

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Polyphony” is a term related to music, and its literal meaning is “different sounds and voices.” As a musical term, it refers to a song, sung by a group of singers in different voices with the accompaniment of musical instruments. It is mainly applied to a song sung by a choir during a regular service in the church. The singers who make up the members of a choir are usually men and women, and they belong to different age groups. They are generally divided into two or three or four groups among them and each group sings the one and the same song in a particular melodious voice like ‘first voice, second voice, third voice and fourth voice.’ As result, the musical voice of one group is quite different from that of another set. If there are four groups of singers, all the four groups will be singing one and the same song in four different voices simultaneously. However, the song thus sung will be a harmonious combination of different melodious voices. This kind of singing is mainly to bring out the sweet and enchanting musical impact of the song on the listeners.

Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian literary theorist, had first used the term ‘polyphony,’ to explain the narrative method, which Dostoevsky had followed in his literary works. He found the characters of Dostoevsky having a diversity of attitudes and behaviours. He also found out the characters’ different behaviours being determined by multiplicity of their attitudes towards life and existing among them. The word ‘polyphony’ refers to Dostoevsky’s characters because his characters have individually expressed different views of life in their respective roles they have played. But their views of life are quite

different from one another, because they depend upon the situations and the roles the characters play. Hence, Bakhtin has said:

The work of Dostoevsky is an exact representation of polyphony because it has been written not in one fixed voice of the author but in many interpenetrating voices of the characters themselves, and each one's voice is acting upon the other. Dostoevsky is the only artist who has been capable of giving each of his main characters his or her own unique voice and logic, which is not predetermined by authorial design but only in the interplay of ideas, arising out of their different positions in life. (*Information Theory* 139)]

Polyphony, as a concept of many voices, is quite applicable to a novel than any other genres of Literature because every novel gives expression to the multiple voices or consciousnesses of the characters. Now it appears to be more relevant to the novel of feminism of modern days because every new woman in her respective role asserts her individuality and puts her thoughts into action independently. In her role either as a daughter or wife or mother or mother-in-law, she wants her voice to be heard and addressed to. The daughter wants her voice to be heard by her mother, the wife by her husband, the mother by her daughter, and the daughter-in-law by her mother-in-law. Besides, all these women expect their voices to be heard by their men such as husbands and fathers. All these voices are independent in nature and they remain uninfluenced by the conception of the truth of the novelist. But at the same time, the opposition to these consciousnesses is allowed to exist side by side and it is also heard and addressed to.

However, all such different voices or consciousnesses are not drawn into a particular system of thought in which everything has coherent relation with the other.

David Lodge in his book on *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* strengthens this concept of Polyphony with which every modern fiction is written:

A novel in which “polyphony” is used as a concept has a variety of conflicting ideological positions. Such positions are first given a voice and then they are set in play both between the individuals and within the individual speaking subjects, without being placed and judged by an authoritative authorial voice. (86)

Women writers have given importance to the various but different personal desires of their women characters called New Women. They have got such individual interests reflected in the different roles and in their various deeds. However, no two characters playing the same role either as daughters or as wives or as mothers are identical in their attitudes and behaviour. Hence, the term ‘Polyphony’ becomes more meaningful. It has been used to describe the different roles that women characters play their assigned roles in the novels of Manju Kapur, in which they play as daughters, wives, mothers and mothers-in-law. It has also been used to narrate the independent actions of these characters when they perform to get their individuality asserted and their personal desires fulfilled on the selected topic “Polyphony of Female Voices.”

The development of Indian English fiction by women over the years has been mainly due to the changing roles of traditional women to the new ones of emancipation and modernity. It has resulted in innumerable changes in familial, marital and social life of women in contemporary India. Such changes in women’s life have got reflected in the portrayal of the characters in the fictional works of women writers. Meenskshi Mukherjee calls this change of attitude in the writings of women “twice born fiction” and “last born’ (20) in order to highlight mainly their specific and individualizing traits.

All writers of fiction in Indian Writing in English have real life incidents as the themes of their works. Among them, men writers have not based their novels on feminist-oriented themes and their works remain voiceless about the problems of women who are living within the four walls of their houses. They have not considered the lives of women as an exciting material suitable for fiction. Moreover, they have not assigned any dominant status to their women characters. Nor have they portrayed women as equal to their men in their fictional works. They have followed only established tradition in the delineation of their women. Their women appear very submissive and remain silent without any desire for the fulfillment of their personal needs. They do not have any courage to bring the desires of their inner-selves to the knowledge of men for any remedial measures. No work ceases to a work of art if a woman does not play her part along with a man. Hence for the sake of introducing, women have been appeared in their works. Asha Choubey has highlighted the place of women in the works of men:

Men writers have focused on a man's world where the presence of women has been only incidental. Women have appeared only as a necessary tool to be used by men. . . . For men did not have access to the inside of a house which was the only space women moved in. (1)

However, women writers have the first-hand knowledge of the experiences and reactions of women during their different phases of life. Hence, they have dealt with the feminist themes in their novels. In their portrayal, they have first given expression to the varied experiences of women during different stages of their growth. Then, they have depicted the reactions of women to their experiences, and at last, they have shown the

reflection of their reactions in words and deeds. Thus, they have portrayed their women protagonists in different assertive roles, beginning with the role of a daughter and ending with that of a grand-mother. In between these two, their women play as wives, mothers, and barren women and in laws. They have also made them establish their individuality and independence in their own way. However, all daughters do not behave alike and similarly all wives and mothers do not. They give voice to their feelings differently and their voices depend upon their different attitudes in different situations.

If women writers had not taken to writing and their writing had not centered on women and their problems, the entire world would not have known about the reality behind “the domesticity of women, the reasons behind their own seclusion within the four walls of their home, the possibilities and impossibilities provided to them by home dominated by patriarchy” (Mitchell 287). Therefore, the women writers are the only right persons from whom the world can come to know of the actual position of Indian women and the different roles they are playing before and after their marriage. They are not inferior to men writers but they are more than equal to their men in the portrayal of women characters. Virginia Woolf in Chapter III of her book *A Room of One's Own* has stated about the significance of women writers:

Imaginatively, she [every woman writer] is of the highest importance but practically she is completely insignificant . . . Some of the most inspired words and some of the most profound thoughts [about women] fall in literature from her lips and yet, as the property of her husbands, she cannot read happenings to her in real life and she could hardly spell what they are. (45-46)

Indian women of today living in India as the natives and in alien countries as immigrants or Indian Diaspora have attained educational and professional statuses on par with men. They are greatly different from the Indian traditional women of the bygone days in their ways of attitudes to familial and marital life. They do not also entertain the idea that the familial, marital, religious and societal conventions are purely meant for women. They believe that such conventions are invariably detrimental to their interests, independence and individuality. They realize that all the familial and societal restraints are only responsible for their personal desires and ambitions to remain unfulfilled throughout their earthly life. They do not attach too much importance to such situations as the impediments to their progress in life. They dare show their individuality, give a concrete shape to their aspirations independently and establish their identity. In their pursuit of chosen life, they do not mind about the consequences. They strongly echo the words of Christabel Pankhurst through their independent actions:

They [modern women] were born to claim their rights as women, not only to be free, but to fight for their rightful freedom. This is the purpose of God for which they have been created. Achieving this purpose is only their birth right and earthly duty. (239).

All women necessarily go through physical and mental growth through the different stages of their life. In the process, they go through many experiences during their familial, marital and professional life. They may feel happy or sad or upset over their experiences because some experiences may be or may not be to their liking. Depending upon their experiences, they form their own points of view of life. Accordingly, they display their attitudes and determine their behaviour. But at the same

time, those who belong to one status or one age do not have same experiences; nor do they show similar positive and negative attitudes and behaviours among themselves. Every woman is quite different from the other belonging to her status or age.

As daughters, women think that they have every right to pursue education and decide their marriage and life partners as they desire. As wives, they do not want to be belittled as inferior gender and for their secondary roles to their husbands. They expect that they should be consulted in matters related to their marital life and in the management of their households. Every act of mothers is always welfare oriented, and so the mothers want their daughters to listen to them and abide by whatever decisions they take regarding their education and marital status. However, the actions of the mothers-in-law towards their daughters-in-law are quite different. They expect their daughters-in-law not only to be very obedient but also they want them to display their attitudes to their liking. Hence, they are very patriarchal in their attitudes and so they try to prove themselves superior to their daughters-in-law.

The mind of every modern woman is in a series of conflict not knowing which kind of life she is to choose for her betterment. She is torn between choosing a life of conformity to the established traditions and a life of non-conformity that confers on her much sought after individuality. She remains totally confused to choose between a life of independence without bothering about patriarchal and familial restrictions and a life of survival by remaining in the midst of restraints curbing her freedom. She also looks perplexed whether she has to claim her right for gender equality or she has to be very submissive as an inferior gender during her familial and marital life. All these conflicts in the mind of a woman during different stages of her sojourn on earth are inevitable.

The decision to opt for the best among the various choices of life for the welfare is left to the discretion of every woman in her respective role. Accordingly, she voices her aspirations, desires them to be heard and addressed to. If her expectations go unrecognized, she follows her own ways of life to get her personal interests fulfilled. However, every woman in the traditional home and society is to play only the secondary role first as an obedient and submissive daughter to her parents, next as dutiful and loving wife to her husband, then as welfare oriented mother to her daughter and at last as a mother-in-law with patriarchal concern to her daughter-in-law. These are their assigned statuses recognized at home and in the society, and all women are not expected to display the polyphonic attitudes in establishing their independent identity in their respective roles outside the established culture and tradition.

Indian women novelists of Indian Diaspora have not simply stopped with the portrayal of women as inferior gender, destined to play only secondary roles to their men. They have brought out the inherent diversity within each woman that has surfaced prominently in her actions and reactions to life. They have described the changed behavioural pattern of women against the imposition of tradition on them even in alien life. They have given expression to the feelings of depression of women when their individuality is taken for a ride. They have portrayed the consequences in the familial and marital relationships of women when they fail to adjust themselves to their traditional living as daughters, wives and mothers. They have given voice to the subsequent reactions of women to restrictions, which stand against their freedom. These diverse attitudes and consequent behaviours in women are true to life and so all the works of Indian women writers are realistic to the core in the portrayal of women. They

only differ from one another in their use of narrative techniques and their style of language with which the story is narrated.

The characteristic qualities like individuality, independence, equality, and rebellion are always the household terms to the women novelists of modern days but they have been foreign to the ones, belonging to the Pre-Independence Day period. There is no denying the fact that these writers have also focused on the different roles of women. But their portrayal of the roles of women characters has been governed by the familial, societal and traditional conditions of the period during which their works have been written. Women characters have been depicted as obediently devoted to their men. There have been no traces of any opposition in them to the views of their men. P. Pandia Rajammal has brought to light how women had been treated before Independence through her article *Feminism in Indian English and Tamil Literature*:

During Pre-Independence day period, women were not only deified and exploited but also glorified. They were ideally gentle, warm, dependent, submissive, devoted, patient and adjustable. They were too distant from reality and too crude, moralized or sentimentalized. They were seen only as wife, mother, mistress and sex-object. (347)

Francis Bacon has also expressed his opinion regarding the behaviour of traditional women in their different assigned roles in his essay *Of Marriage and the Single Life*. He wants women to be “young men’s mistresses, middle-aged men’s companions and the old men’s nurses” (86). Women who are faithful to tradition are dependent on their parents before their marriage. After their marriage, they are dependent on their

husbands. Hence, they cannot enjoy any kind of independence in every stage of their growth in life.

All traditional women have been bestowed with virtuous traits in their characters and such good qualities are explicitly very dominant in their every action. Gandhi's strong belief that God has blessed women with great gifts is revealed when he praised women:

Women are not inferior but immeasurably superior to their men. They have greater intuition and stronger powers of endurance and courage than their men.

They have more self-sacrificing spirit for the well being of each and every member of their household. They display morally stronger effective appeal to the heart of every gender than their men do. (qtd. in Malik 22)

In spite of that, they have not been treated on equal terms with their men. They are considered to be the preservers of peace and happiness at home, but they are taken for granted. It is the universal truth that men are incomplete without their women but the real condition of women is to be pitied:

Man has subjugated woman to his will. He has used her as a means to advance his selfish qualification, to use her body for satisfying his sensual pleasures, to keep her as his instrument to promote his comfort in life but he has never desired to elevate her to his equal in status. Thus, he has done all only to debase and enslave her mind. (10)

As years have passed, the traditional women have had an access to educational and professional advancement. As a result, tremendous and unpredictable changes have

taken place in the attitudes and behaviour of women. There have also been better signs of great improvement in their living and thinking styles. They have come out of their traditional bindings and become modern women in their ways of life. Thus, their advancement in education and profession has directly paved the way for their inner selves to display their voices of assertion. Having become independent thinkers, they have started protesting against all sorts of things that have prevented them from deciding their own course of life to their liking.

The changes in the attitudes and in the consequent behaviour of educated women are nothing but natural and indispensable happenings in their life as they grow. These changes also brand them as women of modernity because they do not remain traditional as they have been brought up. They get their physical and mental outlook changed to suit to their education and profession. It is because “Life is not just a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged and it is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding them from the beginning of consciousness to the end” (Woolf 177). Many feminists and writers of Indian Diaspora have started supporting these new women and their struggle for empowerment. Their novels have also been based on feminism oriented themes and their protagonists are only women.

Indian women writers of Indian Ethnicity and Diaspora have based their novels on diverse themes pertinent to New Women. They have used their women characters as the representatives of all Indian women living all over the world in different identities. They have depicted familial, marital and sexual relationship of their women characters. They have given priority to educationally and professionally advanced women’s quest for gender equality and individual identity, and their existential predicament. They have

given their feminist voice to the voiceless women when they face their indescribable trauma arising out of their loyalty to and rebellion against established traditional and religious beliefs. They have also brought out women's ability and inability to adjust themselves to a new environment and cope with their situations in the midst of multiculturalism.

Depiction of the life of the women characters in the novels of women writers is not just an imaginative creation. But it is the re-creation of real life situations in which all New Women find themselves trapped because of the religious, ethnic and societal consideration of them as the gender wise inferior. The ways of living and thinking of the women characters is also true to life because it is seen in every woman of modernity all over the world. Being women themselves, the novelists have not simply stopped writing about the universal problems of women. They have written with the purpose of bringing to the visualization of the readers all the real life situations of women, particularly Indian women living as immigrants all over the world.

Entry of Indian women writers to the field of writing in English began with Toru Dutt. Since then, many women have chosen this field and showed their prowess in writing in English. Of all the genres of writing in English, it is only in the field of Indian fiction that women writers have dominated and are dominating. They have also imprinted their indelible names not only in the map of Indian Writing in English but also in the map of World English Literature. It is only these women writers who have highlighted the real status of Indian women in and outside India. But for them, the entire world would have remained in the dark, not aware of the positions of Indian women at

home and in the society. It is they who have realistically delineated not only the inner life of women but also their relationship with men and other women.

All women novelists have showed their solidarity with the other feminists in their fight for achieving equal rights for women. They have used their novels to voice their great concern for secondary and inferior status assigned to women in real life. They have made their women characters do everything individually and independently to cater to the needs of their personal desires. In making them do, they have created their women to rebel against all patriarchal restraints in order to establish gender equality. Their life-like portrayal of women is first to achieve good changes in the attitudes of patriarchy, society and religion towards women, and then to give emphasis on the immediate need for equality, respect and dignity of women in all fields of life, dominated by patriarchy. They have also created awareness not only in the hearts of men but also in those of women who particularly behave with patriarchal attitudes to other women who become their daughters-in-law.

Equal importance should be given to women wherever they are and in whatever status they are placed in spite of their different roles in life. It is very important that all women should have equality and individual identity because they are in no way either inferior to or weaker than men. They are morally stronger and culturally more firm than men. Pawan Malik has cited the positive views of Gandhiji to assert the superior virtues of women in his article titled *Relevance of Gandhiji's Thoughts in Current Perspective:*

To call a woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If true strength refers to only 'brute strength,' then a woman is less a brute than a man.

If one's strength is decided on one's moral power, then woman is immeasurably

man's superior because she is morally stronger than a man. Since a woman is blessed with the power of greater intuition, the stronger spirit of self-sacrifice, and the superior powers of endurance and courage, man without her woman becomes hapless. If nonviolence is the law of our being, the future is with woman. Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman? (22)

Hence, man should understand the virtues of his woman. He should respect her feelings, and treat her as his better-half and equal without whom he is a zero in life. He should selflessly help her woman achieve her ambitions in life without his ego dominating his self and standing as a hindrance to her advancement. Many women writers have written about the importance of women and acted as the voice of women through the depiction of their women protagonists.

The novelists like Manju Kapur, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Anita Nair, Sashi Deshpande, Shoba De, Arundhati Roy, Bharati Mukherjee, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Manju Kapur and Kiran Desai are the most popular among women writers. Each one in her own way has expressed her feminist feelings through the portrayal of her women characters. Kamala Markandaya has her women characters expressed their feelings even in their submissive and secondary roles to their men. She has not made them feel disheartened at the unfortunate happenings at home and their inability to find ways and means to satisfy their personal interests. She has explored their emotional reactions and their predicament. All her women characters remain unperturbed in their situations and make all attempts to give voice to their different consciousnesses through their own ways of living and get their individual identity established. Dr. Deepty Pandey observes:

The male is superior to the female, but there is no existence for a male without a female. Though a woman has been destined to be a house wife, her education and profession make her become equally superior to her man. But Markandaya's female characters are different because they show their superiority over other women. (194)

Kamala Markandaya has written ten novels, and *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), *Some Inner Fury* (1956), *The Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966) and *The No Where Man* (1972) are some of her very well appreciated ones.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala has used her creative abilities and displayed a variety of skills in her treatment of women characters. Her women appear in different avatars as per the demand of their situations. They are submissive, self-sacrificing, modest, assertive, aggressive and rebellious. Their behaviour "depends not only on their situation, but also upon the way in which they view themselves and on what kind of self attitude they have" (Kappuswamy 351). Some of her prominent novels are *To Whom She Will* (1955), *The Nature of Passion* (1956), *The Householder* (1960), *A Backward Place* (1965) and *Heat and Dust* (1975). M. Asnani Shyam expresses his view that all her novels:

Deal with the young who are inert, romantic but not very wise and the old who are cool, calculating and rigid. In all her novels, there is the head-on collision between the traditional and the modern, and between the East and the West. Such collusion has resulted in confusion. (80)

Nayantara Sahgal's novels are considered to be political both in content and intention. Yet, she has insisted on the importance of the independent existence of

women and voiced her deep concern over their oppression for being inferior female gender. She has shown her women suffer from the failure of marital life and live in loneliness. She has also made them strive hard to establish their identity against all odds. However, she has not made them as very passive partners, satisfying their husbands sexually without any identity of their own. She has portrayed the marital relationship of men with women for the sake. Iftikhar Hussein Lone in her article “Nayantara Sehgal: Feministic Currents in *Storm in Chandigarh* echoes the novelist’s view:

Sahgal exposes the emptiness of man-woman relationships due to gender inequality and injustice. Her women are self-willed and individualistic. They are deeply aware of their emotional needs and fervently strive for self-fulfillment. They show their courage in rejecting orthodox traditional social set-up in favour of liberal and unconventional ways of life. (1)

Most popular among Sahgal’s twelve novels are *A Time to be Happy* (1963), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), *The Day in Shadow* (1971), *Rich Like Us* (1985) and *Mistaken Identity* (1988).

Shoba De is the first woman novelist who has explored the ups and downs of the urban women. All her novels are against the male-dominated home and society where women are denied the freedom of expression and action. In her interview with Ajay Singh from the magazine *Asia Week*, she has said, “The women in my books are definitely not doormats. They are not willing to be kicked around” (Interview). Hence, her novels are treated as the protest novels. But at the same time, Shoba De brings out the truth that the enemy of woman is not her man but the woman herself. Her novels are

about love, lust, sex, dominance of patriarchy, jealousy, manipulation, gender equality and loveless lives of bored house wives living in luxury. *Socialite Evening (1989)*, *Starry Nights (1989)*, *Sisters (1992)*, *Sultry Days (1994)*, *Small Betrayals (1995)* and *Second Thoughts (1996)* are some of her best known novels. All her novels have been classified according to the themes they deal with such as familial relationships, sex and love and emancipation of women and their fondness for luxurious life.

Anita Desai has based her novels on the issues of familial and marital life of women and their predicament. Since her women are always in quest of meaningful existence, she has brought out the inner workings of their mind through ‘stream of consciousness’ and ‘interior monologue,’ techniques. Her women are neurotic, sensitive, dreamy and imaginative in their way of thinking and behaviour. Their problems mainly arise out of loveless and mechanical marital and sexual relationship. Her women follow all possible efforts “first to preserve their wholeness and sanity and then to get involved themselves in the painful process of achieving some meaning and value in life” (Jain 30). In spite of their positive approach to familial and marital life, her women characters cannot escape from the established inferior gender status. According to R.S. Pathak:

Anita Desai’s women are fundamentally dependent on men who are their lexicon and tropes of mastery, command and domination. Though they sometimes do attempt to assert their independence and self-sufficiency, they are not successful in their quest for identity. (20)

Some of her best known novels are *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *Voice in the City* (1965), *Bye, Bye, Black Bird* (1971), *Where Shall We go this Summer* (1975) and *Clear Light of the Day* (1980).

Bharati Mukherjee has captured the true temperament and mood of American society through her novels. Her women are Indian women immigrants and she has shown them as the victims of immigration and their cross-cultural identities. However, as immigrants, their problems are not only because they are Indians but also because they fight for their rights as women and then as individuals. But at the same, they feel Americanness when they are in India and Indianness when they are in America. Moreover, they feel insecure as marital women, and so they behave quite unexpectedly in their marital life. Her prominent novels are *The Tigers Daughters* (1971), *Wife* (1975), *Jasmine* (1989) and *Desirable Daughters* (2002).

As a powerful woman novelist, Anita Nair has revealed her concern for entire womanhood. She has shown her compassion for all women and yet she feels that they can never escape first from the choices they make to come out of the unpleasant happenings and then from the regrets for the failure of the choices. She has shown them leading their lives with the strained familial and marital relationship. Though her women live within the traditional bounds, they do not remain very passive. They protest against all types of injustice meted out to them for being traditional. Their acts thus show their independent voices of their untold plight. All her women characters are life affirming ordinary people. Her remarkable novels are *The Better man* (2000), *Ladies Coupe* (2001) and *Mistress* (2003)

Jhumpa Lahiri has also focussed her attention on the familial problems of Indian women immigrants, particularly younger generation, living in America. She has depicted them behaving with indifferent attitudes to the real values of life during their alien life. She has also brought out their predicament and consequent feelings of discomforts due to the loss of someone precious to their lives. She has then described how they cope with their situations, thinking that time is the greatest healer. Thus her characters manage to live as immigrants not only by keeping the native culture intact but also by adjusting themselves to American culture. She has two collections of short-fiction such as *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) and *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008), and two novels *Namesake* (2003) and *The Lowland* (2013).

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has dealt with only the lives of women in all her novels. She has insisted on the importance of traditionally arranged marriages for women and on the adjustment of married women to their marital lives in spite of unpleasant happenings. She has analyzed with marriage engagements, arranged marriages and the disintegration of familial and marital relationship of Indian women immigrants in her novels. She has shown how her women assert their individuality and independence and how they manage to maintain their identity, she has defined their individual identity as something deeper and something related to their spirit. Through them, she drives home the truth that the most unexpected thing in life will happen unexpectedly and therefore, in such situations, all women should be very positive in their attitudes. Her most popular novels are *Mistress of Spices* (1997), *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *The Vine of Desire* (2002), *Queen of Dreams* (2004), *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) and *One Amazing thing* (2010).

Shashi Deshpande's portrayal of her women is something different. She has made them openly articulate many of their hidden emotions. Her women always live in the set up based on a patriarchal framework. Their marital relationship is tension packed because of the oppressed sexual relationship with their men. However, every married woman does not confine herself to her man alone in her sexual relationship. What Manjari in *Moving On* has said about her ever wanting sexual desire is applicable to all the women characters of Deshpande. She has said, "Only the body, his body [that of her man or other man], only my body and my starved body. No thoughts, no feelings, but only sensations-physical desires" (*Moving On* 251). Thus, her women achieve their voice through their independent sexual relationships with not only their men but also other men. *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1982), *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983) *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1989) and *Small Remedies* (2000) are some of her familiar novels.

Kiran Desai, the daughter of Anita Desai, is of the view that all human beings, irrespective of their gender variations, have foibles and eccentricities in their characters. She has been aware that these characteristics automatically get reflected in their conduct in certain given situations. She is against one woman belittling another woman just because she is superior in status. She has shown this particular concern when she has portrayed the pitiable treatment of one group of Indian women at the hands of the other set of Indian women who are class and status conscious. She particularly finds fault with the Indian women immigrants who are reasonable for the bizarre state of affairs in the alien life of women:

Ideologies of womanhood have much to do with class and race as they have to do with sex. . . . It is the intersections of the various systematic networks of class, race, heterosexuality, and nation, which determine the status of women. (Mohanty 55)

She is of the view that if Indian women do not treat their fellow Indian women just because they are far inferior in social status, Indians should not find fault with the women of other nationalities who consider Indian women as ethnically inferior. Kiran Desai has only two novels to her name and they are *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006).

Arundhati Roy is not like other women novelists who have more than one novel to each of their names. She has only one novel to her name till this day and it is *The God of Small Things*. Yet, she has depicted the feelings of married women, their constant struggle against exploitation and torture of patriarchy. Homa Khaleeli, the staff feature writer of *The Guardian*, has written in her write-up, “Arundhati Roy has described herself as natural born feminist. Perhaps, it is not surprising that she decided to tear up the rule book when she found herself cast as the fairy princess of the rising middle class” (n.pag), Through the portrayal married women characters, she has also made the sayings of Simon de Beauvoir “woman has always been man’s dependent, if not his slave; the two sexes have never shared the world in equality” (20) become true.

As a novelist, Githa Hariharan has given voice to the survival tactics of women as the ways of liberation from the tradition and culture. She has portrayed her women with varied wishes and frustrations, desires and agony, and quest for self identity and self liberation. Her women never consider marriage and motherhood as the only purpose

of their existence. They rebel against all established conventions, which are curbing their individuality, and they liberate themselves as independent women. Her celebrated novels are *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), *The Ghost of Vasu Master* (1994), *When Dreams Travel* (1999) and *In Times of Siege* (2003).

Manju Kapur as a novelist has been endowed with the inherent virtue of liberated womanhood. She has a strong belief that every woman is the voiceless victim of social, religious and cultural practices of traditional patriarchal society. Hence, she has become their voices, not only by exposing their pitiable and helpless positions as daughters, wives and mothers but also by defending their rights for individual but recognized independent identity. She has become successful and very effective in her attempt through the portrayal of the independent actions of her women characters. She has made the real life incidents related to women get reflected through all her characters. In doing so, she has endorsed the view of Simon de Beauvoir that women are treated as secondary to men because of gender inferiority:

Every woman is defined and differentiated only with the reference to man but not man with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute whereas she is the other. (7)

She is a feminist every inch, and like every feminist, she wants every Indian woman to establish her economic, political, and social rights and opportunities on par with her man wherever she is and whatever her familial, social and professional status is. But being radical feminist, she expects every woman to assert her independence and prove that she is equally superior and dignified one like her man only within the limits of

traditional culture. Hence, she has never hesitated to show her opposition either to the supremacy of patriarchy or the violation of traditional limits by women.

Manju Kapur is a living novelist of India, and she is now aged about sixty seven. She is leading her retired life at Delhi with her family. Her immigrant life and teaching career at Delhi have left an indelible impression in her mind about the real status of women. Such impressions have found reflected in all her five novels. Since her works are about the familial and marital life of women belonging to middle and upper middle class, she is popularly known not only as the modern day Jane Austen of India but also as the most powerful chronicler of modern day Indian family.

Manju Kapur has got her post graduation and research degree in English Literature. She has worked as a lecturer for nearly thirty years at Miranda House, Delhi University. Her Indian and immigrant life has made her rich with the knowledge of the experiences of Indian women and provided her with plenty of feminist issues as the main themes for her novels. In her interview with another woman novelist Namita Gokhale at New Delhi, she had revealed her main intention of writing women oriented novels:

I obviously write about the things I know well - I wouldn't be able to write about them otherwise. But my novels are imaginative reconstructions. I feel uncomfortable writing about recognizable situations. The one exception was my first novel where I used some of the details from my mother's life, but this was with her permission. (2011)

Manju Kapur has dealt with different familial and marital issues in each of her five novels. She has depicted realistically the changing shades of an Indian middle class

life without much ado. She has highlighted women's problems in all her novels and such problems are many and varied in nature. The problems arise out of the traditional arranged marriages, those due to pre-marital and extra-marital relationship; those because of lack of understanding and love in marital life, those related to the inability of married women to be mothers, those relevant to the eligible women for marriage who prefer married men to unmarried men as their life partners; and those crop up due to the barrenness of married women, which leads to their divorce and their legal fight for the adoption of orphaned children. Satish Kumar Harit has echoed the voice of Manju Kapur regarding feminist problems:

Indian traditional society is organized around gender division in order to give more space to male for dominance. Right from the marriage, the bride's incorporation into the family begins. She is guided and trained into the lifestyle of her husband's family. Though she makes all efforts to devote herself sincerely to the wellbeing of the family, she is considered an outsider. Since her good education and intelligence are ignored, she cannot but feel frustrated and alienated. (59)

Manju Kapur has thus delved deep into every aspect of familial and marital life of women, particularly those who are educationally advanced and professionally well placed and who belong to upper middle class families. Her women characters are the representatives of modern women and they voice their predicament in various ways. Women characters from all the five novels of Manju Kapur - *Difficult Daughters* (1996), *A Married Woman* (2003), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant*, (2009), and *Custody* (2011) have been taken for the present study since the novels deal with the feminist

themes of conflict between freedom and conformity, defiance and survival, differentiation and commitment, tradition and modernity, and man and woman relationship. Moreover, the novels have been structured in such a way that all the women characters are invariably made to give voice to their rights and dignified life through their defiant attitudes but concrete and definite actions.

Development of Indian women over the years depends upon a particular socio historical context because it is this context that determines the significance of Indo-centric feminist perspective. Indian feminism is the legacy of equality in marital relationship and education as guaranteed by the Indian constitutional rights and it is quite different from the western model of feminism. The fictional writings of Indian contemporary women writers do not preach the necessity of change in the hostile attitudes of patriarchy but expect due respect and recognition for women as their equal other halves at home and in the society. There should be an accepted social re-arrangement in the amicable living conditions of women. The novels of Manju Kapur also stand as the best exemplification of these views in the portrayal of women characters.

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* is her first novel and it has brought her an honour when it got the Commonwealth Writers Award for the Best First Book Category in the Eurasia Region in 1999. It has been shortlisted for the Crossword book Award in India for fiction. It is a story about three women of one family, belonging to three generations. Kasturi was the first generation woman, Virmati as Kasturi's daughter was the second generation woman and Ida, the daughter of Virmati, was the third generation

woman. All the three were entirely different from one another in their point of view of life and accordingly they had kept their identity intact.

Kasturi as a mother was totally traditional in her way of thinking and living, and she never voiced her protest to anything that prevented her from establishing her individuality. As her daughter, Virmati was completely different from her mother in her attitudes to life. She was in a greater predicament not knowing whether she was to remain traditional or to be different from her mother in her ways of life. But at the same time, she entertained a strong desire in her heart for her liberation and individual identity. Ida who was the narrator of the happenings in her mother's life was an absolutely independent woman and she followed her own discretion to decide her destiny without allowing anyone's compulsion or interference, standing as an obstacle to her independence.

The life of Virmati is brought to light through the narration of Virmati's daughter Ida. She acts like a historian describing her mother's life from the age of ten till she became Ida's mother. Virmati had to forgo all her personal desires to look after her ten brothers and sisters as their second mother. Soon after her attainment of marriageable age, her mother and others talked only of her marriage. They appeared to be least bothered about knowing her inner self. Virmati refused to marry the man selected by her family and she even attempted to commit suicide to avoid arranged marriage. Thus she had escaped the established tradition of marriage. Then she pursued her education and her pursuit paved the way for her to fall in love with her married Professor Harish Chandra. She never heeded the advice of her mother and even married him to be his second wife. Through him she became the mother of Ida.

However, Ida did not lead her life like that of her mother. She was against scholarly pursuit like her parents. She wanted to be herself in her way of living. As her mother became a difficult daughter to Kasturi, she also became a difficult daughter to Virmati when she started behaving against the wishes of her mother. Her attitude to life was that she wanted to live for herself than for her father and mother. She followed it throughout her life. As Virmati failed to understand her mother Kasturi, Ida failed to understand her mother Virmati. However, she came to know of her mother and her rebellious attitude against tradition and accepted what her mother did was correct. She changed her negative thoughts about her mother and came to know the efforts her mother pursued to establish her real identity:

Ida became a typical daughter of the difficult daughter Virmati. She could not develop an understanding with her mother in her life time and after Virmati's death; her realization of her indifferent attitudes to her mother engulfed her with guilt. (Kahlon 3)

Manju Kapur's second novel *A Married Woman* is about the female protagonist Astha whose voice for freedom, individuality and equality for being a married woman has gone unheard in a house of tradition, dominated by patriarchal attitudes of husband and in-laws. Astha was the daughter of middle class parents, working as government servants. Her parents' one and only dream in their life was to see her settled in happy and comfortable marital life. They brought one suitor after another for her choice of a life partner but she refused them all. When they brought a man of Indian Diaspora by name Hemant as her suitor, she readily accepted him with the hope of independent alien life. Everything in her marital life went on as she had expected till she became a mother.

First she had given birth to a female child and then a male child. Soon after the birth of a male child, her marital and familial life net with loveless relationship from her husband and in-laws.

Astha felt greatly disappointed and lonely not knowing how to solve her familial problems. The arrival of a street artist Aijaz to her life gave her much anticipated relief and solace from her tension. Their relationship was a short-lived one since he died mysteriously during the Babri Masjid riots. Soon after his unexpected death, she established her relationship with his widow Pipeelika. These two women became very intense gay lovers unmindful of their surroundings and the gossips of the people. However, as the days passed, she became worried not as the wife of Hemant but as the mother of her two children. She was in dilemma whether she should stay with the tradition by being the mother of her children or she should take care of personal interests by being the gay lover without minding her status. However, her motherhood and tradition became triumphant over her unthinkable gay relationship. Hence, she returned home not as the wife of Hemant but only as the mother of her children.

Regarding this novel, Bhagabat Nayak expresses his view stating that “the purpose of Manju Kapur in this novel seems to be uni-dimensional with the idea of love that can really drive a woman into a gay relationship” (222). Manju Kapur has also expressed the same feeling during her interview with Nivedita Mukherjee. She has revealed her feminine attitudes saying, “My novel *A Married Woman* . . . describes actually a relationship of a woman with a woman, and this kind of relationship does not threaten a marriage as much as that of between a man and a man” (2002). From their views, conclusion that can be arrived at is that this novel exposes the real situation

prevailing in the domestic relationship and Kapur has remained very truthful in presenting the married women and the challenges they face at home of their husbands.

Manju Kapur's third novel *Home* is about happenings against conventions in the traditional joint family of the Banwarilals. Banwarilals was a business man dealing in saris at Delhi. He was a total traditionalist in his way of life and belief. He had a strong belief that the world was meant for men whereas home was for women. He also believed that man's duty was to carry forward his line of family to give children to women and her woman was to beget so that both joining together could carry forward the family line unbroken. He had two sons Yashpal the elder, and Pyare Lal, the younger. They had only one younger sister by name Sunita. They were all living according to the traditional convictions of their father and the brothers helped their father in his business.

Sunita got married but her husband was not a good man. Nobody knew except Sunita the reasons for her mysterious death, which had resulted in leaving her only son Vicky to the care of the Banwarilals. Yashpal married Sona after his love. His love marriage was against the traditional belief of his father and yet his father could not do anything. Yashpal had a daughter by name Nisha but she was born to him after a period of ten year marital life. However, the peaceful and joint family life of Banwarilals got shattered because of Vicky's sexual misbehaviour with Nisha. Vicky's attempt to violate Nisha's chastity forced her to stay with her aunty for safety.

Nisha, when she became a matured woman, was fortunate enough to have a collegiate education. Like her father, she also fell in love with her college-mate. It had its bad impact on the happiness and tradition of Banwarilal's home. Moreover, Nisha's

beauty got spoiled because of a disease. However, she had internal strength and confidence, she overcame everything unpleasant, and she became an independent business woman. At last, she settled into a marital life of her own by marrying a widower. But every unpleasant happening at home was not made a big issue because of the honour and name of the family of the Banwarilals. Satendra Kumar in his review of the novels has stated, “*Home* is extensively an investigative work within the house where each individual may chatter, murmur, question or complain but eventually everyone falls silent in deference to the wishes of the family as a whole” (123).

Manju Kapur’s fourth novel *Immigrant* is about Nina and her husband Ananda, the problems arising out of their arranged marriage and Nina’s change of attitudes to life after her immigrant life in Canada. Before her marriage and immigrant life, Nina had lived with her mother, a widow at Delhi. As she had post graduation degree in English Literature, she was working as a lecturer in Miranda House University College for Women in Delhi itself. She was not only well-versed in English but also in French. Her mother struggled to find a suitable match for Nina. At last, she fixed Ananda, a man of Indian Diaspora at Canada, as her daughter’s life partner. Soon after the marriage, Ananda left all alone for Canada and after some time she joined her husband. She, being an Indian, did not receive good treatment from the natives nor did Ananda treat her as his equal. She felt greatly shocked to find Ananda not manly in sexual relationship with her because he used to have constant problem of premature ejaculation.

As a wife, Nina could not become a mother of his child. She felt lonely at home and to drive away her loneliness, she looked for some work or other. She joined for her post graduate study in some local university at Canada and felt greatly relieved of her

tension with her husband of near impotency in satisfying her sexually. She also came to know of his extramarital relationship. She was greatly upset with her idyllic immigrant marital life shattered. However, like her husband, Nina had extra marital relationship with someone outside to satisfy her sexual appetite. Like Ananda, she also betrayed her marital bond. But on that account, she did not lose her morale but she had reconciled herself to the kind of alien life. She became a student of Library Science and continued her life as the immigrant wife of an immigrant Indian. Nina's life thus clearly provides "glimpses of Canadian and Indian cultures and unlocks how the society changes the person [Nina] and compels her to adjust" (Kumar 40).

Manju Kapur's fifth and the last novel is *Custody* and it is about human relationship, selfishness of married women, the divorce of women on different reasons, the predicament of two children having two mothers and two homes, and the final battle in the court of law for the rights to possess the children between the natural and the foster mothers. The two couples joined together through arranged marriage in the novel are Raman and Shagun, and Ishita and Suryakant. Shagun leaves Raman and marries Ashok Khanna. Ishita becomes divorced due to her inability to become a mother and marries divorced Raman for the sake of being a mother to the orphaned children of Shagun.

As husband and wife, Raman and Shagun were very rich. They had two lovely children one boy and one girl and they were Arjun and Roohi. As a married woman with two children, Shagun should not have fallen in love with another man but she did. For the manly appearance of her husband's boss Ashok Khanna, she mindlessly left her husband legally. She also thought that her children, if they were with her, would be a

great hindrance to her enjoyment of conjugal relationship with Ashok and so she deserted them. Ishita had to get divorced from her husband legally because of her barrenness. She married Raman not because she wanted to have continuous and legal sexual relationship but because of her desire to be the mother of Raman's children so that she could forget her curse and live like a mother with children

The outcome of the selfishness of Shagun, the mother, and motherliness of the unproductive Ishita was the predicament of the children born to Shagun through Raman. The children were left in the lurch and did not know what to do and where to go. Neither did they know to whom they should support, either their mother or their father. But their parents without minding the welfare of their own children became enemies to each other, fighting a legal battle over their possession. The novel brings out the truth that human relationship between man and woman should be within the limit. If it goes beyond the limit, the cordial and harmonious family life will go to any extent in order to obtain the legal possession of its children, thereby putting them in an inescapable predicament.

Many research articles on Manju Kapur's novels on various topics have been written and published in the national and international refereed journals and magazines. More number of research scholars both students and teachers pursuing their M.Phils and PhDs in regular and part-time streams have taken Manju Kapur and her novels for their pursuit. They have also presented papers both in the national and international seminars and conferences on their chosen topics on Manju Kapur's novels. Many have submitted dissertations and theses on the works of Manju Kapur in various Indian Universities.

Dr. Lakshmi Sharma has written an article on the topic “Emergence of New Women in the Novels of Manju Kapur” (2008). *India*. She has discussed how Manju Kapur’s women have defied patriarchal notions that have confined them to domesticity and how they have asserted their individuality and believed in self-reliance through education and profession. Dr. Kalpana Rajput in her article entitled *Self-Syndrome in the Novels of Manju Kapur* (2015) is of the view that all the protagonists appear to be searching for their firm grounds interestingly from a wrong threshold. They all fall in love first and their search for the self identity becomes secondary. Asha Saharan has studied Manju Kapur’s novels on the topic “Perspective of Body in Manju Kapur’s Fiction” (2015). She has analyzed how Manju Kapur has treated the gendered body as a source of rejection and celebration in socio-political culture.

Sheeba Azhar and Syed Abid Ali in their article on “Portrayal of Indian Middle Class Women in Manju Kapur’s Novels: Aspirations and Realities” (2002) have highlighted their point that all her women are not silent rebels, but outspoken, bold, and determined ones. They do not depend on others to sort out their domestic situations and they always proceed to tackle the situations in their own way. Though they are educated and they enjoy independence, they do not blossom into new women in the real sense of the term. They use their inherent virtues of adjustment, compromise and adaptation as per the need of the situations.

Sushila Chaudhary and Usha Sharma in their article *Feminism in India and Manju Kapur’s Fiction* have first brought out the basic definition of feminism in Indian context. Their article specifies the direction in which feminism in Indian English Fiction has evolved and the kind of feminism Kapur has adopted to scrutinize the problems

besetting the Indian women. Kapur's feminist concern has related to the faithfulness of women to the traditional and cultural habits of India. Hence, Western theories on feminism cannot be applied blindly to analyze feminist issues in India because as per the Western feminism, women are equal to men and they can hold any office like their men for their development. In India, tradition, It also underlines the importance for the Indians to evolve their understanding of feminism to tackle problems unique to the Indian situations.

Anwesh Roy Chaudhury and Dr. Joydeep Banerjee in their article on "Isolation in Liberation in Manju Kapur's Novels" have brought out the emergence of an essential Indian sensibility with an expression of cultural displacement, a voice of protest for autonomy, for a separate identity of women. Dr. Dharmendra Singh in his research article "Cultural Displacement and Double Identity in Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant*" (2014) has dealt with how an Indian immigrant has managed to survive in a totally new environment and culture despite his or her identity problems.

Chaudhari Minaben Jesangbhai in "Novels of Manju Kapur-A Thematic Study" (2014) has analyzed how Manju Kapur has based each novel on a particular theme. Such themes are the daughters' attempt to establish their individuality against their mothers' patriarchal bent of mind towards them, the problems, which every married woman faces during her marital life, the identity crisis of the Indian immigrants in America and Canada, and the predicament of the grown up children to keep their parents with them.

R. Suguna in her "Psychological Exploration of Extroverted Women Characters in Manju Kapur's Novels (2014) has critically analyzed how women protagonists first

try to maintain balance in life and then break the shackles of tradition and prejudices. P.Elizabeth Kalpana in her article *Diasporic Sensibility in Manju Kapur's Immigrant* deals with an Indian woman immigrant in Canada. Since Indian culture and individuality are often alien ideas, it focuses immigrant's marital bliss, familial life and the change in such women's attitudes. Though Indian woman feels lonely, she develops a new attitude towards her alien life and goes ahead with it.

Santoshkumar Patil in his article on "Feminine Bonding of Love and Passion in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman*" (2012) has pointed that existence of a female bonding between two women is only the natural outcome of the mismatched marriage and its unexpected ensuing dissatisfaction in sexual relationship. Malti Agarwal in her article "A Gynocentric Text with Diasporic Issues Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant*" (2002) has beautifully analyzed the sensitive thought process of an Indian immigrant woman. She has also brought to the knowledge of Indian readers that the immigrants time and again are seen languishing for their native country and for all conventions, against which they have rebelled though they have established their individual personality.

Swati Srivatsava and Fatima Rizvi in "The Concept of Self in the Creations of Manju Kapur" (2010) have clearly shown how women shoulder the burden of being females and hold the responsibility of being mothers to the other members of their own gender in the house. However, they never hesitate to give voice to their individuality. S. Daniel has pursued his research on the topic *Individuality as the Gateway to Womanhood-A Study of Manju Kapur's A Married Woman and Custody* for his M.Phil dissertation in March 2015 at Madras Christian College. He has analyzed the

importance of motherliness and he has also pointed out the reactions of other women if they lack this personal virtue as women.

Ritu Sharma and Tanu Gupta in “Changing Images of Women in Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters*” (2013) have analyzed how women transcend the threshold of their homes, which is considered as taboos in the present social fabric. They have also described the predicament of women during pregnancy, childbirth, motherhood, abortion and divorce. Prof. D. Amalraj has written an article on the topic “New Woman” as a Misnomer to *Virmati*: A Study of Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughter*. It has been published in 2015 as one of the articles in a book titled *Women Writers and Writings about Women*, edited by Avadh Kumar, Secunderabad. The author has analyzed critically the wrong path taken by *Virmati* under the guise of a new woman.

B. Jayashree in her article. “Volatile, Violent, and Vibrant: Cultural Nationalism as Represented in Manju Kapur’s Novels” (2013) has dealt with the trauma of women who wish to get more freedom but get crushed violently by a patriarchal society. Yet, educated women brave all such discrimination and opposition to establish their individual quality in situations to suitable to their act. T. Sri Devi of Nurool Hassan University has pursued her research for her doctorate on the topic *No More Oppressions-Emergence of New Women: A Study of Manju Kapur’s Women*. She has examined how women protagonists of Manju Kapur have overcome the patriarchal oppressions and established their individuality.

Seema Dhillon in *The Womanly Observation by Manju Kapur* (2012) has critically analyzed how Manju Kapur’s woman characters have made attempts to succeed in their fight to assert themselves and how the endless vicissitudes of life have

made them matured. Dr. V. Jayasre has got her doctorate on the topic *The Familial and Societal Relationship of Indian Women – A Study of Manju Kapur’s Novels* at Bharathiar University in February 2015. She has studied about the relationship of Manju Kapur’s women with others both men and women in their attempt to establish their identity.

Dr. Ram Sharma in his article titled *Individuals and Society in the Novels of Manju Kapur* has deal with the life of women and their struggle under the oppressive mechanism of closed society. Neha Chauhan’s article *Voice of 21st Century’s New Women: Clash between Desire and Duty in Manju Kapur’s The Immigrant and Custody* has focused on the struggles of the middle class new women for their emancipation from economic, political and social bondages. In their struggle, they feel confident, outspoken, bold, determined and action oriented. S. Geetha Lakshmi in her thesis on the topic *Dialectics of Passion and Pragmatism in the novels of Manju Kapur* has brought to light the crisscross pattern of the life of women struggling between tradition and modernity in their attempt to establish their identity.

Taking into consideration of all the critical writings about the quest for identity of Manju Kapur’s women, placed under Review of Literature, the present thesis has also been analyzed on the same line but with a difference. Individual woman as a daughter or a daughter-in-law or a wife or a mother or mother-in-law establishes her individuality in her respective role. Each one’s attempt has been dealt with on the topic “Polyphony of the Female Voices in the Novels of Manju Kapur.” Every woman in her assigned role has aspirations and personal desires but no woman simply stops with entertaining such ambitions in her heart itself. She wants to enjoy them without any constraints and so she

establishes her individual identity in words and deeds in given situations against the patriarchal attitudes of other man and woman such as her father or husband or mother or mother-in-law.

Establishing the rights to express feelings of man and woman has been there since time immemorial. However, there are limits for a man and his woman in their familial and marital life, and if either of them crosses the limits, both of them have to face unpleasant happenings and strain their relationship. Like a man, every woman has the right to express her wishes and see her wishes materialize through her actions. If she establishes her rights, she can be an independent being, quite free from any male oriented restrictions. Therefore, an individual mentality in the thoughts and deeds of women has not been a modern trend.

The attitudes and the subsequent actions of modern women, which are clearly visible in their different roles and statuses, are not their inherent assets alone. Such attitudes have been there in the traditional women of the past too. But those women did not give voice to the feelings because they considered such qualities as indispensable to their gender. They did not show any signs of protest or expect anything better, other than their showering of love on the loved ones. Never did they show any indifferent attitudes in their behaviour to their men. They had been placed between two types of 'likes' like what they like and what their men like. They were made to choose to live as their men liked.

In the modern days, women want to be given special privileges and due recognition for being daughters, wives and mothers at patriarchal home. If they do not get what they want, none can predict how women will react towards their parents, their

husbands, and their children. When they react, they entertain the attitude of “come what may” and they are ready to face any consequences to achieve their quest. In doing so, they become solely responsible for the strained relationship among the members of the family and for their downfall from their secured status in life. But women with independent earning thrive against all situations in their established free life.

The present thesis has been divided into five chapters and the first chapter is earmarked for Introduction and the fifth chapter is for Conclusion. In between these two chapters, the thesis statement “Polyphony of Female Voices” has been discussed critically into three different Chapter titles. “Individuality of Daughters” in Chapter II, “Submissive and Assertive Wives” in Chapter III and “Dominant Mothers” in Chapter IV has been analyzed individually on the women characters relevant to their roles. All the three titles have been the logical and most convincing conclusion of the thesis statement. It has been shown how the women characters of Manju Kapur voice their rights for individuality and independence, how they get their voices reflected in their different roles, how they brave all opposition for their totally different attitudes and how they have had their voices clearly heard and looked into by the characters themselves in the form of their individual and independent actions.

Almost all women characters, appearing in all the five novels are considered to be an embodiment of the term ‘polyphony’ because they never hesitate to give voice to their rights to live an independent life either at home or outside as their right. The term has been based on their different voices they give in their different roles they play as daughters, wives and mothers. In their different roles, their way of registering their voice for individuality, equality and independence has been discussed in detail. In the

planning of this thesis, in the secondary references cited verbatim or as paraphrased ones, which are pertinent to the roles of women protagonists, and the acknowledgement given to such references, the guidelines followed have been as given in the 7th edition of *MLA Hand Book for Writers of Research Papers*. .