CHAPTER V

REALISTIC AND OPTIMISTIC PROTRAYAL OF

SELF IN *HOME*

Quest for feminine identity is largely a post-independent social phenomenon in India, a phenomenon influenced by various changing forces of reality-freedom movement, social reforms, progressive education, and urban growth etc. The nineteenth century is a new era of emancipation for the Indian women, an era of increased opportunities and a more dynamic participation in the social and intellectual life. Secondly, it was also a commentary on the rise of individualism in the life which was associated with the rise of feminism. Feminism emerged as a worldwide movement to secure women’s rights on the one hand and love, respect, sympathy and understanding from males on the other. It focused on women’s struggle for recognition and survival and made them realize that the time has come when they should stop suffering silently in helplessness.

The modern woman found sense in such self-sacrifice and yearns for self-expression, individuality and self-identity. She is trying to free herself of the independence syndrome as says Chaman Nahal:

I define modern woman as a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the dependence syndrome. There is a dependence syndrome, where it is the husband or the father or the community or whether it is a religions group, ethnic group when women free
themselves of the dependence syndrome and lead a normal life, my idea of feminism materializes. (30)

Manju Kapur’s *Home* explores the complex terrain of the Indian family and reveals many issues that are deep rooted within the family – the revolt against the age old traditions, quest for identity, the problems of marriage and lastly the women’s struggle for her survival. Manju Kapur have made a strong impact by depicting the changing face of Indian womanhood where the suffering but stoic woman eventually breaks through traditional boundaries to carve a niche for herself. Present chapter is an attempt to show how to tackle the cultural limitations through establishing their feminine identity by portraying the realistic and optimistic self and the need for reshaping the past value and explore the depiction of breaking the tradition of silence in the novel *Home* by Manju Kapur, who through the medium of her novel grapples with different manifestations of male domination against women. Her writings bring out significant new meanings in the changed exemplar of cultural encounters in which conjugal roles, dual-burdens, equal opportunities and social constraints are present. The protagonist of her novel is constantly trying to break the silence of suffering. Their suffering has made them strong and they struggle to free themselves from the shackles of tradition and various hurdles.

Manju Kapur’s protagonist in the present novel lives within the sphere of reality and successfully finds her ‘Home’. This novel focuses on female protagonists who struggle to break the shackles of the patriarchy and are in quest for self-identity against the dogmas of cultural and social critical thinking. Her
novel observe the continuity with their predecessors in portraying the lives of
Indian middle-class or lower-middle class families and above all their women
members struggling to break the age old silence against gender based domination
and violence in the patriarchal Indian society. Manju Kapur is well aware of the
fact that women under the patriarchal pressure and were subjected to much more
brute and social ostracism. They are discriminated and are biased in lien of their
sex. In patriarchal system, man is the legal head of the family. This system
ensured that property and children belonged to the same genealogy. The same life
lived and struggled under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society is
reflected in her novel Home.

Manju Kapur presents the yearning for autonomy and separate identity in
her women protagonists. Her protagonists are caught in the conflict between the
passions of the flesh and a yearning to be a part of the political and intellectual
movements of the day. She focused on women’s struggle for recognition and
survival and made them realize that the time has come when they stop suffering
silently in helplessness. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes in her article “Can the
Subaltern Speak?”

Between patriarchy and imperialism subject constitution and object
formation the figure of woman disappears not into a pristine
nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced
figuration of the “Third – World Woman” caught between tradition
and modernization.” (80)
The women in the novels of Manju Kapur seem to be the personification of new women who have been carrying the burden of inhibition since ages and want to break that tradition of silence now. In the traditional social milieu of her novel she shows the existence of mothers and daughters, it is the same society where marriage is regarded as the ultimate goal and destiny from which these women cannot escape. Manju Kapur’s female protagonist is the representatives of that female folk who long to form the stale social customs and traditions but are never allowed. Her female protagonists are mostly educated. Their education leads them to independent thinking, for which their family and society becomes intolerant towards them. They struggle between tradition and modernity. It is their individual struggle with family and society through which they plunge into a dedicated effort to crave an identity for themselves as qualified women with faultless backgrounds.

The word ‘Home’ has been depicted as a foreground as well as a background in Manju Kapur’s third novel which has the identical title *Home*. It suggests a kind of domestic harmony, a state of gender equilibrium in which the heroine and other subsidiary characters attempts to reconstruct a novel set of circumstances. The crack in unitary relationships causes a break up in a joint family; the dissonance of rhythm causes a type of disharmony. Manju Kapur’s *Home* is an intelligently fabricated story which follows the lives as the characters leave their conservative, sheltered childhood home, where they were inundated with culture, tradition and values. The way the novel is presented, it can be said that:
Home belongs to what must now be counted as a sub-genre of Indian writing in English, domestic fiction, stories of wedding and death arrange marriages and love affairs, cooking and pricking in a joint, or an extended family in South Asia … (Hussein 2006)

The novel *Home* is a modest attempt to decipher about characters that to the world the family speaks as one voice. But within the house each individual’s voice may chatter, murmur, question or complain but they all must eventually fall silent in difference to wishes of the family as a whole. This presents Manju Kapur’s understanding of human character and her maturity as a novelist. In this context Anupama Chowdhury observes:

> Home reveals a disturbing home truth that joint families cab both destroy and preserve our maturity, and mental progress. (2008:33).

They refuse to reconcile with the patriarchal and male governed society and tries to establish their own individual identity. Since the establishment of the society, woman is stamped as the weaker sex, denied full justice, social security, economic liberation, and political awareness. In this context, Simone De Beauvior comments:

> The situation of woman is that she – a free and autonomous being like all creatures – nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other (1986:167).

But the Women Liberation Movement of 1960’s helped women to think over their condition and treatment of equality along with men. Manju Kapur’s
*Home* encapsulates the idea of women’s liberation and the protagonist emerges as new woman in the novel. The present chapter intends to study the protagonist’s quest for identity and survival.

Though the setting of the novel is full of contemporized, yet it marks a return to traditional Indian milieu, in the grab of conservative views of the Banwari Lal’s joint family of traders in the textile business, who live in Karol Bagh, a commercial head of Delhi. There has been displayed the closeness and disastrous confinements of Indian family norms. The themes of female bonding, female sexuality and mother-child relationship span two generations in this narrative. The story also has an instance which shows a co-ordination, maintained by the patriarch of the family.

In her novel, Manju Kapur, once again goes back to her theme of three generations residing in one house, the women existing within the joint family set-up. Home is about the home of Lala Banwari Lal, a patriarch who firmly believes in living in a joint family. He is the head of the family, with his seven year old son, two year daughter, pregnant wife and wife’s jewellery. They cross the border into Amritsar, then Delhi, finally arrive at Karol Bagh and run a sari shop. In the prologue, the novelist writes:

The Banwari Lal family belonged to a class whose skills had been honed over generations to ensure prosperity in the market-place. Their marriage augmented, their habits conserved. From an early age children were trained to maintain the foundation on which these homes rested...
The education they received, the values they imbibed, the alliances they made had everything to do with protecting the steady stream of gold and silver... Those who fell against the grain found in their homes knives that wounded, and once the damage had been done, gestures that reconciled. (H 01)

Lala Banwari Lal has two sons, his eldest son Yashpal got married with Sona, whose sister is the wife of an educated but badly paid government servant, Premnath. Both are hard workers, good at heart and live with their in-laws in the same area. And the younger son Pyarelal was also married to Sushila and his daughter Sunita, who is married and has a son Vicky. All are the members of generation next to Banwari Lal. Anupama Chowdhury says,

Home reveals a disturbing home truth that joint families can both destroy and preserve our maturity, individuality and mental progress. (33)

After an accidental death of Sunita her only son Vicky is taken to Karol Bagh. As Sona does not conceive for a long time, her mother-in-law assigns to her the responsibility of Vicky. Meanwhile Sushila gives birth to Ajay. Sona feels her life has been miserable. She keeps fasting for a long time for the want of a child but it helps her in no way. So, Yashpal plans to visit a shrine at Chetai near Almora. It is believed that the goddess of this mountain is very powerful. Rupa and Premnath also accompany them. Two months later Sona comes to know that she has conceived. Soon she gives birth to a girl, ‘Nisha’. When her horoscope is matched, he is declared as mangli. After Nisha, Sona gives birth to a son Raju.
Meanwhile Sushila gives birth to her second son Vijay. So including Vicky, Ajay, Vijay, Raju and Nisha are the representatives of the third generation.

The novel focuses on three female characters—Sona, (daughter-in-law of Banwari Lal), Rupa, (Sona’s sister) and Nisha (Sona’s daughter)—who claim their identity in their own ways. The story begins with two sisters: one is good looking and the other merely plain. The beautiful elder Sona is married to the elder son of Banwari Lal while the younger one, Rupa is attached to a junior Government officer of less value. At the initial stage the story revolves around the life of Sona and Rupa before it focuses on the whole family. Each sister thinks that the other is luckier and each one has more difficulties than the other. Rupa has only a husband and a father-in-law in the family whereas Sona’s is a joint family. Rupa frequently remarks to her sister Sona:

We are cursed, Didi, what to do? It is our fate. Perhaps it is just as well we don’t have children, that men will trouble us life after life (H 01)…

Sona’s eyes filled with tears as she murmured hopelessly, ‘I want my own child’ Rupa stroke her back and murmured, Bas, in the end it will be all right. Your time will also come. (H 23)

The only tension of Rupa’s life is a wicked tenant who lives upstairs in their house. He refuses to pay his rent on time. They have already spent a lot of money on the case to evict him. Rupa and her husband, Prem Nath remain childless couple throughout the story. But she is lucky enough because she is not
subjected to bear the taunts of in-laws for having no child. Like Sona, after passing two years, Sona is still not pregnant. Her mother-in-law comments her occasionally,

> What can you know of a mother’s feelings? All you do is enjoying life, no children, so sorrow, only a husband to dance around you. (H 18)

Sona performs every duty as a daughter-in-law as she is trained from an early age to love, serving and obey her in-laws. Meanwhile, Yashpal’s younger brother, Pyarelal gets married to Sushila. Their marriage is appreciated by all the family because it is arranged by the parents. Sushila brings a huge dowry with her including a scooter, fridge, cooler, double bed and sofa. Sona realizes what she has not realized in three years of her marriage. She feels herself inferior to Sushila, as Sona’s parents did not give her dowry at the time of her marriage. The newly married couple starts living upstairs where Sona wishes to shift. But the system of joint family remains same. All take their meal together only. The family believes,

> Separate kitchens lead to a sense of mine and yours, dissatisfaction, emotional division, and an eventual parting of the ways. If families did not even eat together, what was the point of living as unit? You might as well emigrate, pursuing your autonomy in lonely isolation. (H 12)

Sona struggles to have children in order to establish her place in the family and her childless situation continued to make her vulnerable. She was considered
to have a fund of motherly emotion waiting to pour itself into the orphaned Vicky, the son of Murali and Sunita, the only daughter of BanwariLal. Sona’s position forced her to bear these remarks in silence but her internal repartee was fierce and pointed:

How can I be her mother? Or make up for anything? If it is in my fate to have children, it is also in his fate not to have parents. I have to accept that as much as he. How can some dirty little street boy be forced on to me as my child? I would rather die. Oblivious of her thoughts, they reiterated night and day… God has rewarded your devotion. Sometimes our wishes are fulfilled in strange ways.

(H 25-26)

Finally Sona discovered that she had conceived and gives birth to a baby girl. Everybody is happy because “It is good to have a girl in the house”. (H 35) Girl is considered as Lakshmi for the traditional family. Nisha’s birth meant a certain neglect of Vicky, now nobody’s particular responsibility. ‘And now the womb has opened,’ continued Rupa, ‘a baby brother will come soon.” (H 36) The boy child is seen as ‘Kul-Ka-Deepak’. Sona’s delivery of her next progeny, a son is enjoyed and welcomed more than the first. Sona’s mother-in-law declared, “Now I can die in peace”. (H, 41) As both of her sons now have their sons and they can hold their head high in the society. Due to this gender differentiation, the family never let Nisha go outside and play with her brothers.
The family of Banwari Lal is traditional and patriarchal. They believe that men work out of the house, and women within. His two sons follow the ways of their father without any question. The head of the house, Banwari Lal, is ready to do anything for the honor of the family and to maintain its unity. He believes, “United we stand, divided energy, time and money are squandered”. (H 7) At first his principles are challenged by his elder son, Yashpal, who falls in love with a customer and then marries her. The opposition of the ‘love marriage’ is the very feature of traditionalism. Further Sona’s childlessness and later Nisha’s empowerment is also considered as shameful. They believe that a girl is supposed to find satisfaction in the performance of her duties in the varied role of mother, daughter, sister, and daughter-in-law. The home is ‘Karma- Bhoomi’ and for a woman to aspire life beyond the limits of the home is unnatural. Malti Mathur asserts,

Any woman who wished to give up the security and safety of the confines of the home for an uncertain, unsafe identity outside, are looked upon as no less than a Jezebel. (85)

Nisha, the main protagonist and the daughter of Yashpal and Sona, emerges as a self-dependent woman in the novel. She refuses to reconcile with the patriarchal and male dominated family structure and tries to make her own individual identity. She spends a congested childhood where she is not allowed to play or go out by her own choice. She is provided with nice dresses and everything else yet, “unfortunately her outfits did not match her inclinations,’ I want to play in the park,’ she whined periodically”. (H 53)
Manju Kapur has portrayed the confused growing up years of Nisha in a heart rending manner as Nisha is sexually abused by her cousin Vicky in the early stage of her life.

If you say anything to anybody, muttered Vicky unnecessarily into her ear, they will beat you. They will lock you up, and never let you go to school. Nisha freed herself, got up unsteadily and went into the angan. (H 62)

It affects the child psychologically and mentally. She thinks silently that, “she had done something dirty”. (H 59). Rupa believes that there is something at their home which is frightening and disturbing the innocent mind of Nisha. So Nisha is sent to her aunt’s house. Her aunt Rupa, and her husband, take full care of Nisha. In the traditional family of Banwari Lal’s, girl’s education is considered secondary. But Nisha’s education begins properly at her aunt’s house. Her uncle, Prem Nath helps her in her studies and spends much time in telling her stories and lessons. A change appears in Nisha’s behavior after she leaves her own home. Her aunt and uncle try to talk on the issue of Vicky with Nisha’s father. But no one in the family is ready to believe in such tales about Vicky, whom they consider like their own child.

During Nisha’s education, her brother’s get married. Now it is Nisha’s turn. Her mother knows that she is mangli. A mangli, destined to marry unfortunately, destined for misery, unless a similar mangli could be found, with a similar fate and horoscope and it is not as easy to find a mangli boy for her. Nisha is told to keep fasts for her future husband by her mother. Nisha is of modern thinking and does
not believe in traditional beliefs. She is not ready at all to spend her whole day without food and water like her mother. As the family believes in superstitions, Nisha is also forced again to keep ‘Kava Chauth’ fast for the long life of her husband. Nisha has been influenced by her Maasi’s updated thinking of life. The lady believes in practical ways of life and thinks of her sister, “There was an age for everything, and when the child should be thinking of studies, she was forcing her to think of husbands”. (H 95)

Nisha’s stay with them has conditioned her mind according to the ways of her uncle and aunt. Rupa has a business of pickles; Nisha sees her mentor in her aunt and wants to lead a life like her. Sona thought that she is one who forces of patriarchy within their homes; the opposition does not come so openly from the male members as it does from their own mothers. They are unable to understand their daughter’s feelings and rather expect them to follow the traditional role of women in a family. Sona says,

This girl will be our death. My child, born after ten years, tortures me like this. Thanks God your grandfather is not alive. What face will I show upstairs? (H 198)

The traditional mother wants her daughter to be like her. For her doing kitchen work is more important than studies. The main concern of Sona is Nisha’s marriage. Throughout Ajay’s marriage, Sona wants Nisha to look beautiful so that any boy or his family may choose her. 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.
Nisha discovered to her mother that her mother’s idea of a daughter was one who helped her every time anybody ate. ‘What can Rupa have been thinking of? I assumed she was teaching you everything she knew,’ Sona grumbled. You take half an hour to peel ten potatoes. How will you manage in your future home? (H 125)

Nisha always protests in return, “Masi says there is always time to learn cooking, but only one time to study” (H 125) The girl always tries to defend herself and her aunt. This clash between Nisha and Sona is a clash between tradition and modernity. The mother wants her daughter to be rooted in the tradition that would make her life worth having.

Roop, I would never had 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. (H 126)

We see that two real sisters- Sona and Rupa, born in the same house, are totally different in their thinking after their marriage. It is a result of the atmosphere of their new families that one considers a working woman as emancipated individual, while for the other it is shame. One protests, “Times are different now” while the other defends by saying that “We are traditional people. Tradition is strong with us. So is duty”. (H 123). As Nisha is a mangli destined to match her horoscope with a similar mangli, she should wait unless a mangli could
find. Ultimately Nisha is at the centre of interest with an issue of her college education. After a dialogue with Sona, Rupa, an emerging new woman interposes:

If anything happens in the girl’s later life,

She is not completely dependent…

She continues in a careful emotional manner;

It would be shame to not educate her further

Let her do English honour, not too much

Work reading story book. (H 141)

Sona becomes convinced that there is no discrimination made as male and female in the context of education. Nisha joins Durga Bai College. In the college, she has the only best friend Pratibha, an ambitious girl, who joins NCC programme hoping that this would lead to a government job with the police. Partibha as a new woman also wants to create own identity and an independent existence in the economic field. Like Nisha, she deserves to be mentioned as active, confident and thorough.

During first year of her college, she finds her college life adventurous, making her modern and bold in her decisions. She begins to define her independence and react to her rigorous upbringing at home. She wants to negate everything her mother stood for. Her first step in this direction was to cut her long hair which her mother valued as indispensable for womanhood.
She needed to stand out. Could she cut her hair, face the storm this would create, and emerge beautiful and shining after the commotion... To encourage her rebellion she thought of the girls in her class, girls with swishing open hair, wavy, blow-dried, or hanging straight, framing faces with fringes, flicks or stray tendrils. She thought of her own, in the thick, rubber-banded plait, never falling free, ugly, and unimaginative. (H 147)

Nisha comes across a boy, Suresh, at the bus stop. He was tall and thin, with a shallow complexion and his face was decorated with bluish black stubble. They become friendly within two or three meetings and her meeting with Suresh becomes regular. Both fell in love, Nisha loves Suresh from the core of her heart, and Suresh is in deep love with her but they cannot be united in wedlock because of social customs and barriers. Suresh actually belongs to a low caste and his parents are poor. They both wander here and there in each other’s company but in her mind she always reminds herself of the patriarch set up of her home and yet “As they rode towards metamorphosis in Kamala Nagar, she felt she was entering a phase from which there was no turning back” (H 149). She now totally changes. Her mother protests in this way:

Who gave you permission to cut your hair, suddenly you have become 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? Her hair was opened, pulled, tugged, stared at, and wept over. (H 150)
Nisha was terrified to learn that her mother thought that a daughter should be obedient to help her mother. Nisha began to question the idea of home in the joint family system, “Home is where one receives true affection”. Kapur brings out some disturbing home truths in this novel which still exist in our society and is a very part of social structure. In her interview with J. Dadyburjor Farhad she asserts that this novel is based on real facts.

I teach in an all girls college (Miranda House College, Delhi) and ‘Home’ was first conceived in response to the home situations of some of my students who came from conservative backgrounds.

(Farhad)

Suresh and Nisha love each other madly. Once Suresh even makes advances towards her in the Vijay Nagar room, but Nisha being a talented and cautious girl does not allow him to transgress the limits:

What is wrong with you? Haven’t we know each other a long time? Didn’t you trust me enough to come with me here alone?

I love you, I love you, why you are so cruel to me?

I love you too,’ she cried, tears wetting her face, her hanky, his shoulder, as he pulled her, resisting, to him.

Eventually they left the room. (H 191)

Nisha’s cruelty is much inspired by her sense of security and purity. She has actually set her eyes on marriage with Suresh and before that she cannot enjoy ‘the forbidden pleasures’. She had made up her mind to marry him. Towards the
end of third year, her parents received a letter about her short of attendance in college from the authorities. Her affair with Suresh comes into limelight. She has to face many queries. She wants to meet Suresh only once. But her brother calls him a crudefucker. In this opinion, Nisha is no trustworthy. So, she rebels: “who you are to decide whether I am trustworthy” (H 199). This rebellious comment reflects her modernity. She wants to live on equal footing with men, creating her own identity. She refuses to admit any discrimination between men and women. Her rebellious nature arises from time to time. When Suresh on the other hand tries to convey her family that his intentions are pure and he only wants Nisha. No fancy wedding, No dowry, he doesn’t even care if she is a mangli.

On account of this, she is moved by his nobility. She says her mother, “Who cares about castes these days? What you really want is to sell me in the market”, She sobbed with indignant emotion. “Sell me and be done with it. What are you waiting for?”(H 200). Nisha refuses to follow the age-old traditional marriage. She wants no more to be a doll to be sold in the market. Nisha’s quest for identity and freedom as a human being significantly expresses Manju Kapur’s feminist approach.

Nisha’s desire for establishing self-identity, according to Silpi Srivastava is, “a value charged, almost a charismatic term with its secured achievement regarded as equivalent to personal salvation” (Prasad 2008:197). Nisha’s views irritate her mother and she gives her a slap. And she is made a prisoner in her own family. When she repents at her uncle Premnath, he consoles: “Suresh’s family should have met your family” (H 202). This is but his traditional approach,
whereupon Nisha answers: “Uncle this is the modern age” (H 202). Later, they hold meetings with Suresh. But those prove to be fatal for Nisha. She realizes: “Raju was right; Suresh was a Chutia, a total fucker, if he loved her, he had no right to decide her future on his own” (H 215). Significantly enough, Manju Kapur, here, has pointed out the traditional male governed approach. Though Suresh loves Nisha, he wants ‘to decide her future on his own’. During this time, Nisha attempts third year exam and secures third division.

Now Suresh vanishes from her life and there is nothing she can do. She just leaves her fate in the hands of her parents ‘becoming a bird in a cage’ and to adjust with the idea of another man in the place of Suresh. Here starts discussion on her marriage issue all around. She feels torturous about the bride seeing ritual. In her attempts to survive, she wants to do something meaningful. She dares to complain: “I don’t want to be seen by all these people, why can’t I do some course?” (H 226). She declares, “I want to study fashion designing. Lots of girls do it, why can’t I? Why should I sit at home every day waiting for proposals?” (H 227). Being an English graduate, she doesn’t want to stay at home. Instead she thinks about career oriented courses.

Once her family comes to know her desires, she is not allowed to go out. The only ray of hope is again her aunt and uncle. With her uncle Prem Nath, she plans to meet Suresh. At first her uncle consoles the girl, “His family should have met your family”, for Nisha, it is a traditional approach, so she answers back, “Uncle this is the modern age”. (H 202) Finally their marriage results in the destruction of Nisha’s hopes and love. Two things pose a great problem between
them – poverty and caste. Suresh does not have guts to declare his promise of marriage with Nisha before her family. Instead he says,

I will do whatever is best for everyone. I can have nothing to do with Nisha against her family’s wishes, no matter what my personal inclinations may be. (H 205)

After three years of thinking that Suresh is not her future, now Nisha has to adjust the idea of another man in his place. Nisha’s selfless love for Suresh is stilled, and her marriage is so hurriedly arranged with a widower of middle age by her family.

Now starts Nisha’s journey towards emancipation. She wants to do something valuable. She further wants to do fashion designing course. She wants to be economically independent. It is her first step towards empowerment. Her idea of working and earning is bitterly opposed by her mother. Manju Kapur seeks freedom for the Indian woman but within the Indian socio-cultural values. She always bears the process of oppression and gender differentiation within the institution of the family and the male centered Indian society. Nisha 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. Why should it be Ajay, Vijay and Raju? There must be something I too can do. (H 268)

This reveals her inner quest for independent existence and self-identity. She counts herself equal as her brothers. She denies the patriarchal system. At her
request, her father allows her to join a play way school, near her home. Instead of going to shop and attending the customers it is the better option for her. But soon Nisha is fed up with children at the school and leaves the job.

Another example of woman submission has been presented by Manju Kapur through Nisha’s struggle to adopt the profession of her own choice. The author has depicted through the character of Nisha that it is not easy for a woman to choose the profession of her own choice. In order to do so, she has to struggle a lot in her life. Society deprives her of this right just because of her being a woman. Tradition bound society has made certain restrictions and laws which she is not allowed to cross over. Working in shop is not considered to be a good profession for a woman.

The Banwari Lals are primarily a traditional business family where much importance is not given to education. But in their family, only Nisha and Pooja are managed to get educated. Focusing on the change of women’s position, Manju Kapur has presented the changes in the moral foundations of the Banwari Lal’s family. The novel touches the realities of life in which owing to the modernization the ‘old fashioned’ shop of Banwari Lal is replaced by modern type mirror’s showroom and the ‘home’ is fragmented into flats. Anita Sethi in her review of Home writes,

As tradition battles with transition, the older members of the Banwari Lal family struggle to adapt to the seismic changes rippling through the country, from Nisha restyling herself with a new haircut
and clothes to buildings being bulldozed to make way for chandeliered shops. (“Home Is Where Ghosts Are”)

Nisha defies the social structure and defines womanhood entirely in different terms that suit her aspirations. She does not dance to the tunes of conventions and wishes to live a carefree life. With the help of her father, she starts her own business, a boutique, named ‘Nisha’s Creations’. First time in her life she feels proud as “Her father trusted her as he would have trusted a son”. (H 291) She takes money from her father to start the business but she 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 any challenge.

Nisha proves to be a responsible working businesswoman. Her boutique starts shining in the Karol Bagh very soon. She is very conscious regarding her workers, the raw-material for dresses and the genuine prices. Within a year she returns half the money loan to her father. She keeps an eye on the workers. In her absence, she arranges her mother, Sona, to look after the workers. She is very much alert about her status as a reputed businesswoman. She bears no negligence in her work and says, “My reputation will be spoilt. Do you know how competitive the market is?” (H 294) Nisha’s business flourishes day by day.
Demands of suits increase in the market and meanwhile the family finds a mangli boy for Nisha.

Being a business woman, Nisha tackles every problem on her own. For instance,

Mummy, what have you done?" wailed Nisha,

“Even if he (M. Khan) sleeps he never cuts less than five suits a day. I promised Gyan’s twenty by day after, if he doesn’t come, my reputation will be spoilt. Do you know how competitive the market is? (H 294).

This proves Nisha to be dashing and daring in decision making and self-assured. Though, she takes help of Pooja and mother in-charge, she doesn’t allow them to interfere in her decision. This success leads her to get married and fulfill her quest for home that may be parental or of one’s own, the key factor of the novel. The importance of Nisha’s marriage lies in the fulfillment of the family of Arvind, who is marrying for the second time after an accidental death of his first wife. Although the proposal was agreed from both the sides, Nisha’s marriage is fixed with a widower named Arvind. Then she moves to her husband Arvind’s home after the wedding.

As Clara Nublie has pointed out in *The Danger of Gender Caste Class and Gender in Contemporary Indian Women’s Writing*: “Being a woman in modern
India means to be entrapped into the inescapable cage of, ‘being a woman-wife-mother’,” (Clara 12) same is fated in Nisha’s life. She is closed inside her home after her marriage. So she hands over the charge of her establishment to her sister-in-law, Pooja, who is very tactful in handling customers and very sociable.

She stipulated that Pooja could not use the name Nisha’s creations. That goodwill, that reputation was not transferable. One day she would resurrect it, one day it would be there, waiting for her.

(H 333)

In the institution of marriage Nisha’s husband never shares anything, personal or professional, with her. He does not understand her desires and aspirations. Therefore, we can say that marriage, the promised end in a traditional society, becomes an enclosure that restricts a women’s movement. Nisha was like a flying bird that has been a prisoner in the cage of social norms. After ten month of her marriage, she conceives. During her pregnancy, she seeks to go to the shop. Her husband and mother-in-law do not appreciate her idea of going out during these days. Even her modern aunt, Rupa, consoles her,

You know beti; You can always start a business you have shown a flair for it. But this time with your baby, this will not come again”.

(H 334)

It would be proper to say that Nisha as an individual could create separate room for herself in home and society. She, as an educated and spirited new
woman, could refuse to be treated as an object instead she tried to establish her own identity.

It is necessary to note that she belongs to middle class family in metropolis, is born and brought up in India, where social and cultural scenario is different than that of western countries. Her quest for self-identity, struggle for economic independent existence, and her equality with men depend upon Indian social ethos. In *Emergence of New Woman in Novels of Manju Kapur*, Laxmi Sharma is apt to say:

The emergence of new women in the realm of social, economic, cultural and racial aspects will also be probed... The concept of new woman in Indian society varies from the one in the west... (http://Literaryindia.com).

It seems that Manju Kapur wants to have complete liberation to new woman in socio-cultural India. As she, herself studied in Halifax for few years in the early 1970’s, presents portrayal of new woman and honours Indian tradition very well. She maintains the character of Nisha, to create awareness of women’s liberation and equality along with men, not fully bloomed but at least up to mark, though Manju Kapur has portrayed the character of Nisha as an educated, confident, self-assured, bold and independent spirited new woman.

Same thing is highlighted by Clara Nublie for an Indian woman, “Marriage must be followed by motherhood”. (Clara 24) Nisha delivers twin-one girl and one boy and becomes a complete woman according to the frame of society. Malti
Agrawal 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 of traditional middle class milieu and stepping out to start earning for her existence are superb. A girl in Indian family is whining 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. (22)

Manju Kapur’s *Home* also explores the complex terrain of the Indian family and reveals many issues that are deep rooted within the family which revolt against the old traditions, and woman’s unending struggle to survive and to break the silence against her own suppression. Thus we can say that Manju Kapur had displayed a mature understanding of the female psyche and the inner subtlety of a woman’s mind. She has been highly disturbed by the suffering but stoic women trying to set herself free from meaningless chains. She, through her novel *Home*, takes a deep satisfying look at the sense of displacement often felt by women in the traditional institution of marriage. The displacement they suffer and their suffocation in the traditional limits of marriage, family and society as a whole is clearly brought out by the novelist in her novel.

Thus the novelist show that the women has to pull herself out of her existential stupor and bring out her essential self by breaking the age old silence of suffering. She should raise her voice against the mental torture that she has
suffered through the ages by creating a separate identity and space for herself.

With great enthusiasm, Kiran Nagarkar in her “India Club Editorial” declares:

Manju Kapur is one of the most perceptible chroniclers of that microcosm of the nation state: the joint family. The narrative voice is deceptively for Kapur lays it all bare – conflicting loyalties, intrigues triumphs, and tragedies. (India Club Editorial)

In *Home*, Kapur presents Nisha, the protagonist, as bold, educated and balanced. Her feminist consciousness has been suppressed to a great extent by patriarchy, but it has not been murdered. Although Nisha has suffered, she has finally thrived to live like an independent woman without adapting to any extreme step. She has undoubtedly succeeded in asserting her womanhood. Through her sustenance to face the challenges and love for freedom, she is able to realise the immense potentialities of a woman, her unique position in the family and society. Therefore, Nisha stands out as a woman of determination to break free from the shackles of male domination and patriarchy. Her quest is mainly for identity, for selfhood, that is to understand her own self, so as to lead a more authentic life than the one available to her.