Manju Kapur’s writing style is mind blowing and soul shaking. The mind of the reader evokes against the plight and struggle of Indian woman. Her fiction tries to portray today’s woman who has turned and thrown the mantle of tradition, culture identity and social customs. Most of her fiction takes shape in the family background. In an interview with Jai Arjun, she says –

‘Literature by women about families, always has these larger consideration, with years of studying texts, it becomes almost second nature to look

A Ph.D. Thesis, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad
beneath the surface at social and economic forces, gender relationships and how they are played out in an arena that, in my writing happens to be the home. But then all sort of things happening outside do affect what is happening inside the home.’ [Kahlon, Maneeta: 2011: 3]

*Home* is one of her finest novels. It is the description of the struggle of a woman. Ajay expresses –

‘It suggests a kind of domestic bliss, a state of gender equilibrium in which the protagonist and other subsidiary characters attempt to reconstruct novel set of circumstances.’ [Ajay and Bajaj Nitasha: 2013: 56]

The protagonist of the novel, Nisha lives the life in the shackles of responsibilities. The novelist not only describes the plight of woman in the joint family, but their sacrifices for the family. Anupama Chaudhary observes –

‘*Home* reveals a disturbing home truth that joint families can both destroy and preserve our maturity, individuality and mental progress.’ [Huse, Santosh: 2012: 34]

Thus, it is a novel about the quest of identity of three women, especially Nisha, who struggles against the conventional tradition of family. Her family is conventional and traditional. It never adopts the new idea and gives up the old one. Why does Nisha suffer a lot? The answer is only one because she is a ‘woman’. Simon de Beauvoir asserts about the woman –

‘One is not born, but rather becomes woman. No biological psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the female presents in a society it is civilization as a whole that produces this gesture …… which is described as feminine.’[Ibid: 35]

The novel focuses on three female characters - Sona, Rupa and Nisha who claim their identity in their own way. The story begins with the two sisters, Sona and Rupa. One is a good looking and other is plain. Both sisters
have the same struggle in their life. Sona is married with the son of a cloth merchant, Banwari Lal. He is a central figure of the Lal family. The family has a strong belief in tradition. Hence, they stick to the conventional ideas. Yashpal, an eldest son of Lala Banwari Lal, fall in love at first sight with Sona. But, Banwari Lal sticks to the conventional principal of arranged marriage. Yashpal is much aware of the concept of his family about marriage –

‘His parents did not take kindly to this threat. They were traditional business people. In order to remain financially secure, and ensure the family harmony that underpinned that security, marriages were arranged with great care. The bride had to bring a dowry, come from the same background, and understand the value of togetherness. Falling in love was detrimental to these interests. How was it that their son, so sensible, had forgetting this?’

[Home: 03]

Lala Banwari Lal is the head of the family. He migrated from Pakistan. And now he is settled in Karol Baugh as a cloth merchant. He had pain of partition and suffering in the shelter camp. Afterwards, the family took shelter at Karol Baugh, New Delhi and settled down forever. The eldest son, Yashpal now falls in the love with a girl. But, the Banwari Lal family is traditional. There is no space for love affairs and love marriages. Banwari Lal takes all the decisions in the family. Though the two sons are grown up, Banwari Lal does not give them freedom to take decision. The novelist expresses the tendency of patriarchy in the Indian society –

‘The two sons had been brought up to consider their interest synonymous with those of the family. The patriarch was keenly aware of any disagreement between them. Neither must feel exploited, but the eldest had to have the final say. This was not a democracy, in which freewheeling individualism could be allowed to wreck what was being so carefully built. United we stand, divided energy, time and money are squandered.’ [6]
But, the mother of Yashpal and Pyarelal think differently. In the family, she could not suggest something to Banwari Lal. But, she dares and says –

‘Better he had asked all his life than stab us in the back like this,’ muttered the mother. The thought of her favourite son entrapped by a clever, manipulative, dowryless creature made it barely possible for her to look pleasant during the visit, her husband forced her to make.’ [7]

At last, the marriage is decided. The girl’s name is Sona, which means gold. The girl is not so educated. But, it does not matter for the traditional family of Banwari Lal. Education for woman does not create much difficulty in the family. They think that there is no use of education for woman as she does only household works –

‘Will Sona from an educated family, be happy with shopkeepers? The boy is only high-school pass, but Sona now says she does not want to study any more, she wants to remain on the same level as her husband.’ [8]

After getting married, Sona feels suffocated. Actually, there is not enough space for newly married couple. There is an eagle eye of mother-in-law on Sona. But, Yashpal is sensibly young. He says –

‘She can’t help herself, she spent nights and nights in camps wondering how we would survive, and then my father had to sell her jewellery when they came to Delhi, and when Pyare Lal was born there was no one to help her. She was all alone.’ [10]

The charm of the new marriage is over. And the sufferings of Sona start. After two years of marriage, there is no child of Yashpal and Sona. Her Mother-in-law often rebukes her for this. The conventional family never bears this. The author expresses –

‘Two years passed. Sona still wasn’t pregnant, though twenty and old enough. ‘enjoying, enjoying,’ muttered the mother darkly, imagine the use of birth control.’ [11]
But, the suffering of Sona does not cease. In the family, Pyarelal’s marriage is arranged. It is not the love marriage like Sona and Yashpal. And the family of bride is wealthier than Sona. That thing creates more pain for Sona. The thing which Sushila brings creates irritation for Sona –

’Silently Sona watched as Pyarelal’s father in-law gifted a scooter to his future son-in-law and furnished the four rooms of the second storey with a fully stocked kitchen, fridge, cooler, double bed, dining table, chairs, and an upholstered sofa set in red velvet. She realized as she had not realized three years ago, how poor in gifts her own marriage had been.’ [12]

The sense of inferiority arises in the mind of Sona. She thinks that now in the family, her position is degraded –

‘She trembled at her future, and lay awake for hurts with her adoring husband snoring gently beside her.’[13]

The sufferings of Sona are heavier. Childless life is another grief for her. She thinks that this infertility creates ache in the heart. In the family, she is alone to face the problem. Even, her husband leaves her alone in this situation –

‘There must be some deficiency in her prayers or a very bad past karma that made her suffer so in this life- and that too when she had the appearance of every joy a woman could have. Beauty, a fair skin, an attentive husband, a well-to-do family. She had tried to make sure her in-laws never regretted her husband’s transgressive love, proving her suitability every day, year after year. She was humble, easy to mould, and ready to please. Sona was gold, like her name. But what use was all this if the Banwari Lal blood did not pass on in its expected quantity?’[14]

Sometimes, Sona thinks differently. Actually, she suffocates in the combined family. The Banwari Lal family is a joint family. Everyone should share the problems. But, for Sona, she has to face the problems alone –
‘How she wished she did not have to live in joint family. If she and her husband lived separately, she too could be happy, like her sister Rupa.’ [15]

Both sisters have same fate. Both are childless, but the situation of Rupa is different. Manju Kapur deliberately uses the condition of childless woman in Indian family. She says that in the family, woman gets status when she gives a child to the family –

‘Rupa was childless, but free from torment. She accepted her fate, she didn’t spend every Tuesday fasting, she had no one to envy, no one to rub salt in her wounds, no one to keep those wounds bleeding by persistent hurting comments.’[16]

Manju Kapur, through the character of Sunita, a daughter of Banwari Lal, describes the sufferings of women. She has tremendous struggle in her life. One day, she commits suicide. The news stuns the Banwari Lal family –

‘Fourteen years after her marriage, Sunita’s hopes were answered. The Banwari Lal family got the news by telegram. There had been an accident in the kitchen, and Sunita had died of burns in the hospital. The cremation would take place the next day. She was only thirty two.’[17]

Her mother and mother-in-law wail continuously. But, Sona’s mother-in-law never forgets to point out her infertility. She vehemently says –

‘You think sleep is possible? What can you know of a mother’s feelings? All you do is to enjoy life, no children, no sorrow, only a husband to dance around you.’[18]

Meanwhile, the son of Sunita and Murli, Vicky is in the house of Banwari Lal. Sona actually never accepts the appearance of Vicky. The family wishes that Vicky should be adopted by Sona and Yashpal. Sona is depressed with this news. Her husband on the other hand thinks differently. He does not understand the pain of Sona –
‘Sona felt her chest would burst with pain. Tears gathered on her face. Her husband touched her cheek, and said, ‘Sona, you will get used to it. We cannot decide how our prayer will be answered.’ [22-23]

Sona is disappointed with the thinking of the family. She thinks about her own blood rather than others. She is already depressed about her infertility. Her family never supports her in this case –

‘According to them, my prayers are answered. Now they are busy making sure that child is a noose around my neck. Why didn’t he die with his mother?’ [27]

Eventually, God has grace on Sona and she gets pregnant. The behaviour of the family is suddenly changed. Her Mother-in-law takes much care of Sona. The sudden change is skillfully expressed by the author –

‘Rupa received the information stoically. Her mind leaped to the little baby in her sister’s arms, to the loneliness that would be hers as the only childless woman in the family.’ [32]

In Banwari Lal family, Sona is now the centre figure to all. Manju Kapur describes how Sona’s status increased with her pregnancy. She here expresses that in the family the woman has no identity. She suffers if her womb is empty. The author expresses –

‘The next seven months were momentous one. Sona’s diet, her rest, her activities were treated with the greatest of care. Vitamins, minerals, iron supplements, almonds butter, and milk were showered on her. Her body grew heavy with the weight of two; her round face became rounder and shone like the moon.’ [34]

A famous Indian woman thinker, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes about woman in her article ‘Can Subaltern Speak?’ –

‘between patriarchy and imperialism subject constitution and object formation the figures of woman disappear not into a pristine nothingness,
but into a violent shutting which is the displaced figuration of the ‘Third World Woman’ caught between tradition and modernization.’ [Sharma Ram: 2013: 140]

The behaviour of mother-in-law is also changed. Rupa remarks, ‘to change from poison to honey just like that.’ [Ibid: 34]. The situation of Sona is drastically changed. As her womb fertilized, the family takes much attention and takes much care for her. But, Rupa, she is still childless. She is completely alone to share her problem. In her family, no one understands her grief of childlessness –

‘Rupa returned to her house thoughtful. There was more to Sona’s life that she had previously realized. There had been so much family feeling at the nursing home, everybody pitching in to take care of things. What did she have in her home besides one husband and one old father-in-law? Nothing, and with dry and barren womb there would continue to be nothing. She sighed, and gave her karma a gloomy thought before concentrating on the provision that needed to be bought for tomorrow.’ [37]

The misfortune for woman is not only limited to Sona and Rupa. The bad fate continues with the newly born baby. The newly born girl infant is affected with the misfortune. The traditional family is desperate about the horoscope of new born girl child. But, the future of the girl child is not fare –

‘The baby’s horoscope was cast: the configuration of the planets at her birth made her a mangli. This was not good news; manglis were horribly difficult to marry off. Unless they found a man with similarly unfortunate stars unhappiness or death was the sure result.’ [39]

The novelist describes how the fortune of woman in the family depends upon horoscope. Nisha according to horoscope is Mangli. It is a inauspicious thing for the family. Manju Kapur describes that the Indian woman is blamed for misfortune. She has no freedom and opportunity. Meanwhile, Vicky is neglected by Banwari Lal family. Bisha is the centre for family. No one cares about Vicky. Hence, Vicky’s behaviour becomes rough.
He regularly fails in the examination. The family gets serious about him. The family decides that Vicky should join the shop rather than school –

‘Vicky stepped through the mud carefully in imitation of his grandfather and uncles. Now he was part of the earning section of the family his status would change; he would be looked up to and given the respect that was given them.’ [45]

The author expresses desperate attitude about Indian family for boy. It is most important for woman to have son rather than girl. The Indian family always thinks that the family is incomplete without son. Woman blessed with a son is fortunate one. Sona is also ranked fortunate, when she delivers a son –

‘The moment on the hospital bed she experienced as the most blessed of her life. The mother of a son, she could join Sushila as a woman who had done her duty to the family, the family understood it.’ [48]

The family of Sona is complete one. A childless woman is now mother of a son. Hence, in the family of Banwari Lal, Vicky is totally neglected. No one cares about him. He himself feels suffocated in the family. He actually needs the freedom and his own space in the family –

‘I want to leave school, I want to manage shop,’ said Vicky, straining towards visions of independence, money, and recognition that would come when allowed to handle customer.’ [55]

Nisha is a center figure of family. She is nourished by every member of the family. Vicky is jealous about the behaviour of the family. The effect of this causes drastic change in the life of Nisha. Vicky is a neglected boy and he is jealous about Nisha and Raju. He thinks that the family takes much care of them rather than him. The disgusting thing happens in the life of Nisha. Vicky makes her sexual harassment. She is shy and thinks that she has done dirty thing. It is the thing which deeply affects on the mind of Nisha. Then, the family decides that the girl should be kept with her Masi [Maternal aunt] Rupa –
‘In the days that followed Nisha grew silent. For the first time, she felt divided from the family she had so unthinkingly been part of. Her mother was always so particular about her being clean, now she had done something dirty. Her hand had touched that filthy block thing. She tried to block it from her mind, but it proliferated, grew large and terrifying.’ [59]

Now Rupa, a childless woman takes care of Nisha. She is also satisfied with the nourishment of Nisha. Her wish of child is fulfilled with the appearance of Nisha. Her life was empty and lonely. Nisha is a new hope for her. Both Rupa and Premnath take care of Nisha as their own child. The effect of this nourishment soon gets result –

‘Gradually, the girl’s bad dreams grew in frequent. In their cessation Rupa found proof that the demon lay in her home- otherwise, would such a small child willingly leave her mother? She could only marvel at the spirit that her scream till she was rescued.’ [67]

Manju Kapur not only describes the loneliness of woman, but also shows the isolation of Male characters. Premnath is a sensible man who also suffers with the loneliness and childlessness –

‘He did not regret not having children. Part of his capacity to think, felt his admiring wife, was reflected in his stoicism. To want children was another word for I, me, mine. It was easier to be free without such attachments.’ [68]

Premnath is generous character. He is aware about his responsibility. He respects the emotions of woman every time. He is disappointed with the behaviour of Sona and Yashpal as regards the mess happened with Nisha. He says –

‘Isn’t that family of yours going to do something?’ he demanded of his wife. ‘Fine way to abdicate responsibility dump the girl here and forget her.’ [70]
After that, the situation of Vicky becomes miserable. Actually, he is on the mercy of his uncle and aunt. He never finds himself in this house. The novelist, through the character of Vicky, tries to explore the agitation of adult boy. He is not bad in nature. But, the situation makes him evil in the manner. The novelist judges his character –

‘He was how in the house his mother’s death had made hateful to him. Tears came to his eyes, he let them fall.’ [76]

Eventually, Banwari Lal family understands their responsibility. The family shows mercy on Vicky. It is the responsibility of family for orphan. They nourish him well and now the family decides that his life will settle down after marriage. He then will understand his responsibility about the family. But, Murli his father creates hurdle in the marriage proposals. Afterwards, Banwari Lal takes decision that his father should select the perfect bride for Vicky –

‘The family has seen to an orphaned child’s welfare, and is transmitting him with a sure hand into the future, equipped with the responsibilities of adulthood [employment] and the rites of manhood [marriage].’[79]

The marriage takes place in Banwari Lal’s family. The bride is selected by his father, Murli. Asha is now new daughter-in-law in Banwari Lal’s family. The novelist bears quality in elaborating Indian marriage. The rituals, poojas and ceremonies are described in detail by the novelist. She describes the fate of bride. In Indian family, the girl is always considered as responsibility. Marriage of a girl shows that her parents are relived from the burden –

‘The brides’ side looks pleased. To lose their girl is a sacrifice they hope the other side will register.’[85]

Banwari Lal family thinks that they have finished their responsibility. Vicky, a motherless boy, is now married and soon his life will settle down.
Everyone thinks that Vicky should understand his responsibility and behave like a matured man. His life is now in the verge of satisfaction –

‘Satisfaction pervades the bus. Vicky is married another job done another responsibility over.’ [90]

The children of the Banwari Lal family grow up. Nisha is also well nourished in the company of Rupa. Though Nisha is nourished by Rupa, her sister worries about her behaviour. Sona thinks that the behaviour of Nisha is arrogant and is not liked by her. Her attitude is traditional and that girl should behave mildly. She should be obedient in her nature. It is useful for girl and if she behaves arrogantly, she may be in trouble at her husband’s home –

‘Sona rolled her eyes. Only ten and the girl was beginning to argue. She had never questioned anything her mother asked her to do.’ [92]

Nisha hears the story of *Karva Chauth*. She is opposed to the story. She thinks that the fault is not of girl, it is the fault of her brother. It shows how girls are dominated and suppressed by male –

‘But Nisha was young and protested. ‘it was not the girl’s fault, it is the brothers who should be punished. They made her widow.’ [94]

Rupa though childless now spends her lot of time on Nisha. She takes care of Nisha like her own child. Nisha is also concerned with Rupa rather than her own mother. Asha, wife of Vicky, struggles to survive in the family. It is the second generation of the family. But, the situation of woman is same. She is engaged in the household duties –

‘She cooed over Raju, she pressed her grandmother-in-laws feet, she ran with the grandfather-in-law’s tea when he came home, she practically lived with Sona next to the stove. She had no airs, no graces, she was humble, obedient and helpful. From time to time Sona couldn’t help thinking that Murli had chosen well.’ [102]
There is no status for Vicky and his wife in Banwari Lal’s family. Though the couple is the first one who gave grand children to the family, from the initial time, Vicky is merely a responsibility for Banwari Lal’s family. Asha, though mild and good in behaviour, has no status as a daughter-in-law in the family –

‘She had borne the first grandchild; still there was no appreciable increase in her status. They didn’t send her family presents, they didn’t have an elaborate naming ceremony, she got nothing beyond a silk sari. Would they behave the same if one of those other sons produced [make] grandchild.’ [103]

Asha is ignored in the family. Even, her husband does not support her. Actually, she thinks about the position of her husband. In the family, no one is concerned to Vicky though he is a member of the family. They have never given him respect as a boy of the family. Asha worries about the behaviour of her husband –

‘His standard argument reduced Asha to temporary silence. She knew she couldn’t push him beyond a certain point, he knew that ultimately he could insult her into restraint. Still, she was his ally, and the knowledge that somebody in the house considered him a victim was balm of his soul.’ [105]

Meanwhile, Vicky demands the right. He thinks that he has an equal share in the family. Banwari Lal has strength to unite the family. Yashpal and Pyarelal never dared to say about the right. But, the situation now is different. The new generation demanded the new space and individuality. The new generation is not interested in the joint family. Sona is not surprised with the behaviour of Vicky. She thinks that the boy is always a burden for Banwari Lal’s family. But, Yashpal is silent and sensible. Sona thinks –

‘That was the trouble with her husband speaking, the man was so simple, it was as though he had a disease. How happy the whole family would be to see him go, she could just imagine.’ [111]
Thereafter, the Banwari Lal family gets blow of the death of Banwari Lal. The family is in despair. Now, Yashpal is the head of the family. He is calm and sensible man. But, now, he has the confusion about the current situation of the family. He has a troublesome work to unite the family. However, Sona’s thinking is different one. Actually, she thinks that beside the death of her father-in-law, her mother-in-law should have strokes –

‘Angrily she thought, why couldn’t this have happened to her mother-in-law? If a stroke had to befall the family, they were well able to spare that evil tongued crone.’ [117]

Then, Manju Kapur describes the death ceremony. It is considered the worst ceremony in Indian society. The condition of woman is more drastic after the death of her husband. The novelist tries to unveil the truth of Indian society. After the death of her husband, she should wear white sari. She does not have right to attend any auspicious event. Her life is miserable and has many constrains –

‘They smashed the glass bangles on her wrists; her scrawny, loose-fleshed arms were now bare of colour except for two thin gold bangles. They pulled off her toe rings, they unclasped her mangla sutra, they removed all the coloured saris form her wardrobe and left the white. She insisted this be done. The whole world should recognize her for what she was, a poor old widow, as insignificant and colourless as the clothes she wore.’ [119]

Afterwards, Sona and Yashpal decide that they should bring Nisha for the sake of grandmother. But, it is most troublesome for Rupa and Premnath. Sona says –

‘I know Bhai sahib is full of qualities,’ said Sona impatiently, ‘but if something happens, God forbid, thoo-thoo [Sona spat lightly on the floor to ward off the evil eye], she has her family, her brothers, her aunt and uncle. What is the need to protect you? Might as well like the streets’ [123]
When Nisha returns home after living for a long time with her aunt, Sona discovers with horror that at the age of sixteen, Nisha does not know how to cook –

‘What can Rupa have been thinking of? I assured she was teaching you everything she knows.’ [Kahlon, Maneeta: 2011: 35]

Sona is upset with the behaviour of Nisha and she complains Rupa about it –

‘Roopa, I would never have imagined you, of all people, filling the girl’s head with rubbish. This is the life of a woman: to look after her home, her husband, her children, and give them food she has cooked with her own hands. Next you will be saying she should hire a servant.’ [126]

Sona thinks that Nisha is arrogant and her mind is full of rubbish things. She thinks that if the girl has not known about cooking, it is difficult for parents in future.

After many years, Nisha is now in her real house. But, her hopes are demolished. She thinks that how her aunty Rupa and uncle Premnath always supported her. She suffocates in her own house –

‘From time to time Nisha fantasized about returning to her aunt’s place. They repeatedly told her this was where she was needed, this was her home, but it didn’t feel comfortable. The moment she opened her books, she missed her uncle, when she slept she missed the quietness, when she came home from school she missed the fuss, when she worked she missed the encouragement. Her hands altered form spotless white to nicked and burnt, reflected the change in her situation. Worst of all, no one imagined there was any lack in her life that needed to be filled.’ [128]

But, Sona thinks differently. She thinks that Nisha should follow the tradition. It is essential for every girl. Nisha should learn the household thing. She says:

‘Nisha needed to be grounded in the tradition that would make her a wife worth having. The art of
service and domesticity should shine in her
daughter so brightly that she would overcome her
negative karma to be a beacon in her married
home.’ [128]

But, Rupa is surprised with the behaviour of her sister. She thinks that her
sister may spoil Nisha. She gets irritated with the attitude of Sona. She gets
angry about the traditional attitude of Sona –

‘Why should I go on taking care? Am I a fool?
Something borrowed is never yours, you should
remember that’ [136]

Banwari Lal’s family has different destiny. Especially, they think that
Yashpal’s children have bad fate. In Indian society, mangli girl has real
trouble for family. Sona is worried about the future of Nisha. But, she never
realizes Nisha. Sona thinks about her horoscope rather than her feeling –

‘Nisha was a mangli. A mangli, destined to marry
unfortunately, destined for misery, unless a similar
manlike could be found, with a similar fate and
horoscope to do this would take time and during
that time.’ [139]

Nisha wishes to have a higher education. But, Sona is furious with this
decision. She is not in fever of girl’s education. There is no space for girl’s
education in Banwari Lal’s family. Actually, every traditional Indian family
does not think about the higher education of girl. Sona also has the same
mentality –

Her family’s attitude to college proved sustaining.
Higher studies were just a time pass; it was not as
though she was going to use her education.
Working was out of the question, and marriage was
around the corner.’ [141]

After many arguments and discussions, Yashpal is convinced upon the
higher education of Nisha. This is the first incident when Nisha is free from
the household burden and obstacle. She thinks that it would give new direction
to her life. But, Sona has always refused higher education. She thinks that the
co-education may create new problem in the family. And, another reason for
her refusal is that if a girl is much educated, they have to give much dowry to find the suitable life partner for her.

But, Yashpal is firm on his decision and Nisha is admitted in Durgabai College. In new atmosphere and environment, Nisha feels free and independent. There is no restriction and bounding. She enters the college for doing B. A. English Honours. In the college, her best friend is Pratibha. She also meets a boy, Suresh who studies in Khalsa college of Engineering. Soon, the friendship takes place between Nisha and Suresh. She thinks that there is nothing wrong to have friendship with a boy –

‘She returned to college feeling adventurous, daring, and modern. For the first time she had interacted socially with an unrelated male.’ [144]

Nisha feels free in the college atmosphere. She thinks how her life is ruined in the house. But, now, she is free. She has adopted new fashion. Actually, fashion is disgusted in the traditional Banwari Lal family. But, Nisha is fond of fashion. For instance, she cuts her hair. Sona is furious and she angrily says –

‘Who gave you permission to cut your hair, suddenly you have became so independent you decide things on your own, where did you find the money, the time, the beauty parlour, where did you find all these things?’ [149-150]

Now, Nisha is deeply in love with Suresh. She imagines her life with Suresh. But, she forgets about her orthodox family. She often dreams about Suresh –

‘She thought of Suresh, she imagined their love, and she smiled a secret, knowing sort of smile.’ [155]

She experiences the passion of love. This is a new experience for Nisha. She feels the real excitement of life. She has excitement and adventure of real love –
‘May be it will be like that me, thought Nisha, swept by the magic of the songs and the appeal of the story. By this time Suresh’s hands were all over her, she was slumped in her seat, her head heavy with desire, her heart pulpy with longing.’ [156]

Meanwhile, another marriage progresses in Banwari Lal’s family. Sushila is happy that her son, Vijay brings prosperity to the family. But, it irritates Sona. She thinks that Sushila may boost with these entire things. Nisha dreams of her own marriage –

‘Hers would be a modern relationship. Gone were the days when women needed to be so silent. And anyway silence in itself was a subversive activity. This she had gathered from her teachers, who had spent much time explaining Fanny Price and the voices in which silence spoke.’ [160]

Manju Kapur describes how marriage is the source of prosperity for the family. A bride should bring the belongings and make her in-laws happy. The marriage is not a bond of love. But, in India, it is a token of prosperity in society –

‘In this manner, the Banwari Lal family acquired another daughter-in-law, from the same caste, the same community, the same locality. Everything humanly possible had been done to ensure the success of the marriage, after that it was in the hands of the gods.’ [161]

Afterwards, the Banwari Lal family decides to develop their shop. It is the new generation of Banwari Lal family which thinks that the shop is small in the comparison of other shops. Hence, the family hires an architect to develop the shop. And soon, the shop develops and becomes comfortable for new generation. But, the destiny of the family is different one. The marriage brings new trouble in the family. The house feels congested for newly married couple. The hint of separation arises in the family. The joint family now suffocates in one house –

‘Complained Sushila to Sona: ‘Ajay, Seema and their child are in one room, we two in one, Vijay
and Rekha in one, and room to even put your leg. Big problem the bathroom, now that Rekha is expecting. She has to go – if there is someone she has to wait, then she gets cramps. Big, big problem. But downstairs it is easy, you cannot understand, only four, plus the angan and outer veranda in which to spread out.” [167]

Yashpal is opposed to the idea of renovating the old house. He determines about the united family –

‘Yashpal was incredulous. Marriage had turned the boy’s head. He offered to explain to Vijay how it was important to tolerate, you cannot go far in life if you are always thinking of yourself.’ [168]

Yashpal admires the joint family. He thinks about his father. How his father had made an effort to unite the family in one bound. But, now the situation is different one. It is the new generation who thinks of nuclear family. But, Yashpal is desperate about the joint family –

‘Yashpal said nothing. In a joint family, compromise is of the essence, but a strong power structure meant it had to be done less often. Again he thought of his father.’ [169]

Sona is surprised with the behaviour of the Pyarelal family. She thinks how the situation is surprisingly changed –

‘Sona’s jaw dropped. Such greed was never seen on the face of the earth, such manipulation, such blackmail. ‘One thing is to ask, another is to get,’ she said grimly. ‘And why two-fifths? What about Vicky? We keep him, his wife, his child; we should have at least half.’ [170]

It is not the situation of Sona only, Yashpal is also surprised with the current situation. He thinks about his father. How his father used to strive to unite the family. He remembers the suffering of mother and their situation in the refugee camp. But, now, it is all over –

‘Yashpal remained lost in his own thoughts. Their family had changed since his father had died. Pyare
Lal was tense and irritable, always wanting more. Maybe there had been some sense in his father’s refusal to do certain things. When he was around they never experienced such tension they never experienced such tension.’ [170-171]

Manju Kapur describes the demolishment of the united family. She not only describes the crises in the family, but also the condition of woman. The woman in the family is torn with the present conditions. Asha dreams about the new life. But, she had ever thought about herself. Her whole world is around her husband –

‘Used to filling her husband’s silences with chatter, Asha went on, in an effort to bolster her wavering confidence that their future was going to change for the better, though the means were as yet vague. Vicky satisfied with a routine that never thought beyond the day. But Asha, despite the odds, still preserved shreds of that old sense of opportunity she had felt when she first got the news that she was marrying into a Delhi trader family. All these years it had hibernated, now her gaze narrowed as she watched for any slight shift in the patterns of destiny.’ [173]

Vicky is also disturbed with the thoughts. He imagines her grandfather, who was always in his favour. But, now he is on mercy of his uncle. Asha demands that they should ask them about their share. But, Vicky is silent –

‘Vicky looked at his wife. She smiled at him. He would never have thought of establishing possession of the roof. But in this dog-eat-dog world who else was there to look after you but yourself? He had been exploited all these years, his measly return being board, lodging, and a pittance for salary. Of course, the Banwari Lal sons would get everything worth getting. The blood on that side was thick to cut into barfi, on his side it was a pale pink dribble through the house.’ [174]

The novelist realistically describes the strains between relations. How a united family falls in a ruined condition. She also describes how in a joint family relations are maintained on the basis of profit. She never forgets to judge the condition of woman. Asha is desperate about the share in Banwari
Lal’s family. She thinks that if they demand about the share, their life would be easy one. She desperately says –

‘You are no less the son,’ went on Asha. ‘You work for them just the same, have the same blood, and get less in return. What do they think? That all our lives we will say yes, uncle, yes, auntie, no matter how they neglect us? We are not so stupid. If we do not look after number one, who will? Why should we settle for the uncertainty of a rented house? We are not the ones who want to leave. After all, this is our house too.’ [176]

The novelist drastically portrays the attitudes of the Banwari Lal family. Asha spends much time in the kitchen. But, now, for the Banwari Lal family, they are merely parasite –

‘By now the anti-Vicky feeling had reached its height. Ajay raged at him, to the family’s great approval: he was a parasite, useless, good for nothing, why didn’t he return to the sewers of Bareilly, but no, he was too shameless to do that, he preferred to live off the relatives who had taken him in, and were even now feeding his wife and child.’ [177]

Everyone in the family wishes that Vicky should leave the house and stay somewhere. It was the responsibility of the family to nourish motherless boy. But, now, he is married and he should start his life separately. He is also firm on his decision. Rupa also has same attitude towards Vicky.

Between these strain situations, Nisha’s love also gets suffocated. She has never met even to talk to Suresh. Her love is mute and silent in the slashes of relations. She had not revealed it in front of anyone –

‘Summer passed. A hard time for secret love. Clandestine phone calls, occasional surreptitious meetings. Living in the hotel meant surveillance was a bit lax, and Nisha got more freedom than she ordinarily would have. There was no kitchen work, and it was easier to say she had to visit a friend, see this or that film.’ [183]
On the other hand, Sona worries about her family. Actually, she worries about her husband. He is simple and straightforward, but his brothers are different. Hence, she thinks that her husband may be duped by Pyarelal. She is irritated with his decision –

“For the first time she felt some irritation with her husband. Why was he of a tribe that could not get things done? Aye, if bribing was demanded, just bribe and finish. It made it possible to live your life.” [185]

Finally, the new house becomes ready. The rituals are organized and Banwari Lal family enters into new house. Sona is happy. Eventually, she has got her own space. But, on the other hand, Rupa is upset upon her own identity. This is the unique quality of the novelist that she pictures the deep unhappiness of woman. Rupa though looks sensible and quite, but in her mind, the storm of thinking hovers. She has struggled a lot to survive and get rid off from stigma for childlessness. Hence, sometimes, she is jealous with her sister –

“Why did her sister always have all luck no children, along comes a daughter; no son, along he comes; dark, inconvenient rooms, along comes a palace.” [185]

The novelist further describes the situation of Nisha. Though she never meets Suresh freely, they secretly meet at the coffee house and Cinema hall. The intense love between Nisha and Suresh smoothly develops. Suresh is also deeply involved in Nisha. Manju Kapur describes true love with the cinema scenes. Nisha and Suresh are just like the hero and beloved of film. But, suddenly, Nisha experiences something strange with Suresh. He demands Nisha to spend some private time. Suresh has not demanded it before. Though it is the strange for Nisha, she has belief on Suresh. He brings Nisha in a room at Vijay Nagar. It is most strange thing for Nisha –

“But those eyes were everywhere. The men gazed at her and divined the key in Suresh’s hand, the women judged steadily over flashing needles and balls of yarn. Her own mother, chichi, masi, sitting
on a charpai, knitting eternal sweaters for eternal relatives, condemned her in whispers, their eyes never on their work [which didn’t need it], their eyes fixed on her.’ [188]

It is most a shameless thing in the life of Nisha. She has trust on Suresh, but Suresh has different plans. He wants to experience wildness of love. Nisha is stunned with this type of behaviour of Suresh. The novelist beautifully describes the plight of Nisha. She is in a dangling situation between true love and wildness of love. She also remembers about the family and tradition. She refuses Suresh and opposes her wish. Though she still believes on her love –

‘Tears came to Nisha’s eyes. It was clear Suresh loved her deeply. Very slightly she nodded. She gazed at the look on his face, felt the change in his breath, heard the words that came pouring out, paeans to her beauty, her softness, her perfect skin, her divine body, more lovely than any film star’s, the loveliest girl in the world, worth dying for, over and over and over, worth waiting for, always, always.’ [190]

Actually, no one understands the emotions of Nisha. Hence, she is alone in the house. Her family is only aware about the tradition and family bond. Her own feeling stings to her heart. The family is unaware about the love affair. Nisha hides her love affair, because she is well known about her orthodox family. At the end of Nisha’s third year, her family gets the letter from the college authority. They understand that Nisha was dismissed from college. It was most terrible thing to the family. If Nisha never attends college, there is something wrong with her. The family puts questions on Nisha –

‘Meanwhile, at home questions, questions, questions. Why had this happened? Where did she go? What had she been doing? Had she been up to any funny business? [194]

Sona is much angry on Nisha. She thinks that Nisha may tread on wrong way. In Indian family, if girl does wrong, it may have stigma to the
family. Sona is irritated with the behaviour of Nisha. Actually, Sona needs to talk to Nisha, but she is orthodox, typical Indian woman. She furiously says –

‘Have you been roaming the streets with some boy? Is that what you have been doing? That is why you cut your hair, that is why you have been coming home late, saying you have been studying in the library, lying all the time, that is why you look so happy. You have been deceiving your parents.’ [194]

Nisha often unfolds all her secrets to her aunty, Rupa. She reveals all the details about Suresh. She thinks that definitely Rupa does something for her love. But, Rupa says –

‘Well let us see what will happen. Our destiny is not in our hands,’ sighed Rupa heavily.’ [197]

It is the destiny of Indian woman that she cannot think about her future. The fate of the woman is decided by male in the family. Nisha is also upset with this kind of attitude. Hence, she asks Suresh to talk to his father. On the other hand, Sona curses Nisha and says –

‘This girl will be our death. My child, born after ten years, tortures me like this. Thank God your grandfather is not alive. What face will I show upstairs/ Vijay gets his wife form Fancy Furnishings while my daughter goes to the street for hers.’ [197]

The novelist expresses how in Indian family that a girl has no right to take decision for herself. She has to sacrifice all her wishes for the sake of the family. If she goes against it, the fate of the girl remains different as her mother, Sona did for the family. The situation of Nisha is a difficult one –

‘The easiness between her and her family evaporated. She moved like a guilty thing among them, worse than the dirt under their feet. She was not allowed upstairs. There is no need to give your Sushila Chachi an opportunity to pump you.’ [198]
The meeting is held between Yashpal and Suresh. It decides the future of Nisha whether the boy is suitable for her or not. That night becomes difficult for Nisha when Yashpal arrives at home –

‘Finally, he declares him unfit for the girl. Nisha, dear daughter, leave all thoughts of this dirty low caste man, what can he give you command to what we can arrange for you? Marriage into a family that will enable you and your children to live comfortable for the rest of your life.’ [Sharma, Ram: 2013: 136]

But, Nisha is upset with this thing. She is desperate about her love. Banwari Lal’s family never accepts low cast boy. It is the Indian society where caste plays a prominent role. The caste system in India is rigid. There is no space for love in the caste. But, Nisha is desperate about her love. She says with agony –

‘Nish, on hearing this account, was moved by his nobility. To sell me in the market,’ she sobbed with indignant emotion. ‘Sell me and be done with it. What are you waiting for?’ her mother slapped her, although the girl was too old for this to be of any use.’ [199]

Now, the family is strict about Nisha. They never allow her to go outside the house. Now, Nisha is imprisoned in her own house. Her own parent creates obstacle between her loves. She feels like a caged bird in the house –

‘All day she remained in the house, a prisoner of her deed, a prisoner of their words. She was distrusted too much to be allowed to put a foot outside. A padlock was put on the phone, only incoming calls could be received without the key. She noticed and said nothing. She did not care what happened to her. She ate less; she spoke less, what was there to say? Have pity, said Rupa to Nisha’s mother, pity to play a part.’ [200]

Nisha spends her life in confinement. The family thinks that she had a sin and hence, should be punished. The girl is bound in the chains of tradition, religion and caste. She remains in the house. The family now seriously thinks about
Nisha’s marriage. Sona is disturbed with all these things. Actually, the marriage is another problem for Sona. Nisha is mangli and it is difficult to find the same groom for her.

Meanwhile, Nisha is upset with this type of life, where she has no freedom to choose about her life. Sometimes, she thinks to give up all this and free her families from all the suffrages –

‘Her uncle, she supposed, had remained behind to complete the business with Suresh. If only her brother weren’t there, she could fall and slip under the wheels of one of the many buses of Netaji Subhash marg. Such accidents were common. Her death would be common too.’ [204]

Few months pass. But, the family is firm on the decision. An orthodox family never accepts the poor and low caste boy. But, Nisha never thinks about the caste. She is desperate about love. Hence, she thinks why her family is interfere in her love –

‘Once or twice she tried conveying her point of view. Their only real objection was that he was poor, and of another caste. If they did not approve, why couldn’t they just let her go, her life was her own. Suresh and she were educated, they could both work. But anything she said was countered with her youth, her ignorance, her betrayal of them.’ [205]

Nisha often dreams about Suresh. She rarely talks him on phone. Her family every time keeps an eye on her. But, she never forgets Suresh and her love –

‘The third year exams started in the second week of April. Nisha had never in her life been so unprepared. No sooner did she open a book than Suresh’s face came before her eyes. What was she to do with that face? Her family was doing its best to erode its charm.’ [207]

Though Nisha prepares for her examination, she thinks about Suresh. Her brother follows her at every place. The family never leaves her alone.
They think that Nisha may meet that boy again. Though Nisha restricts herself in her house, her mind often searches Suresh –

‘Then came Kashmiri Gate, Suresh’s stop. Her destiny had lain here, in Suresh’s tall, thin form, dark glasses, blue jean, and long feet, dusty in their kolhapuri chappals. Surely love must find out the English honours third-year exam timetable, and make its presence felt.’ [209]

Nisha has only hope from her masi, Rupa. She always says to Rupa that she has to do something for her love. After finishing her examination, Raju and Nisha visit the same restaurant, where Nisha and Suresh had spent hours in isolation. But, now, the situation is different one –

‘Nisha sat lethargically in the cool, musty air. The sense of endings lay heavily upon her, depressing her into realism. Suppose love did not triumph? They had eaten hung around, and left. Now, every minute reminded her so vividly of him that her breath, as it slowly came and went, cut her to pieces’ [211-12]

All efforts of Nisha vaporize. Her family insists her about marriage. But, she does not decide to choose her love or duty towards her family. Actually, no one understands the condition of her. No one considers her opinion about her own life. It is the decision of family who chooses the destiny of a girl. It is the girl’s fate who sacrifices her dreams for family. No one considers Nisha’s emotion, how she deeply loves Suresh. But, the financial discrimination and caste ruined her love. The question in front of Nisha is whether to choose her own destiny or to accept the decision of the family. Eventually, she surrenders her love, affection and feeling. Her future is now in the hand of family –

‘After three years of thinking that Suresh was her future, Nisha had to adjust to the idea of another man in his place. A better man, according to her parents. Would he be able to gauge the extent to which she had been touched?’ [217]
She hurts with the escape of love. She feels awful aloofness in the family. In isolation, she thinks that she is a girl who never has her own thought, emotion and life. She feels merely a puppet in the hand of tradition and culture –

‘Now a prisoner in her home, she played the part of the king in chess. She needed to be protected, as without her there could be no game. The moves concerning her were carefully planned, but she herself was powerless, quiescent, mute and waiting.’ [217]

Meanwhile, a marriage proposal is sent for Nisha. It is from the side of Rekha’s cousin. The family is old fashioned and strict to the old tradition and culture. Banwari Lal family worries about the horoscope of Nisha. If they demand about horoscope, it may create trouble for the family. Destiny is also hard for Nisha. As the days pass, Yashpal tells his brother about the further enquiry. The family gets the news of rejection of the proposal. Yashpal and Sona gets upset. Their hopes are evaporated and the reason of rejection is more painful to the family –

‘Two days later Pyarelal said to Yashpal ‘they have heard rumours about the girl, and unfortunately her prettiness lent them credence. They were an old-fashioned family, they believed in old-fashioned values, and those values included absolute purity. He had assured them it was all nonsense, but they did not want to start a new life with a girl on whom there was even a shadow of a stain. What could he do, some people were suspicious just like that, this was Rekha’s mother’s cousin, the situation was too delicate for him to insist.’ [220]

Afterwards, there is another proposal for Nisha. Again, she prepares to face strange things. She is ready to test her future again. Between the discussions, she discovers that the boy also hides something. Hence, she says to Sona that the boy is not suitable for her. On this, Sona gets furious on Nisha –

‘Nisha tentatively remarked that there was something not quite right with him. At this her
mother collapsed. Who are you to decide what is right or no? You have only had low-class bhangis to compare him with. But Nisha had spent much time in the company of a man who was attracted to her, and though she was too inexperienced to go beyond a gut feeling, she persisted with each family member that there was something wrong, hoping that despite her blackened reputation and tarnished orals, she would be heard.’ [222]

The fear of Nisha is true afterwards. The behaviour of the boy is strange. Hence, the family is in urgency of marriage. Nisha spends hours in house without doing anything. Her friends always visit with the news of marriage, that news always hurts not only Sona, but Nisha too. Irritated with isolation, Nisha says to Yashpal that she has degree and like her aunt, Rupa, she wants to do something. She has more saddened in the gloomy atmosphere of house –

‘She wants to do something valuable. She complains “why should I sit at home every day waiting for proposals?” [Kalholan Maneeta: 2011: 7]

Irritation, isolation and aloofness cause skin disease to Nisha. Sona is now more worried about Nisha. Already, she is a Mangli girl and now has skin disease. It will create more hurdles in the marriage of Nisha –

‘That they were there was Nisha’s fault and course, but it was also the mother’s wretched destiny. Had she known the misery her stubborn daughter would cause her, she would not have bothered with the fasting or the praying. Fortunately there was no need for her to speak in order to make Nisha understand her feeling.’ [228]

Manju Kapur describes how a mother’s behaviour is changed with the effect of bad destiny. At the time of Nisha’s birth, Sona was the happiest woman and now the most worried woman. Sona considers Nisha now a troublesome child –

‘The only change of scene this wretched creature will get is after her marriage. Right now she is like
A small child who has no control over herself. No matter how often I tell her not to, night and day she goes on. Whoever heard of having to tie the hands of a grown girl?' [230]

For the skin treatment, Nisha visits many treatment centers. Allopathic and Ayurvedic both were implemented. The real cause for illness is emotional rather than physical. Nisha is not mentally balanced. The storm of emotion hovers inside her. Hence, the treatment is not useful for Nisha. The result of the treatment is quiet unhappy to the family. Sona thinks that the only thing which is proud for family is her beauty. Her stars were already against her, only her fairness creates some help in her marriage. The family takes much care of Nisha regarding her skin problem. As the allopathic, homeopathic and Ayurvedic treatment is worthless, they visit some Hunani and Tibetan medicine practitioner. But the results are same. The irritation of skin grows up and her fairness is faded. Her disease creates more trouble for the family. Meanwhile, Banwari Lal family decides to hire an expert doctor. He also suggests that the girl is sensitive. Hence, it creates more trouble in the treatment. Her loneliness increases in isolation –

‘Times has created many empty spaces in Nisha’s head. Into those cavities come rumours, rumours flying about in the atmosphere of the house, borne by half-caught phrases, spread in whispers that reverberate downstairs among the adults. In a joint family it doesn’t take long for information to reach a destination, desired or undesired.’ [240]

The family decides the marriage of Raju. Nisha’s destiny is hard and the family is unable to find the suitable match for her. The marriage of Nisha hurdles in the marriage of Raju. Hence, the family believes that the arrival of new daughter-in-law is auspicious for the marriage of Nisha. But, it is Indian society, where the marriage of younger brother creates more problems for Nisha. People may think that there is something wrong with the girl and their problem may increase. Yashpal thinks the same –

‘Yashpal reiterated that there was no question, simply no question, simply no question, of getting a younger son married before an older daughter.
People would presume there was something wrong with the girl and it would ruin her chances for ever. No matter how favourable the match for the boy, her happiness could not be scarified.’ [242]

Yashpal is quiet right with this opinion. The marriage of the younger brother may create rumours among society about Nisha. But, for Banwari Lal family, marriage of a boy is considered as the financial matter. Every marriage of boy in Banwari Lal family increases their financial status. Hence, Pyarelal boldly says –

‘Nisha was his own daughter. He would never suggest anything that would harm her. But Raju was his own son also. With this match his future would be made. If it weren’t for the accident, the girl’s family would be looking much higher, they had the means. This proposal had come to them without any effort. Who knew how hard they would have to look before meeting its equivalent? Perhaps this was a sign from the gods that they should not ignore.’ [243]

At one point, the argument of Pyarelal is correct. It is the marriage which brings the prosperity in home. It would also increase the status of family in the society. But, on the other hand, Yashpal thinks differently. His mind is full of confusions, whether to accept the proposal for Raju for the sake of property or to think about his dream to marry Nisha. Yashpal silently thinks about the matter –

‘But the idea factually agreeing to something so obviously inimical to Nisha’s interests kept him silent. From her earliest years he had imagined giving her a boy so full of qualities, both personal and worldly, that her happiness would be permanently assured. Her wedding would be the most elaborate in the family. Now Pyare Lal was urging him to postpone those visions and go ahead with Raju’s marriage. How would his daughter feel with a sister-in-law younger than herself.’ [244]

Yashpal thinks about her lovable daughter. Actually, he worries about Nisha, fare enough, well educated, but her destiny is against her. Her fairness
and intelligence remain useless for Nisha and her family. The isolation creates more pain for her father –

‘Yashpal felt a pang for his daughter. So pretty, so loving, so studious, only to fall prey to bad stars. Was there nothing beside the pujas they were doing that could counteracts their vicious influence over her life.’ [246]

‘This condition of Nisha remains same for a long period. Parents have been worrying, the daughter getting older by each day, the son’s future block because of this; good matches will pass over because of this. One day a proposal comes from a richer branch of Rekha’s family showrooms in Karol Baugh and South Extension. Pyarelal tells his brother that this type of proposal does not come daily so without any delay he should make up his mind.’[Sharma, Ram: 2013: 137]

The novelist describes how the attitude of Banwari Lal family for Nisha is changed. At one point, Nisha was centre for the family. Everyone in the family was worried about her. But, now, no one even cares her. She experiences this attitude –

‘The forlorn misery that was Nisha’s burden increased with every step made in the direction of her brother’s marriage. Had her parents not been so determined to reject Suresh, she could have been reveling in attention as the groom’s only real sister, instead of feeling a source of apology and justification. She wished she could disappear into some hole till the wedding was over. But the hole did not exist that could conceal a daughter of the house on such an occasion. All she wanted was to be ignored, even as she was consulted daily about clothes and jewellery, involved relentlessly in every ritual performed, and assured constantly of her luck in getting a permanent companion in her brother’s wife.’ [249]

Meanwhile, the marriage is proposed in the family of Banwari Lal. Now, Sona becomes mother-in-law and the newly married girl brings enough offerings. For this, Sona boastfully says to others. Eventually, the newly married couple goes for honeymoon at Europe. Nisha thinks the family is
same when they reject Suresh and now they accept the burnt in laws. Nisha thinks how her family is unfair with her choice. She thinks that –

‘She too could have been at same airport with her new husband, new luggage, gold sandals, gold jewellery, wedding bangles, and covered head. She too could have been the one eagerly awaited by a family after her honeymoon.’ [255]

But, the happiness of new marriage is over. Sona discovers that Pooja does not behave like daughter-in-law. She is often far from her. She has never shared the things to the family –

‘Sona complains to Raju that Pooja is not behaving like a daughter-in-law. Pooja spends no time with the rest of the family, no time. Raju responses-

‘Pooja is right: you don’t like her, why did you marry me to her, then? Was I in such a hurry? Snapped Raju before returning to his lair, leaving Sona to tearfully narrate the conversation word for bitter word to Nisha and later to Rupa.’ [Op.cit: 138]

But, Raju always takes side of his wife. He says that there is no mistake from the side of Pooja. Actually, the mistake is often from her side. Sona is upset with it –

‘her son had become slave of his wife and was bent on stabbing his mother in the heart.’ [259]

But, Sona’s suffering never ends. Actually, she thinks that Pooja creates separation in the family. She is a mother and she thinks that Pooja may snatch her child –

‘When he came out of his room in the morning, paper read, bathed, and ready to have breakfast, he would try and feed him, but there was Pooja armed with the things he liked already cooked by her maid, ready to serve him, hover over him, careful that no one else should do the things she had been married to do.’ [260]
Though Sona herself chooses Pooja, her daughter-in-law turns the mind of Raju. It causes more pain for Sona who had given birth, but now the deep pain arises in her heart. She painfully says –

‘But does that mean she should turn him against me—me, his own mother, who gave him birth from this flesh and blood?’ Sona beat her chest. ‘Whose milk he drank for two years—two whole years?’[265]

In this family intrigues, Nisha is neglected by her parents. The behaviour of Pooja against Nisha is also not good. Hence, Nisha is upset to spend hours idly at home. Maneeta Kahlon expresses –

‘Manju Kapur seeks freedom for the Indian woman but within the Indian socio-culture values she always bears the process of oppression and gender differentiation within the institution of the family and the male centered Indian society.’[Kahlon Maneeta: 2011: 8]

Nisha is desperate about the work. She thinks about the work. She thinks that besides idly waiting for proposals, she should work outside. But, it is ordeal for Nisha to convince the orthodox family. She thinks that her study is worthless in the house. She is a victim of gender discrimination when she feels that she can’t work outside like her brother. She requests her father –

‘if only you could take me with you, Papaji.” She continues,” I have seen girls working in shops shy should it be Ajay, Vijay and Raju? There must be something I too can do.’[Ibid: 9]

But, it is the orthodox family which never gives permission to work the girl outside. It is against the rule and tradition of the family. The novelist expresses –

‘When Nisha knew Suresh, the hitherto mindlessly done fast had acquired meaning. She offered him her karva chauth hunger, her discipline through the day, her prayers as she looked at the rising moon. The redness of her mehndi was a source of anxiety-
was it dark enough, would her mother in law over her?' [271]

Nisha gets upset with the behaviour of her family. Even, Pooja also misbehaves with Nisha. Hence, Nisha is deeply upset with her mother and relatives. Her own parent has never taken her side –

‘Why send me with them if a little thing is so important?’ was all Nisha said. She felt betrayed. Her mother was not on her side any longer. Pooja could do anything, Raju could do anything, and she would find excuse, all for the love of her son and his baby.’ [277]

Meanwhile, in the family, the new infant arrives. The family is happy, Even, Sona forgets the sufferings. But, the situation of Nisha is the same one. Though Nisha fascinates with new child, she is aware about the behaviour of Pooja –

‘Nisha was fascinated by the baby, but since it was Pooja’s, she was reticent with her affection.’ [279]

Pooja’s behaviour shows how Nisha is negligible in the family. She thinks that this has happened because she is just a burden for the family –

‘A few such incidents and it was apparent Pooja did not want Nisha to touch a baby. She confronted her mother one weekend morning when her aunt was there. ‘Is this true or not?’ ‘Try and understand. Young mothers have all kinds of fears.’

‘Now I am an untouchable?’ [279]

Because of this type of treatment in the family, Nisha irritates with all this. She thinks that she never has peace in the house. Hence, she thinks it better to leave the house and stays at Ashram, where she has mental peace. She says –

‘Why? I can go to an Ashram. At least there I can live with dignity and respect.’ [281]
Nisha thinks about her fate. She thinks why this type of destiny she has. Even, she thinks about her brother. How God has made discrimination among them –

‘Nisha looked indignant, Raju annoyed, embarrassed, and proud. His fate was markedly different form his sister’s. He was the holder of house, goods, wife and child. All on the right track.’ [283]

Besides, wasting time in the nursery school, she decides to start business just like her aunt. She dreams that she would be a successful business woman like her aunt. She says: ‘Give me a chance to show you what I can do’ [286]. The novelist describes that how a girl in Indian family always wants to prove. The gender discrimination often gets inferior treatment for girls. In the orthodox family, the girl never has right to do for herself. She never has opportunities like a boy. Her father, Yashpal says –

‘You will need at least two to establish yourself like that, you have to work, work all the time.’ [286]

Nisha is nervous on the statement of her father. Her only hope is her aunt, Rupa. She reveals all the things to her aunt –

‘Her aunt listened and gave no indication of the tears in her heart. Her poor, poor Nisha, forced to hew her own path in life. What kind of karma had the girl come what?’ [287]

Eventually, Yashpal thinks that her daughter first time demands something and tries to stand on her feet. Hence, Yashpal decides help Nisha for establishing her business. But, with this, Sona is not pleased. She thinks –

‘Sona was not pleased at this new development in Nisha’s life. ‘She is going to get married, why waste time and money in all this?’ A business was not like teaching, resignable when the bridegroom reached the door.’ [289]

At least, Yashpal gives support to Nisha. He is also worried about Nisha. He has knowledge about business. He thinks that doing business is a
mammoth task. Hence, he always gives support to Nisha. He says: ‘Beti he started, business is not an easy thing [290]. Though Nisha is well known about business, she is happy that her father is in her side –

‘Nisha held her breath. Twenty-five thousand! It made her feel adult. She who had been earning six hundred a month, to be responsible for twenty-five thousand! Her father trusted her as he would have trusted a son.’ [290]

Her father trusts her just like Raju. The novelist expresses how in Indian family, the girl is affected due to gender discrimination. The girls have less opportunity in every field rather than boys. But, now, Nisha has an opportunity to prove that she is not merely a thing which made for marriage only. She would also prove that girls are equal to boys. Meanwhile, the business of Nisha runs smoothly. Her business steadily grows up –

‘She takes money from her father to start the business but vows to return every single penny to her father. She hires a tailor on monthly pay and collects material for suits from her father’s shop. Her friends and customers like her suits and dresses. She gets heavy orders and becomes a successful and known ‘businesswoman’ of the Karol Bagh market. She is now economically emancipated. She has thrown the social codes to the wind and wants to display her talent and is ready to take up challenge Nisha proves to be responsible working business woman. Her boutique starts shining in the Karol Baugh very soon. [Kalholan Maneeta: 2011: 10]

Now, it runs smoothly. She has enough order to fulfill and her boutique is now popular in Karol Baugh. She has a skilled business woman –

‘All her friend love Nisha’s creation, thought it remarkable tht in a year she should be making suits as nice as the ones at Deepson’s and how fortunate they were to be getting one-third of when they bought from her. Nisha looked pleasant and non committal at the same time.’ [294]
Her position is improved in her family. Her horoscope also changes and her family hopes about marriage –

‘Meanwhile, the marriage mill went on. On Nisha’s birthday the family pundit came to deliver his predictions for the year. He unrolled the little chart tied with red thread and assured the anxious parents that this was the year Nisha was definitely going to get married. Shanni had moved from its house, the malevolent influences on her life were weakening.’ [295]

Her father is delightful about his daughter’s growth. He is akin about her skill as a business woman. But, at first, she is his daughter - a dearest one for him –

‘His daughter was growing, not in the way he had anticipated, but growing. Sometimes it occurred to him that she was more intelligent, methodical, and independent than Raju.’ [295]

Now, the family decides that Nisha should marry. A suitable proposal arrives. Nisha now is not much fair because of skin disease. The proposal of widower, Arvind, though good by nature, has same fortune like Nisha. But, the thought of a widower as her life partner makes Nisha afraid –

‘This made her afraid. She was no longer what she was. For the last five years she had watched her skin darken and her future grow ugly. Her mind darted down the sewers of her past, weaving through Vijay Nagar and the threatening places of her old house.’ [297]

Afterwards, Arvind’s family decides of registered marriage. They are against the fake vista. A simple marriage is arranged in the family. This is the moment that Sona, Yashpal and Nisha await from many years. Nisha weaves the dream of future life –

‘The many family wedding stretching down the years, bringing brides into the house, taking daughters away, had all been traditional. Not to have one of those. No ceremonies where she would be the centre of attention, of laughter, jokes, and
teasing, no dressing-up or jewellery, no red and white bridal dots across her forehead, curving under her eyes, no arrival of the barat, no groom on horseback, no wedding fire, no sisters hiding the bridegroom’s shoes and taking as much money as they could to give them back, no vida, no tears, no photographers, no wedding album- nothing. She had not realized how much she expected these things in her future.’ [302]

It is most comfortable thing for Sona. She is desperate of this event. Her dearest daughter is now going to be married. Her new life would be full of happiness and joy. Sona thinks how Nisha is suffered with bad fate. Uneven horoscope is also one of the hurdles in the marriage. But, now, everything is settled down. Now, Sona is content. She says to Rupa –

‘My Nisha’ said Sona answering Nisha’s tears with her own, ‘you are going to be a bride.’ She cracked knuckles around her daughters head.’ [304]

Banwari Lal family is now content. The only responsibility of the family that is Nisha’s marriage is now proposed. Everyone is pleased with the marriage of Nisha. Sona is a content woman. She has a soul responsibility of Nisha and now she is going to be married. Sona is now free with all depression and tension. She says to Rupa –

‘My duty is done, and now I can die in peace, Roopa. Said Sona incandescent with relief.’ [305]

Every family in Indian society is desperate about girl’s marriage. They decide the future of girl. But, the girl has no right to decide her future partner. Maneeta Kahlon explains –

‘As Clara Nubile has pointed out in danger of gender: ‘being a woman in modern India means to be entrapped into the inescapable cage of being a woman -wife-mother.’[Op.Cit: 11]

But, here, the novelist describes that after deciding the marriage, Nisha has to leave her well settled business. She will now again remain in the house and spend lonely hours in the house. Manju Kapur raises the question that’s
why every time girl should give up the things. She describes how marriage is a promised end of the freedom of woman. She remains bound in the walls of house. She is just like a prisoner in the house. But, for Banwari Lal family, marriage is an important thing for a girl. They have the concept about the marriage that gives the stable life for a girl. Banwari Lal family is now engaged in the marriage process. After all, this marriage is awaited from a long time –

‘Finally they collect in front of a magistrate in the nicest room. Here Arvind and Nisha sign their names in several places. Pooja takes out a box from her hand bag and unwraps the paper covering to reveal fat white squares of cashew barfi. She firmly holds a peace out to Arvind.’ [Sharma, Ram: 2013: 139]

After marriage, Nisha enters in a new life and new future. Now, she is not a daughter, she is a wife. Now, she shares her thoughts with Arvind. But, her awful aloneness remains still. Though she leaves her father’s house, she remembers the suffrages in the new life –

‘All night Nisha slept with her mehndi on. She slept badly, the mehndi flaking on the sheet, getting into her face and hair as she tossed and turned. As the sky grew lighter, she could hear the twittering of waking birds outside. Finally when the darkness had turned bluish grey she got up, and went into the kitchen. It was four-thirty on her wedding morning and she wanted to be alone before the others got up.’ [309]

Though Nisha is married and being a part of the Indian tradition and soon starts her new life, she often in the deep corner of her heart thinks about her first love ‘Suresh’. Though it is worthless to think of Suresh, she imagines that if her marriage was with Suresh, the scenario would have been a different one. Here, the novelist tries to unfold the emotions of Nisha –

‘She can’t help it, Suresh comes to her mind, and how different it had been. With Suresh the initial alarm at his touch had been mixed with excitement, longing, pleasure. Now it is dread hoping for
gentleness, with love not even a guest on the horizon.’ [Op.Cit: 316]

The novelist describes how marriage can change the identity of a woman. Nisha, who was the dearest daughter of Banwari Lal family, is now a wife of Arvind. She leaves her old life. Soon she dots the new life with new identity –

‘The next morning Nisha is escorted to her new home by a car load of relatives belonging to her husband. At the threshold she puts first one foot then the other into a tray laden with rice, wheat and cloth, and with those feet she enters the house, bringing food, clothing and prosperity to her married home. Some older women sing in the background, the mother-in-law sobs. Nisha is led to her, she takes her by the hand, crying, crying all the time, while it is whispered that Ammaji feels too much, but such is her nature.’ [317]

Nisha is lost in her past memories of Suresh and her sufferings in the family. Her skin disease deeply affects on her fairness. All these memories are gathered in her mind. After that, she has owned a new identity. She has now new role, new home and new responsibilities –

‘Her new home was above her husband’s shop. Its entrance was from the back gully, dumping place for rubbish. The paving was rutted and uneven, the foot slipped between the debris of eternal construction, loose brick, piles of sand, bajri, and puddles of stagnant water. Down the gully, rows of doors led to identical steep, narrow staircases that darkened as they rose higher. At the top a narrow entrance let into a small angan, bordered with plastic ropes stretched across for clothes to dry. The household bathed, peed, shat, cooked in cubby-holes on opposite ends of the angan; the eating was done in an alcove adjacent to the kitchen. On the left of the entrance were two large, old-fashioned, high-ceilinged rooms, one to sit in, one to sleep in. beyond them lay a covered veranda with a bed-cum-divan.’ [321]

Now, Nisha demands that at least her husband should support her. But, her dream scatters. She demands firm support of her husband just like her father. But, the situation is a different one –
‘He did not need to. He now had a substitute, one who was getting acquainted with what was expected of her, one who was uneasily wondering if this was compatible with her own longings. She looked to her husband, but the silent man was digging into his teeth with a toothpick, and did not seem to realize that a response was required.’ [322]

Nisha thinks about the business. She thinks that besides wasting time in the home, she should start the business. Though it was overlooked by Pooja and her mother, Nisha is desperate about her shop at Karol Baugh. Soon after few months, her body again decides her fate and the pregnancy report is positive –

‘The pregnancy test was positive. The doctor was encouraging. Normal healthy foetus, seven weeks, due date 6 January, iron, vitamin, and calcium supplements to be taken, normal activities to be followed, none of this eating for two business, exercise a must.’ [324]

The novelist describes how the role of a woman is changed. Nisha is changed from a daughter to a wife and now she is going to be a mother. It is the ultimate fate of woman. The society thinks that the woman is complete after motherhood. Maneeta Kahlon comments upon –

‘Same thing is highlighted by Clara Nubile for an Indian woman “Marriage must be followed by motherhood.” [Kahlon, Maneeta: 2011: 12]

But, the pregnancy is a hurdle for Nisha and her business. She is desperate about her business even in pregnancy. This time, her aunt, Rupa also opposes and said firmly –

‘You are clever one, you can always start again. There is a time and a place for everything. Now is the time for you to have children and enjoy them. If your mind is always somewhere else, you will be irritable. If you do too many things, you will be exhausted and create tension.’ [325]
Nisha is nervous and thinks about her husband. Arvind is always engaged in his business and he never takes interest in it. Nisha always asks him about her situation. But, he never says anything and gives suggestion that better to talk her mother. Nisha gets angry and thinks –

‘Amma, Amma always Amma. What about him? Though he was kind to her, she never felt any intimacy beyond fleeting moments in the dark. Did he like her at all? Was it her skin? Was the first one beautiful? She was sure she was.’ [327]

Now, Nisha is pregnant and it is the time when she demands her husband should be present with her. But, she is upset with the behaviour of the husband. He is always engaged in the business. At this situation, she needs him more. But, he always neglects her. She is depressed and thinks –

‘Despite all this, her husband was distant. The fuss made over her came from her mother-in-law. Once when the old woman was near she wondered out loud, lying tiredly on the bed, staring at damp marks on the ceiling, whether this was a child he wanted.’ [327]

But, Arvind never remembers that Nisha is in need of him. She demands his moral and emotional support. She is his wife. She leaves her father’s house for the sake of her husband. But, he always asks about his Amma. Nisha is serious with this attitude. She thinks –

‘Amma, again Amma, never any thought for her. Never how have you been, is your back paining, has the baby started kicking yet? Anger began to tremble below her considerate exchanges, ….. Not this preoccupation, not this looking through, not this ignoring of their coming child. If he felt so little for her, she should go home to her tailors, why enact this farce here? Mohseen Bhai would love it, though no doubt he would refuse to let go of his transportation allowance.’ [328]

Now, in Banwari Lal family, the new ceremony is prepared. It is God Bharai ceremony and all women gather around her. Her mother-in-law says –
‘The child should be healthy, that is all,’ she replied. ‘If it is a girl she will be ghar-ki-Lakshmi.’

‘Nisha knew that part of that Lakshmi would come from gifts her family would give, but still she felt reassured. She looked down at her belly. The skin was stretched, the eczema scars looked lighter. She hardly itched any more, and never to draw blood.’ [334]

Nisha would be complete woman. She was a good daughter, then a decent wife and now goes to be a good mother. Her life is filled with happiness. The happiness is spread throughout her life –

‘Ten months after Nisha’s marriage, twins were born. One girl, one boy. Her duty was over- God had been kind, however hard it was to believe.

Forty days later, during the naming ceremony, Nisha sat in front of the Havan, and through the smoke gazed at her tiny babies. ....... Her milk began to spurt and stain her blouse. She quickly adjusted her palla and looked up. Surrounding her were friends, relatives, husband, babies. All mines, she thought, all mines.’ [335-336]

This is a quality of the novelist to portray the middle class Indian woman and her identity. Maneeta Kahlon expresses her views –

‘Malti Agarwal in “Manju Kapur’s home: A Chronicle of Urban Middle class in India” observes, Manju Kapur’s depiction of her heroine, her travelling the labyrinth of rules and regulations and stepping out to start earning for her existence are superb. A girl in Indian family is wishing under the burden of patriarchy. She while living in her home feels herself homeless-shelter less-she strives to explore space for herself-she tries to be self-reliant in order to survive.’ [Kahlon, Maneeta: 2011: 13]

Manju Kapur in this novel deals with the problems of joint family. The novel also put focus on the condition of woman through the woman protagonist.
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