Chapter 5

Summation

Literature is a widely recognized art form that mirrors life. Life is not the same for all though all are nothing more than human beings. Apart from God made differences in features, man has invented infinite differences and a set of consequent treatment to each of the type. At all points of difference man took chance to treat low either of the types like Black, White, rich, poor, civilized, tribal, literate, illiterate and so on. The society in its terrific face has not barred even the difference between male and female and from here it has taken the opportunity to subjugate its women folk.

While numerous rules and practices are formulated to eradicate all such marginalized treatments, the status of women still remains with a vast space for growth and equality. Laws of any kind to safeguard women are perfectly laid and preached but poorly practiced. Not only men but women too to an extent accepted and believed that women were meant to work, serve and act as directed by her male partner forgoing any individual self of her own. Woman who as a wife suffered the indifference became mother and mother-in-law just to repeat the history.

Anyway it is high time to highlight the indifference suffered by women. Era of women pursuing their individual self has been set on. The women group organizations have less work at the urban areas where most of the women have found their purpose and the way to achieve it by them. The same is reflected in literature. The problems suffered by women are raised in the works of many Indians writing in English, namely R.K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Das, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai and so on. Gone are the days where men writers had to come out to raise voices on behalf of the women. With Kamala Das the first voice of woman by a woman was initiated. This paved way for a
close understanding of the various shades of a woman’s mind and plight. While the writers of the past brought before us the hidden subjugation of women, today’s writers are busy sketching the ways how the present women are overcoming their indifference.

Writers at times sound shockingly audacious in their description of modern woman, but it is nothing more than literature which is the mirror of life. Undoubtedly the quest of today’s woman is self-identity. The powerful tool that she handles with excellence for achieving this is her attitudes that she has at her demand. She strongly believes in her purpose in life which is beyond just marrying, housekeeping and parenting. She realizes her responsibility over her life and consequently is aware of her decision making power. She refuses to depend on any neither for financial nor for emotional well-being. One among the many new attitudes of her is that towards love and marriage.

The prevailing norms of purity and chastity for woman and promiscuity for the man, are giving way to more considerate points of view- the urges and the raw calls of the body and sublime demands of the soul. Extra-marital sex (though pricking at times) has come to be regarded with greater understanding or flexibility, depending on the circumstances: If men have reasons for a particular line of action, women may have theirs, too! (Sinha K.K, 14)

Manju Kapur as a feminist writer analyses the transition of women by placing women of various generation together and thereby is making it easier to observe the crust of her novels. Her novels on the whole have all her female protagonists as protesters of any of the many social codes against women and her status. Each novel is a replica of the concerned social expectation from woman and her reaction to the same in that particular period. As a result Kapur’s novels stay unique from each other except for occasions where history is repeated.
The present study “From Naivety to Prudence in the Novels of Manju Kapur” has been intended to mark the development of the protagonists from naivety to prudence and the chapters are divided in the manner so as to feel and realize the same. The Introduction which serves as the first chapter throws light on the novel as an art form in India, its evolution in the hands of Indian women writers, the remarkable contribution of Kapur through all her five novels (Difficult Daughters, A Married Woman, Home, The Immigrant and Custody) and the theme of woman’s transition in it.

The initial mundane anxieties of Kapur’s women characters are depicted in the second chapter entitled, “Stock Anxieties”. The third chapter “Subjective Strive” discloses the psychological and physical disturbance undergone by the characters. The fourth one “Social Consciousness” exhibits the awareness and maturity attained by the characters socially and personally. The Summation which is the last chapter of the study summarizes the final phase of Kapur’s protagonists in the five novels by highlighting their vital decisions towards their future. By stating so the researcher justifies the title of the study.

The various struggles of Kapur’s women characters come to an end with their success and wisdom. They either attain their goal or give up their desires but they do so with an ultimate satisfaction at heart. Their goals are both professional and personal. Except for Kapur’s Difficult Daughters and Custody, her other three novels namely A Married Woman, Home, and The Immigrant has in it both the heroine’s professional and personal success. Virmati and Shagun entirely attribute their happiness and desire to their relationships especially to that of their most adorable life partner. Virmati centers Harish in every little move of her life, and Shagun fights a tough battle at the risk of her reputation for the sole reason of leading a life with Ashok Kanna. But Astha, Nisha and Nina have both the professional and familial desires. In addition to their various other
familial roles and wishes Astha strove and accomplished herself an artist, Nisha became an established entrepreneur and Nina a librarian.

Kapur has not missed the sensitive analysis of her women’s personal life. She boldly ventures to draw her characters in unusual relationships. Some take steps back from it, while some tread forward courageously. Astha in lesbian relationship and Nina in extra-marital relationship get back from their journey. But Virmati in love with a married professor and the already married Shagun in love with an unmarried man refuse to return back.

Virmati’s consciousness and courage reaches its climax on being inspired by the bold activities of Kiran. Her desire for establishing social identity is “a value changed, almost a charismatic turn, salvation” (Nirmala, 62). While Kiran as a child shows such courage, she feels ashamed to fret about her petty domestic matters especially at a time when the nation is on trial. She finally resolves her crisis and resumes her strength “I too must take a stand. I have tried adjustment and compromise, now I will try non-cooperation” (Kapur, 259). She tries to do all that she desires. “What is necessary to break the patriarchal mould, and for Virmati to have tried to do that in the forties was a great achievement” (Juneja, 68). With a determined will, she refuses to go to Amristar for holidays as she disliked fighting Ganga with cunningness, guile or seduction. Realizing the real value of her education, she decides to repeat her post graduation.

For the first time, Virmati becomes concerned about the social happenings. The Calcutta ravages affected her deeply, though she was good at ignoring things not actually under her nose. Dora Sales Salvador in her note to her Spanish translation of Difficult Daughters oppositely stresses, “Kapur emphasises the efforts made at that time by numerous women who, while demanding equal opportunities, equal access to education
and life-opportunities going beyond convention were a visible force in the non-violent resistance to the British” (364). In the unrest condition in both cities, the practical solution was to go to Amritsar where her husband was waiting there alone.

At the end of the novel when Virmati comes home to Moti cottage, the first thing she did was to shift every belonging of Ganga to the dressing room, a place where once Virmati lived in depression and loneliness. At last, she felt light-hearted, conquered and won. Her mind was drained of all emotions though Amristar turned into a city which washed over with the scourge of death. She had never had so much space around her. May be this was really what she had fought for all along, space to be. The Epilogue later conveys that Virmati had just one child Ida and led a happy life.

The heroine of Kapur’s second novel *A Married Woman* who joins hand with Virmati is Astha. Like Virmati, Astha too is introduced with her usual anxieties and by the end of the novel she exhibits a new image of wisdom. After various lessons learnt from various situations, Astha by now has found ways to shine both in professional and personal life. Her change from naivety to prudence is beautifully and vibrantly brought out by Kapur through a description of her posture. “As her brush moved carefully over the canvas, her hand grew sure, her back straightened, she sat grimmer on her stool, her gaze became more concentrated, her mind more focused” (Kapur, 299). Calmness settled over her in a tenuous and fragile manner. She is reminded of her own name which meant faith and consequently with faith in her own self she looked forward. It was all she had. “She is conscious of her self-fulfillment like a post colonial woman and carves out a life for herself violating social codes that restrict her from asserting her own womanhood” (Singh, 161).
Astha worked day and night for her exhibition. Even while Hemant disliked her life getting revolved around those canvasses, she did not go far from it. Work was the only place she could forget everything, and become her mind, her hand and the vision inside her head. Arrangements were ready for the exhibition with a remarkable help from Hemant. Yet Astha was not moved but suspected his joy for having her work get over. “It is a good beginning” (304) said Hemant when his wife sold half of her paintings and made almost two lakhs out of it. As Jha Ira studies “Manju Kapur explores the inner vents of her protagonist’s mind in landscapes which are mysterious yet awe-inspiring and going through it, the readers have the sensation of crossing the mysterious land of Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan*” (76).

Pipee all the more recognized Astha’s achievement. Her appreciation made her a stranger in front of Astha. From time to time they parted at heart. With the imaginary of bricks and wall, Kapur puts it clear. “But the wall between them was by now quite high, and from time to time they both threw another brick on it” (304). It was 6th August the day for Astha to overcome Pipee’s departure from her life. Astha drove to Vasant Kunj for the last time, climbed the steps of the flat for the last time, and rang the bell once again for the last time. “Last time, for the last time, rang irritatingly in her mind” (305). Always they were ants to gather and now Pipee alone was journeying twenty hours to be ant somewhere else. In the flat she watched Pipee doing last minute things. Later their car was one of the streams going to the International Airport, all saying good bye to people they loved. The admiring imagery and perception of Kapur makes reading her a pleasure. Here she had not made the car move but the stream of the car to move and say good bye.

With a last kiss, good bye and take care, Pipee was lost from the eyes of Astha even before, she has wheeled her trolley through the entrance door. Back to home, Astha could not reply to any of Hemant’s question about Pipee and her departure. Mechanically she
did the things she ought to do and lay on her bed absolutely still. “Motion of any kind was painful to her. Her mind, heart and body felt numb” (307). While Pipee’s inspiration made Astha conscious, her separation made her unconscious. Astha’s numbness continued for days after which she felt stretched thin, thin across the globe.

The relationship between the couple ended but Astha’s growth and evolution the fruit of the relationship stayed intact. Her inborn desires and longing were better expressed through her paintings. Her creations turned out to be strong and effective statements. They brought her absolute and ultimate comfort. Thus as in the words of Seema Malik, Astha is Kapur’s New Woman “Conscious, introspective, educated, wants to carve a life for herself to some extent she even conveys a personal vision of womanhood by violating current social codes” (171).

Nisha is the protagonist of Kapur’s third novel Home. Like Virmati and Astha, Nisha’s thoughts too turned wise and new from her early anxieties. It is in Chapter XXVI of Home that Kapur brings out the significance of its title. “Now you are home” expressed Arvind. Nisha began her service to her mother-in-law, as fed in her mind from early years. New relatives in and around visited her. She received them and gave attention, care, concern and food, with little time left over for anything else. Nisha was no more naïve to her purpose in life. Ten days later she took the plunge. She well realized not to expect Arvind or his mother to take her business seriously. One morning she said openly to her mother her plans to go to Karol Bagh to supervise her work. She had such a tough time to seek their permission and move out. She understood that working was not going to be easy. She could better initiate Pooja to help her in the pricing. As she checked the accounts, she observed them neatly recorded by Pooja. The relatives have slowly taken it as a family business and she could not be there to plug the leaks.
Nisha soon conceived which made the distance between her and her business still farer. She felt happy that at least in one part of her life she has performed as expected. But, yet the thought of her business stood dominating and disturbing in her mind. No one, neither her mother-in-law nor her husband was interested in her interest. She was worried seeing Pooja running away fast with her business. On discussing the issue with Rupa, the latter patted and induced confidence in her to restart a business anytime and anywhere that she preferred. Raju soon visited Nisha with a proposal to hand over the business to Pooja. Nisha understood the practical difficulties at present. “All right” she sighed, “let it go” (333). Nisha handed over everything except the use of the title, Nisha’s creations. “That good will, that reputation was not transferable. One day she would resurrect it, one day it would be there, waiting for her” (333). With this strong hope, she began to enjoy her present state. Months later she gave birth to twins, a girl and a boy.

Nina of *The Immigrant* longed for a company when the novel opened, but towards the end she looks forward for a new path where there would be no husband. She felt the need to be herself. Her professional success supported her. With her excellent academic record, she received encouraging responses. She was confident to get the job. Interviews had always been easy for her. She admired the prettiness of the landscape and felt nothing tying her down anywhere. “She was travelling away from Halifax, deliberately pulling at the bonds that held her” (333). Nina’s decided to discover her individual self. She thought of those strangers who had been nice to her on the path. Though nothing was permanent, interacting with them made her stretch easier.

Kapur hits at the significance of her title *The Immigrant*. Nina realized that everything is temporary and that was the ultimate immigrant experience. Nothing would attach steadily to the rest of the life, but that teaches one the different ways to belong and make journey less lovely for a while. “when something failed it was a signal to move on. For
an immigrant there was no going back” (333). Nina was now heading towards fresh territories and fresh circumstances. Nina’s transformed intentions could be concluded in Kapur’s final description of her, “When one was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home. Pull of your shallow roots and move. Find a new place, new friends, new family. It has been possible once, it would be possible again” (334).

After a long struggle of missing the children, Shagun gets a date for the court hearing. “Custody of both children will be reopened” (407). On November 26th, everybody connected to the case appeared before the judge. Ishita brought Roo, in a manner that even the judge would be convinced of her care and concern for the child. Meanwhile Shagun too confidently stood there with the rightful position of the biological mother.

Raman, Ishita, Roo and Shagun neared the judge’s chamber. Shagun began her complaint first and straight. Raman has been refusing to send her daughter to meet her over two years, with the false excuse of sickness and doctor’s certificate. She then pointed out her faithfulness, when she returned the children to him safely every time. Shagun with clear strategies explains Raman’s fault in spite of her honesty and then moves on to her purpose. She reminds the judge of her young daughter, especially growing without any maternal influence. She ends up with the mention of a step mother in her place.

To the question of custody given up, Shagun honestly says her past, “My marriage to this man had broken down due to irreconcilable differences, and he would only give me a divorce if I gave him custody” (411). Before she continued any further, Ishita interrupted to convey the child’s own interest to stay with her, and to this Shagun explains the way the little girl is persuaded to turn against her own mother. The judge goes on to the question of the presence of her new husband. Shagun had only a negative answer but managed to explain his high position which demands his presence at his office inevitably.
Soon Roo is left alone with the judge, where she expresses her willingness to love and live with Ishita, her mother.

The verdict gives Roohi to Ishita and Raman, and Arjun to Shagun. Though Shagun succeeded in taking Arjun into her new family set up, she could not make the same out of her eight year old Roo. Roohi who is turning five is old enough to sense the difference between the real and the biological mother. Ishita’s care too increased simultaneously. Much of her efforts were put up in training Roohi for her interview at one of the best schools in Delhi. Soon Shagun filed a contempt of court case, as she was refused to see Roo with various false excuses. The day of courts’ hearing was announced, for which Ishita reminded Roo, day and night, how she should prefer her for Shagun.

Ishita’s love and efforts towards Roo gave fruit in the form of court’s verdict. Roo was her’s thereafter. Ishita and Roo moved to the taxi, while Raman had things to do back in the court. Nothing bothered Ishita anymore. Though Ishita couldn’t help Raman with winning Arjun, she believed in the happiness she could transmit through Roo. She opened the little finger of Roo, her daughter and kissed the palm, thanked the god. “Confidence flooded her. She had won this first, most difficult round” (415). She dared to face all possible tricks of delay, if Shagun was to appeal further. Roo was eight now and within four years, she was independent to choose and it would be obviously Ishita, making her safe forever. “In the mean time victory lay with the possessor” (415).

At the end of the present study “From Naivety to Prudence in the Novels of Manju Kapur”, the transition underwent by Kapur’s protagonists could be obviously perceived. They are not the same in the end of the novel as they were found to be in the beginning. In the beginning of the novels all the protagonists of Kapur aspire and live the pleasures of life as expected of them by the society. But their exposure and awareness to their own
The transition of Kapur’s protagonists is evidently highlighted by placing close Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. “A Theory of Human Motivation” is the title of the research paper studied by the famous psychologist Abraham Harold Maslow, where he has attempted to understand human motivation. He arranged all the needs of humans in a hierarchy containing five levels. Each person is said to move through the hierarchy by fulfilling each level of needs. His theory of needs include Physiological or Biological needs, Safety needs, Social needs, Esteem needs and that of Self-actualization need, where one becomes the best one can be. The need here is to maximize one’s potential.

By giving a step by step adherence to these needs, the present study confirms the growth of the protagonists towards prudence. The path they choose to prove their might may differ or appear socially unacceptable but it is nothing more than one of the many ways woman tries to establish herself as an equal human of flesh and feelings. Kapur’s novels are more of a woman’s message to a woman than that of woman’s to a man. Similarly her novels demand more of woman’s contribution to the society than that of the society’s to the woman. Though some may interpret the social evils in Kapur’s works as the personification of male chauvinism, one could not evidently and effectively find the same in reading her. Her male characters are drawn as plain as they are for they neither cause serious hurt nor contribute great support for their females. They are just a typical representation of present society which has sowed the seeds of superiority in the minds of
its men. Thus Kapur’s works are greatly studied as novels of female evolution than that of male dominance.

The mention of various social issues is not vehemently accused or blamed but only makes one be aware and encourages for action. Kapur is a writer, who refuses to socialize much and consequently her writings are a firsthand impression of a woman on her society. The society with all its insane codes regarding woman and her limitations can be changed but not by blaming and accusing but only by individual realization. This is what is practiced in Kapur’s novels. She creates characters that become the change they want to see, especially her female protagonists. By placing various natured women adjacently, Kapur highlights her protagonist’s unique attitudes. While some characters narrowly refuse to alter their lives by altering their thinking, some are fortunately conscious from the beginning of the novel. But it is the protagonists who in the beginning act like puppets and later realize an urge towards individualism. In this thirst for their identity they move forward with determination and achieve a state of mind that makes them feel happy of their being.

Social issues dealt in Kapur’s novels are of two types of which one is the injustice carried out against woman on the basis of gender discrimination and the other is the injustice against human in general on bases of political, religious and cultural grounds. Be it any type of issue, Kapur invites and encourages her women protagonists to play dual role by both voicing for the social issues against the nation and by solving the issues in her way too. Virmati of Difficult Daughters marries the married professor with determination and the same time contributes to the partition victims also. Astha of A Married Woman proves her stand as an artist and simultaneously gives voice against religious issues through her painting. The greatest challenge of Nisha, the protagonist lies in her development into an entrepreneur though brought in an orthodox family where
women’s duty begins and ends only as a wife. Nina of The Immigrant succeeds as a librarian and at the same time is aware of her country’s political ongoing. The might of Shangun and Ishita of Custody lies in making clear their most complicated familial bonds towards husband, lover and children. These two women finally settle in a new family of their choice after realizing the pros and cons of the existing judicial system.

Kapur shows her protagonists in the light of her inferior status and the consequent mental trauma suffered due to the same. She uses her artistic talent to point and explore the subtle unseen failures suffered by woman namely, refusal to love, refusal to education and thereby to profession, refusal to take part in social activities, refusal to make life’s vital choices and decisions in all financial, emotional and familial. But she at no cause demands the society’s helping hand to change the situation instead she educates her women to realize their responsibility towards their own lives first and secondly their responsibility towards social happenings of the day. While women of the past concerned themselves only to their familial roles, Kapur’s works register a permanent instinct in every woman reminding their duties towards themselves and their nation too.

In her debut novel Kapur expresses her message clear, stating that “society would be better off if its females were effective and capable” (Difficult Daughters, 163). This statement of Kapur evidently conveys the twin aim of her works: to educate the woman both of her duties towards herself and that of her society. This invaluable truth identically echoes the firm belief of our former Prime Minister Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru who believed that in order to awake people it is the woman who must be awakened and if once she is on the move then the whole nation moves.

Kapur’s works are filled with lofty themes from various perspectives paving way for further studies on her. Research aspirants have ample choices to choose their study in
Kapur and her works. Kapur’s social issues could be studied on a still elaborate basis. Her still refusing women characters that encourage woman subjugation can be explored. Woman’s role in social activities, education and profession could be expanded. Kapur’s features as a post colonial woman writer are also a wide area of study. Comparing and contrasting Kapur with various Indian and Foreign writers paves way for an interesting study.