipeelika. Her status as a wife of Hemant was nothing but an unpaid servant. She knew that “there were hallows in her marital life and she wanted them to get fulfilled” (*MW* 202) and “a willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day and obedient mouth” (*MW*. 231). As she was not ready to lose her feeling of heavenly joy as and when Pipeelika touched her body emotionally, she dared to brave any familial situations at home. “She thanked God again and again for this love in her life when she thought that all the chances of real love were over” (*MW* 235).

In her madness for Pipeelika, Astha failed to see the real intention of her woman lover. Pipeelika was determined to possess Astha for herself for ever. She made Astha to dance her tunes thoughtlessly. Astha considered her as her well-wisher and felt that whatever Pipeelika had said was only for real happiness in life. Pipeelika also urged her to convey her husband and his family about their affair and get separated from them once for all. However, Astha realized that she was the wife of Hemant and felt sorry for doing things like this against her marital life:

Ever since Aijaz has died, I have the feeling that I am being exploited by the Manch. I have gone to Ayodhya and met Pipeelika [forgetting about my

status]. I have not thought of my home, the duty of wifhood or of motherhood.

(*MW* 248)

Fortunately for her, Pipeelika had to leave her and India for America for pursuing her doctorate degree. Astha could not but become emotional and she cried thoughtlessly as if she had lost a husband in Pipeelika forever. Ashok Kumar in his article “Social Web and Cry of the Self: A Critical Analysis of Manju Kapur’s *A Married Woman*” has confirmed this feeling of a woman:

Manju Kapur has exposed a woman’s passion with love and lesbianism, which is an incompatible marriage and ensuing annoyance. With passion to revolutionize the Indian male sensitivity, she describes the traumas of her female protagonists from which they suffer and perish in their triumph. (165)

Being left with no option, she regretted for her impulsive action and returned to her family only because of her children emotionally. However, she looked satisfied with her gay relationship when she said, “I live my life in fragments, she is the one fragment that makes the rest bearable” (*MW* 264). Astha thus voiced her individuality and asserted it by her way of living outside her marital limits. If Pipeelika had not got separated from her for her education, Astha’s life would have ended in her desertion of children and husband. Instead of having sexual relationship with a woman, she ought to have with any man but she did not.

Nina in *The Immigrant* was well advanced in her thinking. She had full freedom to do anything that she desired because she was highly educated and professionally settled. She was thirty years old and yet, she remained unmarried and she had learnt a very good lesson in her disappointed love affair before marriage. She was against

marrying anyone settled in India. She dreamt of an immigrant life for her happier and more easy-going life. She wanted to marry an Indian immigrant through an arranged marriage, settle in foreign lands and enjoy her life of freedom and individuality. Being an Indian woman and an educated professional with Independent income, she had a strong belief:

Every eligible woman's final fulfillment lay in getting married on time, giving birth to children and attaining motherhood and if not, her earthly life as a woman would be a total failure, and she could not but live without any self identity and status of her as a married woman. (*Immigrant 230*)

Ananda was an Indian dentist at Halifax in Canada. He enjoyed his bachelor life by indulging in pre-marital relationship with white women at Canada. Yet, he wanted to marry only an Indian woman so that he could have his own and free sexual relationship with white women as and when he liked even after marriage. He thought that if he married an Indian woman, she would be very submissive. Moreover, she would never question his free life. She could not but reconcile herself to her fate and marital life with him in an alien country.

It was sheer fate, which brought Ananda to Nina through some relative. Nina had to accept Ananda because, "she wanted to settle down, she wanted children, and she could continue in the same rut for years . . . this could be her last chance. What were the odds of marrying after thirty? (*Immigrant 72*). Fortunately, she also found in Ananda, "an eligible, well-placed professional, settled in the first world country, and honest, upright citizen" (*Immigrant 72*). Their marriage conventionally was an arranged one.

Ananda insisted on his meeting the entire marriage expenses himself. But Nina made her voice of individuality get asserted by saying and getting her assertion materialized:

She would meet the entire marriage expenses herself and she did not want to start her marital life as a kind of charity case. She took a loan against her college provident fund, in order to pay for the wedding and the subsequent reception at the Rose Garden of the Gymkhana. (*Immigrant* 81)

Thus, the alliance between Nina and Ananda had thus paved the way for their personal desires to get fulfilled. Ananda got Indian wife as he had desired and Nina married an Indian settled at Canada as she had expected. Both did not know anything about each other's premarital relationship nor did they confess to their violation of well established Indian conventions to each other even after their marriage. Sometime after marriage, she went and joined him at Halifax. She found herself with her husband with the great hopes of getting her aspirations realized. However, she failed to know the truth that life was full of ironies.

Ananda had become an actual Canadian in his ways of life at Canada. He adopted himself to his Canadian food habits and westernized style dress code. But Nina was an embodiment of unadulterated Indian culture in every way of her life in Canada. She was always seen wearing her traditional Indian dresses such as saris and salwar khameeze either at home or outside while participating in social functions with her husband. All Canadians except Ananda found her in her Indian dress glamorous and beautiful. However, she had to change her Indian dress to a westernized one, not because of her fulfilling the wishes of her husband but because of her winter comforts. With regard to food habits, she never lost her Indian orthodox identity nor was she

ready to break her tradition. She continued to taste only vegetarian food though she cooked non-vegetarian for her husband. As she had not objected to his way of living, she expected the same kind of attitude from her husband and he did.

Both Ananda and Nina enjoyed sex with each other as legal husband and wife. For the first time both entered into an ecstasy of real sexual relationship. Ananda's craving for her body increased day after day. Nina also fervently responded to his lustful love. During their happy togetherness, "she pressed her body closer to his. In the process, gone was the awkwardness of words. With his free hand, he turned her face towards him and nuzzled her lips" (*Immigrant 77*). The night of their love making was a great one for Ananda because it was a night of his sexual fulfillment, which he had never had in his premarital relationship. However, the same night was the night of shock and disappointment for Nina because she found him lacking manliness. She had miserably failed to attain her fulfillment in sex, which she had during her premarital relationship with Rahul. Ananda did not mind about whether his wife felt satisfied or not but he felt content with his way of enjoying sex. He never appeared to be uncomfortable for his lack of manliness in sex. He had the weakness of premature ejaculation during sex and he used to keep his timing and enjoyed sex at the time of ejaculation.

Nina decided that she should adjust herself to the kind of marital relationship because she had to put up with him for the rest of her earthly life. Though he was not like Rahul in giving her complete fulfillment in sex, she could not leave him as he was her legal husband. After the realization of his weakness in sexual intercourse on that particular night, she lay on her bed, thinking deeply about the ways and means to solve

her problem as an immigrant marital woman. She felt worried about her name sake status as his wife without any genuine conjugal pleasures:

She tried to transform [the bitter] reality into a scenario that would not confuse or upset her. [Whether she was sexually getting satisfied or not], togetherness was the important thing. To be critical of how it was achieved was against the spirit of marriage. (*Immigrant* 91)

Ananda dominated her body only for his satisfaction and he failed to use his body to satisfy her. In such situations, he simply ignored Nina's longing for real love and its pleasures and the consequent attainment of motherhood. Nina also realized the truth that she had to accept what was happening to her life without giving voice of protest to the behaviour of Ananda. She did not think of taking recourse to divorce because she knew well that the position of a divorced immigrant woman in an alien land would be a predicament and she did not want to be in that position herself. "A woman getting divorce is a shame and it signifies a willing detachment from her husband and her security in life" (Guru 300).

Ananda realized his inherent frailty and yet he thought that his wife was not the only woman in the world with whom he could have sex. There were other native women with whom he could have sex and prove his manliness. His lack of manliness was his undercover by which he had sex with Mandy, his new receptionist. He failed to realize that Mandy became his bed partner just to feel relaxed and not to enjoy real sex as his wife desired. Moreover, he was not the only man with whom she had sexual relationship. Nina was certain that her husband's dilly dallying to avoid making her pregnant showed his inherent inability. She also made him realize under some pretext or

other that his impotency was exposed. Ananda felt shocked for being exposed that he was impotent and this feeling made him sex with Mandy frequently and fall flat to her charms. As a result:

Distance grew between them [gradually but steadily]. Nina felt imprisoned by the stress, and she assured him that there were other things beside sex in marital bond. Relationship had to develop; feelings had to be shared. . . . Everything she said made it worse [further]. (*Immigrant* 185)

Nina as a married woman could not give voice to her sexually dissatisfied marital life for being dependent on him. Other married women used to enjoy sex with their husbands because their husbands were manly and they showed their manliness in their sexual performance. But Ananda disappointed her with his lack of intimacy in his sex and for want of orgasm on her enjoyment. He had the weakness of early ejaculation during his sexual act and this weakness in him was the main cause of his inability to make her a mother of his child. As a result, Nina felt her promising expectations of happy marital life that was leading to her motherhood shattered. She also suggested many remedial measures to get his problems solved. But he did not cooperate with her. Neither was he ready to accept his inherent weakness. Hence, she had to remain barren woman. Khairnar cites reasons for Nina's permanent state of barrenness:

Manju Kapur presents an absorbing study of several psychological factors, which contribute to a barren marital relationship between Nina and Ananda. Intimacy, passion, and commitment, which form the bedrock of a successful marital relationship, are conspicuous by their absence in their relationship as a result of which their marital life runs into troubled waters [with each one

trying to find sexual outlet outside the home through extramarital relationship].(54)

Nina had to remain indoors all day long companionless but she did not voice her predicament of being lonely. Though Ananda pretended to be serious in his sexual relationship with her, he was a total failure as a man. Yet, she continued to remain with him as his faithful wife. She did not seek extra marital sexual relationship with other man of her liking to voice her individuality.

Nina wanted to come out of her house so that she could be independent. She was in search of a teaching post but without a doctorate degree, getting a teaching post in Canada was highly impossible. Hence, Nina started pursuing Library Science with the consent of her husband. During her pursuit, she happened to meet Anton and to him, she appeared pretty, intelligent and understanding. Since she felt alienated and dissatisfied at home, she found the companionship of Anton, her class mate and a married man, a great relief. She could not control her sexual feelings as a woman. She exploited her fruitless marital life to have extramarital relationship with Anton. She had for the first time a sense of her own self and attained complete fulfillment:

For the first time, she had a sense of her own self, entirely separate from other people, autonomous, independent. So strange that sex did not make her feel guilty, not beyond the initial shock. Easy, she was amazed it was that easy.  
(*Immigrant* 264)

Their union was “purely meeting of the bodies; a healthy give and take” (*Immigrant* 269). Thus, she asserted her individuality as a wife of independence. In their physical togetherness, she found sex with him a motivating force of life. Her lack of sex

at home made her get attracted towards Anton, more and more and for frequent sexual relationship. As she had an extra marital relationship outside the limits of her marital life, she turned to be an assertive woman. She became one with the natives by tasting non-vegetarian food too. In this way, she expressed her individuality. In spite of that, she remained with her husband.

Both Ananda and Nina had to satisfy their personal desires through extra marital relationship, he with Mandy and she with Anton. However, they had their relationship unnoticed and unchecked though it was not based on any established norms but on lust. Both deceived each other and hidden their relationship from each other. What they could not get from their life partners, they got from others. Nina however felt convinced in her extra marital relationship that she was not taking anything away from her husband. Her relationship with Anton was not temporary and it would go on as long as she was alive. Thus through her extramarital relationship, she found her inner voice completely satisfied. “Anchors. You have to be your own anchor” (*Immigrant* 328). However, this was not the way for Ananda and Nina to achieve their sexual satisfaction. Both lacked understanding between them and they did not try to find solutions to tide over their bodily problems. If they had very good understanding between them in their marital life, everything unpleasant in marital life would have been avoided.

Of the two, Ananda was to be blamed the more for his way of behaviour and abuse of his marital accord. If he had not violated marital fidelity, if he had not been indifferent to Nina, and if he had not been sexually lacking manliness, their marital life would not have been strained beyond any remedial measures. Both began to live not like husband and wife but as individual immigrants, pursuing their own sexual pleasures

without the knowledge of each other. Thus, lack of genuine sex for Nina from Ananda and Amanda's inferiority complex in sex with his wife was a gateway to their mishandling of marital bond and acted as per the desire of their hearts. However, it was Nina who discovered her husband's infidelity after he had slept with a woman in their bedroom. This startling discovery brought in a momentous change in her attitude to her marital bond with him. She decided to move away from him and Halifax for Brunswick to attend an interview for a job at the university:

When marital relationship strained beyond, the failure in marital relationship was a kind of signal to move on. For an immigrant there was no going back. . . . Nina too was heading towards fresh territories . . . for reinventing herself. . . for finding new friends and new family. (*Immigrant* 333-334)

Their final separation without divorce centered not on lack of understanding and compromise between them but on sex and want of genuine sex. Ashok Kumar in his article on *Manju Kapur's The Immigrant: The Dilemma of the Second sex* has correctly summed up their sex oriented relationship:

Compatibility between husband and wife is indispensable. But in the present novel [*The Immigrant*] sex overtakes the other factors needed for compatibility Ananda and Nina as husband and wife. Both want to join the bandwagon of liberal sex . . . Social, Psychological and Ideological factors remain on the fringe while sexual factor remains at the centre. (22)

A man does not show his voice of protest explicitly when his sexual needs are not fulfilled. But a woman of assertive nature does it openly before her husband and gets

her sexual urge fulfilled in some way or other. Her behaviour as a wife in such situations can never be understood. Nina is one of such an assertive wife.

Manju Kapur's *Custody* portrays the inscrutable behaviour of two married women in Shagun and Ishita. Shagun is the mother of two children whereas Ishita is a barren woman. The former is the deserter of her husband and two children for the love of another man where as the latter is a divorced one due to her barrenness. These two women always think of themselves and their interests. They care about only their point of view of life and try to achieve it at any cost. They also make others accept their views without questioning their attitudes. "It is only they [married women] who care more about themselves, who understand only their own troubles and who see only their perspective" (Lal 33).

Shagun was an extraordinarily beautiful young wife of Raman who was a Marketing Executive in a globally based soft drinks company. Their marital life was enlivened with reciprocal love and understanding relationship. They had nothing to complain against each other and their God of faith had blessed them with prosperous life. Shagun was very happy to beget a son Arjun first and after a period of five years of their first male child, she brought to the house a symbol of prosperity in the form of a female child Roohi. Their happy marital life went on smoothly for eight years without any problems. They got everything for their dignified status in the society.

Shagun did not experience any difficulties in spending and leading a very luxurious life because of her husband's envious position. But her status of wife and mother did not allow her to pursue a modeling career. She was always under the control of patriarchal attitudes of her mother. "She felt very bad when she was not able to guide

her own life like her familial and marital set up” (*Custody* 11). However, she managed her house and took care of the education and welfare of her two children. Raman used to be away most of the days from home in connection with his work. As he had strong faith in his wife’s management of the house, he was of the view that everything in his family was going as per his expectations and as per his wife’s desire.

Being totally absorbed himself in his work, Raman did not find time to express his love and spend his time with the children and Shagun. A woman in Shagun felt neglected and began doing things as per her wishes. She wanted to find someone who could demonstrate his love to her in actions and to be with her for her sexual satisfaction. Ashok Khanna, her husband’s boss, happened to be that someone for her woman’s sexual urge. On seeing him, she forgot her status as a wife and mother of two children and fell in love with him. Hers was a love that expected immediate response and she also got it from him. She responded with very positive behaviour. She wanted to enjoy his relationship by being with him whenever she would get chances and she looked forward to that day.

As a wife, Shagun should not have thought of another man in Ashok Khanna but she did and as a mother of two children, she should not have felt a sexual urge surfacing beyond her control for him but she had:

Love is the strongest and deepest element in all human life. It is the harbinger of hope, joy, and ecstasy. It is an uncontrollable force that rebels against all laws, and all conventions. It is the most powerful moulder of destiny. As an all compelling force, it can never be synonymous with the poor status

called marriage because love never results from marriage. (Goldman, *Marriage and Love* 11)

Love feelings in Shagun for Ashok Khanna made her more attached to him, became stronger and stronger day by day, and needed immediate and permanent fulfillment.

Being married, Shagun's love for Ashok was an illicit affair and so she was in dilemma. She should have kept her love for Ashok to herself but her anxiety to know more about him from her own husband exposed her real intention. Whenever, her husband was away from her and home for days together, she used to be out under some pretext or other. However, her husband felt something fishy in the attitudes and behaviour of his wife.. He also had his voice of suspicion heard by her in an indirect way. Putting his hands on her, he informed her that there was a distance between them in their marital relationship and this distance made him unhappy. At once she made her inner voice explicitly heard through her bold utterances:

She laughs at him saying 'Distance?' What do you mean by that? Then she draws her hand away from him and brings to his knowledge who keeps distance. She bluntly tells him, 'it is you who keep travelling and remain distant to me for days together. It is a great wonder when you talk about my distance from you. (*Custody* 49).

Raman wanted to confirm whether his wife was in love with his boss or just a friendly relationship. The photographs taken on different days confirmed his suspicion that she was really in relationship with his boss.

Shagun should have kept her meeting of Ashok a secret but she could not. Raman engaged a man to record her daily activities during his absence at home. The

different photographs taken by the man on her days' activities showed her tactless actions. In all the photographs, she was seen wearing in different dresses while meeting Ashok. In one photograph she was seen leaving from the door number 27 along with Ashok, in another she was seen getting into a taxi, and in another Ashok was seen bending over her and lightly kissing her in an open door way. As a married woman and a mother, she should not have done these things in public.

Shagun's actions were an open display of her rebellious attitudes and her determination to be with Ashok against her well established marital status. In Ashok, she found love more equal, democratic and satisfying than in her husband. Her critical attitude towards her husband got a very good support from her lover. Ashok Kumar in his article "Social Web and Cry of the Self: A Critical analysis of Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman*" has correctly pointed out Shagun's change of attachment, "The dissatisfaction that accrues in most marriages is not allowed to dissipation; instead it makes her [Shagun] cling to reason in order to justify her unfaithfulness" (27).

Shagun found Ashok more suitable to her temper. She thoughtlessly and emotionally divorced her husband and deserted her children after her twelve year of marital life. She had gone against the social set up, voiced her modern attitude and became the wife of Ashok Khanna. In doing so, she followed the dictates of her own heart. She knew that she had only one life on this earth and she wanted to live it in the best way possible. As a lover, she would add more interesting things to her marital experience, which would make up for all the things she had missed through arranged marriage. Without any inhibition, she had sexual relationship with her lover to her maximum satisfaction. After the enjoyment of sex with Ashok, she felt triumphant and

she decided to be with him as his wife forever. This kind of assertion in her marital assigned role is very dangerous to the marital life, the home and the society:

Then she sank down next to him feeling greatly satisfied with her sex. She also entertained a thought that if she had to die the next day, she would not feel very sad to die because she had now sexually fulfilled woman. She also felt that this kind of fulfillment she had never had with her husband.  
(*Custody* 113)

Soon after her independent and individual extra-marital experience, she met and informed her husband that as she wanted to live with Ashok Khanna as his lover cum wife, she was to part from him through divorce. By saying so, she had proved that 'thoughtlessness' was her name. She got divorce on condition that she would not claim her right over her children as her natural mother. She had readily accepted his condition for divorce with the reason that her two children would be a stumbling block to her enjoyment of her uninterrupted sex with her new husband. If she had not been impulsive in her passion for another man, and if she had not acted thoughtlessly as a married woman with two children, her husband and children would not have faced trauma of separation, he as wifeless and his children as motherless.

Ishita was the wife of Suryakant and her marital life went on without any problem in her marital and familial life. Both understood and loved each other. It is expected of every married woman that she should become pregnant and give birth to a child. Ishita as a wife was also expected to attain motherhood soon after her marriage. However, she could not live up to the expectations of all because of her inherent barrenness. She was made to undergo all types of painful and tedious medical treatment

to become a woman of fertility. She remained childless even after nearly four years of her marital life. It was found out that she would never attain motherhood.

Ishita's barrenness gradually became the talk of all and it placed her in an irrecoverable predicament. She could not voice her concern and she had to remain a voiceless being, accepting the reality. Her husband was only for the sake and Ishita as his wife could not reveal her inner self with courage. Adekanmi A. Solomon in her poem titled *The Agony of a Barren Woman* has beautifully sketched the real state of barren women like Ishita:

My kinsman, my dear women,

Help tell my in-laws and husband,

My barrenness, not my fault, not if I know,

Why I had become another Sarah and my husband

Another Abraham! (36-40)

Ishita was conformed as per the medical report that she could never become a mother. Her mother-in-law became patriarchal in her attitude towards Ishita. It was she who decided that Ishita was to be divorced. The decision of divorce unnerved her and her status as a wife became a question. She began muttering to herself that she was not at fault and it was the fault of God who had made her such a being on earth. Hence, she need not be punished with. If Suryakant had a married sister and if she had been a barren woman, Ishita stood wondering how they would have reacted when she was divorced. Moreover, she began to think of her husband and his helplessness. She also

started entertaining the feeling that if it was found out that it was her husband and not her who was barren, his family would take steps to get him cured of his sterility:

Had Suryakant been a proven man of sterility, they [his mother and other women] would have moved heaven and earth to get his defect cured or corrected. Since the defect is with the daughter-in-law of the family, they are not ready to do the same thing. She considers the home of her husband is not an ideal one. (*Custody* 68)

She appeared saddened at the attitudes of her in-laws and the indifference of her husband. In such a situation, she found herself helpless and hapless. She could not assert her right to remain in the house of her husband. Nobody was ready to listen to her pathetic voice and looked into her problem for a solution amicably.

In their midst, Ishita felt isolated and sad. She also appeared to be an insignificant being. She was also relegated to the status of 'nobody' in the house:

She looked smaller than the ants on the ground, smaller than the particles of the dust in the sunlit air and smaller than the drops of dew caught between blades of grass in the morning. She had to remain content with the thought 'this is my karma, nothing will break it.' (*Custody* 65-68)

As the wife of Suryakant, she could not have her voice of predicament heard. There was no end to her trauma in the house. She began to hate her body because it only let her down as a woman. Because of her useless body, she had to go back to her parents as a divorced woman. She knew well that she had not gone wrong in her attitudes and behaviour towards her husband and others. She always treated them with love and affection:

From the day of my wedding [and entering into the house as the daughter-in-law] I have always thought of this [Suryakant's] family as mine, reveling in the togetherness, sharing companionship and affection with all, without any show of pretence. Now, I find all around me only rejection instead of love.  
(*Custody* 63)

But her fate could not be tilted. She was legally separated and she came back to her house with the loss of her wifhood. Her insecure situation and status at her mother's house made her think of her life, which she had been living with Suryakant as a wife. The more she thought about it the more saddened she became. She felt very bad about being a female gender because all the women in the house of Suryakant failed to identify with their gender in her. As a husband, Suryakant did not come to her defence. He kept mum at the happenings to his wife in his house. He lost his manliness to protect his wife for being a sterile woman. He should have encouraged her by talking to his parents that they would adopt some orphan as their child but he did not. He left her to herself to decide her own life and future. :

For nearly three and half years, I have been living with my husband and he has showered me with love and affection. I have also firmly established my status as the wife of Suryakant in his house. Suddenly I have been asked to go back to my house from my husband's house due to my inability to become a mother. It is really a heart breaking one to me. (*Custody* 71)

Ishita had to come back to the house of her parents and as a single woman she had passed through a period of indescribable agony. But slowly and steadily she regained her morale. A woman alone could understand the role of another woman

playing the role of a wife. Ishita's mother consoled her daughter that she was not the only one in the world. There were innumerable women like her in this world. Every in-law belonging to a female gender in the house of one's husband would behave like this. As a daughter in law with barrenness inherent in her, she was no exception. She had to brave her situation and live with positive attitude to her status in life. Thus, Ishita's mother brought the existing trend in every traditional family to the knowledge of her daughter. She had to reconcile herself to God's will. She thought that her God of faith should have some other plan as a remedy to her predicament:

It is essential that Suryakant should have a child from you as his wife because his bloodline of his forefathers should continue. Not only has Suryakant divorced you for the sake of his posterity but also all families do the same to their sterile women who have become their daughters-in-law. (*Custody* 69)

Ishita also vetoed her parents when they looked out for some proposal for her second marriage. She did not like to experience further humiliation through another marriage. She expressed her desire to adopt a child and take care of it as its foster mother. Her parents fell in line with her thinking:

If she wants to be a mother to an adopted child, we have to help her . . . She has all along been a good girl to us. We must be equally good parents. We are good parents. We have followed society norms. Now, as parents, we have to think for her good. This is what our daughter, a thirty year old divorcee needs. (*Custody* 189)

Ishita's accidental meeting of Roohi, the deserted daughter of Shagun along with her father Raman, brought very close to Roohi. Being barren, she showered her motherly feelings on Roohi whose mother left her motherless and this feeling made her establish a relationship with Raman.

Ishita understood that the life of Raman was no way better than that of hers and she was without a husband and children and he was without his wife but with his children. Both of them were sailing in the same boat because both were divorcees and the people with broken hearts. Ishita decided to establish her gender individuality. Both liked to mend their broken hearts through their remarriage between them. They did not stop with expressing their desire and they gave a firm shape through their second marriage. Thus, Ishita became the legal wife of Raman. Their union in marriage paved the way for each to get from the other that had eluded in their first marital life. Both revealed their unfailing love, understanding and adjustment to each other. They became forgetful of their incurable wound made in the hearts due to the happenings in their previous marital life. Ishita also began enjoying an emotional bonding with Roohi as her foster mother. She had to remain content with the saying:

Be happy, you childless woman! You shout and cry with joy that you did not feel the pains of childbirth! For the woman who has been deserted will have more children [abandoned ones] as hers than the one who has been never deserted by her husband. (*Family Devotional Study Bible*, Gal.4:27)

Sona, Rupa, Sunita and Nisha are four other women characters in *Home* who have also imprinted their impressions as wives. Sona and Rupa, the blood sisters, entered into two different marital set up. Sona became the wife of Yashpal, the eldest

son of the Banwarilals, who were socially better placed than her family. She became his wife after their love relationship but her arrival as the daughter in law of the Banwarilals did not cheer the heart of Mrs. Banwarilal. However, her husband was a loving one and consoled her not to take the attitude of his mother to her heart. Everything would become fine when they had children. Sona was lucky to have an affectionate husband in Yashpal. However, she could become a mother of a daughter only after ten years of her marital life.

Rupa became the wife of Premnath who was her equal in his social status. Her marital life was one of barrenness and so she experienced indescribable pains at heart for being barren. Mental stress of her condition was expressed in every word she uttered. She could not find any ways except reconciling herself to her fate. No one could imagine the kind of painful feelings caused by the indifferent attitudes of other men and women, with whom she had to live till her death. A woman can remain unmarried till her death but as a childless married woman, she will find very difficult to cope with her barrenness till the end of her life on earth. This is the situation in which Ruba was placed. Yet, she continued to live in hope. However, Ruba happily forgot her predicament by taking care of her sister's daughter with love and affection as her foster mother. Since the arrival of Nisha to her house, she had never thought that she was a barren woman.

Sunita, the only daughter in the family of the Banwarilals, has three identities such as daughter, wife and mother. In all her three identities, she remained a voiceless being. She got married very early and her marital relationship with her husband was a great disappointment to her. She experienced untold hardships at the hands of her

husband who was an addict to drinks. Since her father had a good name in the society, and her family had very good traditional background, she did not spoil the reputation of her family and the name of her father by bringing to their knowledge about her marital trauma. She kept every transgression of her husband hidden from her family. She pretended to be very happy in her marital life. Till her mysterious death in the kitchen accident, and even after that, the Banwarilals were not aware of their daughter's stressful relationship with her husband. In spite of her unhappy marital relationship, she had left behind her son Vicky to the care of other Banwarilals.

Every married woman should adjust herself to the unpleasant happenings in her marital life. She should not be a woman of complaining nature nor should she worry about her predicament. Life has both spring and winter lest it should be taken for granted. There is no spring without winter and any married woman does not experience only winter in her life, and she cannot really enjoy the spring throughout her life. If she does not experience both positive and negative aspects in her marital life, all she faces in her life such as good and bad, pleasures and pains and poverty and prosperity will look alike without any differences.

The happening in real life situations of married women is against the tradition and for the sake of individual convenience and happiness. As long as the marital relationship between a man and his wife meets the personal needs of both, their marital life is heavenly on earth. If there is no understanding and give and take policy between them, and if one takes the other for granted, they will try to find various other means for their happiness. As a result, their personal desires become dominating over their well

established social conventions and cultural bindings. Modern day trend shows the unconventional attitudes of women who play their assigned roles as wives.

All literary works of women focus mainly on the feminine issues and they are very realistic. Through the portrayal of New Women attitudes in their women protagonists, they mirror the real life of the educated Indian married women. Unless all men and women mend their ways, change their attitudes and give up their egos, nothing good will come out of their marital relationship. Every house has steps and so everyone's marital life has problems. Since all modern human beings look like oysters in their attitudes and ways of living, what is happening in one house may not be made known to all. It is only fictional writings of women that make everyone know how life is being lived in India and in alien lands.

The researcher had analysed the Submissive and Assertive wives in Manju Kapur's Novels in the third chapter. Eventhough the characters Astha in *A Married Woman* and Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* voices their individuality against the established norms of tradition, they returned to their original mode of life only for the sake of their children . The writer had written her novel in such a way that all her characters finally go for compromise and adjustment. Hence, the term 'Polyphony' can be very well applied to the characters of Kapur which bring harmonious ending in the novel.