CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

India is a dominant force not only in the field of science and technology, but also in the field of literature. The English Language has become one of the major forces to spread Indian thoughts of enjoying themselves in composing something in this alien language. The term “Indo-Anglican” literature is used to denote the original literary creations of the Indian in the English language. Indian writing in English initially emerged as an offshoot of the English literature. Today, it has become a powerful literature and holds a place of its own in the world literature and appears perfectly as an indigenous literature. Hudson opines

Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest of all of us. (Oldcastle 10)

He is also of the opinion that

Some pieces of literature present a realistic picture of life… literature lives by the virtues of the life which it embodies (Oldcastle 10)

Mathew Arnold is of the view that, “Literature is a criticism of life”. It means literature is an interpretation of life. Johnson calls literature, “a mirror of life” which means literature reflects life in the process, and one can acquire
knowledge about life. George Eliot says “Literature is the nearest thing to life”. Literature helps to enrich the knowledge of man’s life by being realistic and relevant to the contemporary society.

The novel, with its power, influences all kinds of readers, as it has always been an effective instrument to portray society. In fact many of the classics from Russian, French, German and English Literatures voice strident and loud protests against social inequalities and inequities. Writers use literature as a weapon to lodge their protest against the established order of society as the evils that have swept into it and to register their strong dissent.

In India to the advent of novel has brought in a remarkable change. Indian English Literature has created a wave of inventiveness in the world of literature. Indian English Literature (IEL) refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in the English Language and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian Diaspora, especially people like Salman Rushdie who was born in India. As a category, this production comes under the broader realm of post-colonial literature the production from previously colonized countries such as India.

Indian writers in English have made significant contribution in the field of novel. Since the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s Ramona’s Wife in 1864, Indian novel has come a long way from imitative stage to the realistic to the psychological to the experimental stage; Indian novel has followed certain definite
patterns. Chatterjee established the novel as a major literary form in India. *Ramona’s Wife* was his only novel in English. As K.S.Ramamurti states:

> It must be admitted that Bankim was a true pioneer of the Indian novel in English, in the sense than a novel which demonstrated that it was possible to write about Indian life and to describe Indian scene in a foreign language without becoming imitative (40).

He further calls Bankim Chatterjee as the “Father of the novel” in India.

The emergence of Indian novel in English was the result of one great creative urge manifesting itself in almost all the Indian language. The desire in writing in English may be due to:

1. A genuine creative impulse which was a characteristic of the times.
2. A desire to imitate western models.
3. A desire to impress the reader.

In the analysis of Indian Writing in English, there are various literary genres such as poetry, drama, short stories, novel and other types. Of these literary genres, Novel is growing in popularity in recent years without any ancestry to its credit. Further Srinivasa Iyengar is of the view that:

> The ‘novels’ as a literary phenomenon is new to India. Epics, lyrics, dramas, short stories and fables have their respectable ancestries, going back by several centuries, but it is only during a period of
little more than a century that the novel- the long sustained piece of prose fiction- has occurred and taken root in India. (314)

The novels of Indo- Anglican writers have taken major stride in the post-independence era. These fictions present a consistent picture of the changing social realities. The post- independence era has witnessed at least three generations of Indian novelists in English. The first generation consists of the “Big Three”- Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan.

Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan are those three pillars of Indian novel in English. Each has evolved a separate world different from each other. Their genius has achieved a variety in Indian fiction in English. Raja Rao excels in expounding the Indian philosophy. Mulk Raj Anand is a champion of the downtrodden. He suggests change of profession as a remedy for the evils of caste system in India. *Coolie* and *Untouchable* are two of his masterpieces.

R.K.Narayan, the last of the Big Three, belongs to a different mould; he cannot and should not be compared with Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand. He is basically a comic genius. His humour is found in the Indian context, and given an elaborate treatment in most of his novels.

Indian Writing in English is flourishing abundantly by leaps and bounds in every field of literature particularly in the field of fiction. Indian English fiction, in recent years has centered round the unsung plights of Indian women. Traditionally man has been regarded as a protector, a master, a guardian of woman. He was considered as the God and woman, the devout; man for the field and woman for
the hearth and so on. In Vedas, most of the hymns are attributed to only sons, never to daughters. Atharvana Veda says: “The birth of a girl grants elsewhere, here grant a son” (Prasad 12). In the Koran, “a woman is described as a ‘fitna’ one who tempts man and brings trouble” (Prasad 2). The Bible observes that God formed woman out of the rib of man. This led to the age-long disparity between man and woman.

As a matter of fact, both men and women are the essential parts of creation. Both are the two sides of the same coin. A man’s life without a woman is just like a flower without fragrance, a ship without a rudder or a body without a spirit.

Today a woman is not a doll in the hands of man. She is being seen establishing her identity in almost every walk of life. Apart from many other fields, women have also heralded a new consciousness in the realm of literature. Their immense contribution to English literature in general and fiction in particular is worth noticing and praise worthy. Women writers in India are moving forward with their strong and sure strides, matching with the pace of the world. They are recognized for their originality, resourcefulness and the indigenous flavour of the soil and it is reflected in their works. Indian Women novelists took to writing in English mainly after Independence and achieved remarkable success.

Indian women writers in the Post Modern era have played a vital role to give shape to this literary genre, the ‘novel’. Contributions by women writers are enormous and they used ‘novel’ as a tool to voice their views on marriage, society, and various other social and psychological aspects associated with ancient Indian
ethnicity which was the basis of the enslavement of the Indian women for centuries.

In most of their writings they have tried their best to free the female mentality from the age long control of male domination. Indian women’s writings focus on the eminence of man-woman relationship in the society to describe, analyze and define the Indian Woman’s individuality. The modern Indian women have started questioning the age-old patriarchal domination.

The most outstanding among these writers are Bahabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar... The second generation novelists are Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhavala, Santha Rama Rau, Nayantara Sahgal, Arun Joshi, etc and a train of other talented women writers. In the third phase, novelists like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Shashi Deshpande, Geeta Mehta, Rama Mehta, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, Bharati Mukherjee, Mahasweta Devi, Bapsi Sidhwa, Manju Kapur, etc have captured the international arena and many more have left their indelible imprint on the readers of Indian fiction in English.

The blooming and blossoming novels written by Indian women are gaining recognition and have paved the way for a promising research in the ground of feminism. These novelists have pervaded all spheres of Indian life and experience. It is amazing to note that these writers and many more have climbed the ladder of success in a slow, steady and painful way. Amar Nath Prasad opines:

…the women novelists have created and are creating such a vision of life both thematically and aesthetically that now it is wrong to say
that great art can be rendered only in the artist’s mother tongue. Today we see that the authors of the creative Indian fiction have managed to overcome this insurmountable hurdle. The present trend of Indo-Anglican fictions obviously shows a bright and optimistic future — such a future which is bound to yield fruits and flowers provided the plant is properly irrigated, nourished and pruned. (1)

Manu, the founder of the patriarchal structure in Indian society, declared that woman can be subjected to corporal punishment, that they can be enslaved by their father, husband and son throughout their life. According to Manu, the avenues of education, learning and knowledge which promote the growth of an individual should be blocked for them in all possible ways. In this view, since women are the property of their folk, they can have no right over the material property of their family. All the feminist women writers started handling the theme of female exploitation in the patriarchal society. They started voicing the helpless cry of female exploitation.

Subordination of woman is a common feature in almost all stages of history all over the world. The degree and form of the subordination has been conditioned by social, traditional and cultural environment. In India, a girl child is unwanted even at birth, neglected during childhood and adolescence. There are several domains where woman are considered as ‘the second sex’. With the advent of the twenty first century a tremendous transformation is identified in women’s position, employment, economic, political and social and in gender equality and
gender justice. The role of women is taken to greater heights beyond Home Makers to Bread Winners and Wage Earners.

In the pre-independence era, Raja Rammohan Roy, Aurobindo, Tagore and Gandhi have strived hard to represent and highlight the place of women as they function within the cultural systems. These stalwarts were among the makers of modern India. Though in the Vedic period (2500BC – 1500BC) women were treated with dignity and respect in all matters- religious, social, political and economical during the subsequent periods there has been a gradual decline in the status of woman. At the dawn of the British rule, the status and position of women were degraded and deteriorated. On seeing the degraded position of the Indian Women, Aurobindo says:

In India… the woman had first a free and more dignified position than in Greece and Rome, but the slave was soon replaced by the proletariat, called in India the Sudhra, and the increasing tendency to deny highest Benefits of the common life and culture to Sudhra and the woman brought down Indian society to the level of the western conquerors. (Sree 7)

During this period Rammohan Roy (1772-1883) raised his voice against social evils like Sati, infanticide, forced labour and slavery. He not only made zealous efforts to bring about the legal abolition of certain loathsome customs but also advocated the need for widow remarriage and opened up opportunities of
higher education for women. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) an outstanding figure in the realm of Indian English Literature. Through his writings, he throws a fruitful insight into the problems of women. He tries to focus the attention on the major problems of women such as the plight of widows in the joint families, the struggle of the modern, educated young women for equality and freedom in the male-dominated conservative society and the complications that arise in the family setup when the modern woman participates in the freedom struggle.

The advent of Gandhiji (1869-1948) on the Indian political scene testifies the birth of a new era of emancipation for Indian women, an era of increased opportunities and a more dynamic participation in the social and intellectual life of the country. Mahatma Gandhiji, the national father of India has given a new direction and dimension to the Feminist Movement in India and has freed women from passivity and servility. As a result, women’s writing which springs from the new concept of Indian womanhood is voluminous from late nineteenth century to the present date. Women writers attempted to uproot the rigidity of the orthodoxy and established order and at the same time reshaped their identity in them with tradition and emancipated ideas of the western womanhood.

Indian women writers articulate the marginalized, neglected, ignored status of Indian woman’s intellectual tradition and then to fight the menace that almost obliterate the worthiness of their experience, their contribution to ensure and preserve the rich, variegated culture and tradition of their race.

One of the reasons that women have in such large number taken up their pen is because it has allowed them to create their own world. It has allowed them
to set the conditions of existence, free from the direct interference of men. Similarly, so many women have taken to reading women’s writing because it allows them a safe place from which they can identify with a range of characters and a variety of existences. That is why women’s writing has occupied such a significant and central place in women’s lives. It is also the reason why women’s writing can share much the same disparaged status as women in a world dominated by men. Shashi Deshpande, a well-known women writer has said in an interview:

I believe that the female of the human race and species has the same right to be born and survive to fulfill herself and shape her life according to her needs and the potential that lives with her.

Among the women novelists, Toru Dutt is considered the first to write in both English and French although tragically she did not live beyond the age of 21 and died in the year 1877 before she could complete her second novel Bianca. As early as 1876, Raj Lakshmi Debi wrote The Hindu Wife and Krupabai Satthianadhan wrote Kamala, A Story of Hindu Life in 1894. In 1901, Cornelia Sorabji, a Parsi Christian, wrote Love and Life behind the Purdah. Woman was easily caught in the meshes of intrigue, and social taboos of all kinds and her subservience to man gave her very little freedom of action.

Then the first generation is largely preoccupied with social-political concerns and themes of national fervor. These novels are written in response to Gandhian ideological and nationalistic aspirations to get independence. The emergence of women writers occurs in the realm of Indian Fiction, obviously in
the second phase. Kamala Markandaya (1924-2004) occupies a very important position among the women novelists who have made substantial contribution to Indian fiction after the World War II. One of the most striking features of Kamala Markandaya as a women novelist is her portrayal of women in relation to the historical, cultural, political and sociological environment of a changing India. Her women characters are bold as well as tender and self-conscious. Women in her novels are traditional and uphold the traditional values of Indian life.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (1927- ) has left an indelible imprint in the history of women novelists in English. Her novels revolve around the problem of arranged marriage versus love marriages, giving a parallel reinforcement to the theme of tradition versus modernity. She finds life in India to be the overwhelming burden to European. Jhabvala understands the psychology of women and portrays them with insight, understanding and sympathy.

Nayanthara Sahgal (1927- ) is yet another distinguished women novelist of the contemporary scene. She is considered as political novelist. Her work has a strong realistic base and reflects not only her personal views on values but also the changing values of a society. She articulates her feminine sensibility and aspirations through her women characters. Her women characters are especially notable as normal human beings. She delineates with keen perception and sensitivity, the problems and suffering of women who feel entrapped in marriage, there in oppressed and doomed to the care of domineering husband.

Anita Desai (1937- ) breaks a new ground in the world of Indian English fiction by shifting the emphasis from the external to the internal world of her own
which she fills up with extraordinary sensitive beings. Desai portrays women as not totally cut off from familial and social ties but women who remain within these orbits and protest against monotony, injustice and humiliation. Woman in her novels is not a mere goddess or a robot but a self-actualizing and self-realizing individual. Desai adopts the special narrative technique of setting apart from the main fictional narrative, the fragmentary passages which imply the theme of alienation.

In the last decade of twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty first century witness the sudden spurt of Indian Women Novelists in English who have focused their wonderful introspective and thinking of women predicament with the impact of modernization, globalization, neo-colonialism and multiculturalism in their fictional creations. There was the time when the women writers were the victims of gender bias and the publishing industry has an unreceptive attitude towards them. With the changing global order the Indian Women Novelists in English neatly draw woman’s point of view, their problems, various issues relating to family and society in the novels. Chotai emphasizes this idea thus,

Women are depicted as an extremely versatile social unit, widely sought after to fulfill an endless range of social and professional functions. As mother, daughter, wife, grandmother, business partner or in any other position – she comes out as an astonishing human being, with multifaceted talents, weak and vulnerable in certain
circumstances and powerful, resilient and indefatigable in other.

(128)

In the galaxy of Indian Novelists in English, Indian Women Writers too shine luminously like their male counterparts by their significant contribution to enrichment of Indian English novels. The surprising facet of this growth and exposure is that women were the chief upholders of a rice role tradition of story-telling, through myths, legends, songs and fables. Many third-generation Indian women novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish their identity. The image of women in fiction has undergone a change, women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring self-sacrificing women, towards conflicts, female characters searching for identity; no longer characterized and defined simply in terms of their victim status.

A major preoccupation in recent Indian women’s writing has been a delineation of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships. In a culture where individualism and protest have often remained alien ideas, and marital bliss and the woman’s role at home are always the central focus, it is interesting to note the emergence of not just an essential Indian sensibility, but also an expression of cultural displacement. Women’s presentation is more assertive, more liberated in their view and more articulate in their expression than the woman of the past is.

The women novelists who have risen to celebrity and won global recognition are Bharathi Mukerjee, Anita Nair, Maha Sweta Devi, Aundhati Roy, Gita Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Meena Alexander, Chitra Banerjee, and Manju Kapur. These novelists surpass their male novelists both
quantitatively and numerically in exploration of the inner mind of women and thereby assert their own identity.

Bharathi Mukerjee (1940- ) an immigrant writer liberates her women protagonists for a new world order. Her women characters vent their feminine sensibility in their frantic desire for an authentic communication with their society as well as their own selves.

Anita Nair (1964- ), a post-colonial writer deals with the problems of women and solutions. Her novel *Ladies Coupe*, unfolds the misconceptions about women and their identity at home and in the society. This novel rather not a feminist piece because Nair disagrees with the word feminism. She finds the term ‘Feminism’ outdates. The word Feminism implies a striving to be equal, desperation almost to get equal with men, with whom it is important is to know that women are equal to men and should exercise that equality.

Maha Sweta Devi (1926- ), a creative writer and is actually a social reformer in the sub-urban and rural areas of West Bengal. Her main intention is to sensitize the public about the social injustice meted out to the oppressed, marginalized and the exploited. In all her writings, poems, short stories, dramas and fiction, Maha Sweta Devi talks of the tragic lot of the suppressed, that is, ‘Adivasis’ like Santals, the Shabars, the Lodhas and the mundas living on the border regions of the states of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

Arundathi Roy (1961- ) who has brought international fame for Indo-Anglican fiction by winning the Booker Prize for her sole novel *The God of Small...*
_Things_ has become a literary legend. Even though V.S. Naipaul, I.G. Farrell, Ruth Pawer Jhabvala and Salmon Rushti are writers of Indian origin to win the Booker Prize, Roy is the first resident Indian and youngest writer to receive such a prestigious award. Centering the novel on two marginalized groups, women and untouchables, Roy has titled the novel with the subtle reference to the injustice practiced in the patriarchal Indian set up in the name of God sanctioned religion. ‘The Small Things’ presented in this novel are women are the untouchables crushed under the dead weight of the class-conscious, caste ridden, male dominated, patriarchal, orthodox and Keralite society.

Shashi Deshpande (1938- ), one of the third generation Indian women writers, is an award-winning novelist. Her novels reveal her deep insight into the plight of Indian women, who feel smothered and sheltered in a tradition-bound, male-dominated society. She delineates her women characters in the light of their hopes, fears, aspirations and frustrations who are aware of their strengths and limitations, but find themselves thwarted by the opposition and pressure from a society conditioned overwhelmingly by the patriarchal mind-set. She highlights the subordinate inferior position of women and their subsequent degradation in a male-dominated society.

Gita Hariharan (1954- ) was born in Coimbatore grew up in Bombay and Manila. Her first book _The Thousand Faces of Night_ won the Common Wealth Prize for the best first novel in 1993. Her novels portray India that has been completely seized by fanaticism, hatred, mistrust and male domination. Her books
also unfold the stories of men and women struggling to make sense of hatred, ignorance, love and loyalty.

Shobha De (1948- ) is an eminent Indian novelist, who is often known as India’s Jackie Collins. She is famous for portraying the sexual mania of the commercial world. In narration of incident she is very frank and straightforward. Like Anita Desai, she has the gift of exploring the subdued depths of women psychology. A thorough study of Shobha De’s novels show the novelist’s perceptive portrayal of the secret depths of the human psyche; her accurate characterization; her saucy racy and captivating style which invokes vivid images and compels the reader to identify himself or herself with the characters and situations. In short, Shobha De has tried her best to expose the moral and spiritual breakdown of modern society in which a hapless and forsaken women longs for pleasure and wants to fly freely in the sky of freedom. Though she has been severely criticized by the champions of ethics and morality, the readers should not forget that whatever she has penned down they are all fine pieces of poetic and metaphoric exactitude which haunts the reader’s mind long after reading.

Diasporic Writers are emerging nowadays and there are so many diasporic writers in the literary world. One among them is Meena Alexander (1951 - ) who is a daughter of the Diaspora and a poet par excellence. Her writings reflect her lived diasporic experiences. She is the author of numerous collections of poetry, literary memoirs, essays and works of literary criticism. Describing herself as a “woman cracked by multiple migrations”, she acted on by the disparate and powerful influences of the languages and customs of the four continents on which
she has lived. Her writing reflects the tension created by the interplay of these influences and serves as a way to derive meaning from her wide range of experience. Her writing is lyrical, poignant and sensual dealing with large themes including fanaticism, ethnic intolerance, terrorism, inter-racial affairs and marriages.

Another diasporic writer who set a sound milestone in the literary world is Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (1956- ) an award – winning author and poet. Her themes include women, immigration, the South Asian experience, history, myth, folklore, magic and the celebration of diversity. She writes both for adult and children. Her books have been translated into twenty languages and two of her novels have been made into films. Divakaruni locates her texts at the troubled intersection of female subjectivity and national identities. She places women in the center of her stories to have their voices to be the voices of interpretation and stands alone by her realism.

Women writers have given literary work in India an unmistakable edge. They are able to sensitively portray a world of women of substance. Their women are in confederation with their relationships to their surroundings, their society, their men, their children, their families, their mental make-up and themselves. Indian women novelists in their works, try their best to handle the pathetic plight of forsaken women in the Indian society, be it educated or uneducated, who are fated to suffer from birth to death.

Indian women writers have grappled with complex issues such as sensuality, servility, subjugation and society. They have handled them with a sense
of balance, never disregarding the tradition. Women writers in India can no longer be claimed as the exclusive property of India. Their work and their art belong to the world crossing all boundaries. Their works are universal in nature. Many women writers have focused on the man-woman relationship to examine, explain, and classify the uniqueness and distinctiveness of women.

In a male-dominated world the bitter experiences, the miserable humiliations, the helpless cries of women go unnoticed. The shame and the suffering they have been exposed for years have made their situation even worse than beasts. Indian women especially have faced this miserable traumatic situation for long. The coming of the British brought new ideas, new thinking and new attitude along with it. From then onwards the societal pattern changed, the woman came forward, emerged as the new woman to seek a new identity.

But the problem of womanhood continued. The new woman has become more vulnerable and her problems have increased. No longer can she retreat to the seclusion of her kitchen and at the same time the male domination has tried to overpower her. But she has fought on to seek an identity, an identity that she had lost in thousands of years of slavery. Women writers have taken to the pen to inspire as well as to ignite the fury that has lain within.

The blooming and blossoming arrivals of these Indian women novelists in English clearly shows that women have made their permanent mark in the field of English fictions. They are being conferred or not only national but international awards also. In most of their writings they have tried their best to free the female mentality from the age long control of male domination. In short, in their novels,
the protagonists are mostly women characters desolated and isolated by an entirely
sapless, hypocritical and insensitive male domination. Today, whatever political,
social, cultural and individual awareness seen in women are mostly the result of
these fiction writers who heralded a new consciousness in the realm of traditional
thinking. If this tireless efforts on the part of women for women’s sake go on, the
days are not far when they will be equated with men and even far better than men
in every field. Even today the condition of Indian women in the remote villages is
very heart-rending. They are still getting step-motherly treatment by the parent in
both education and nourishment. So, the thing that most urgently needed today is a
reciprocal and friendly relation between the sexes-a relation which must be tinged
with the colour of modernity and conventionality, antiquity and spirituality.

These modern-day women authors are now expressing themselves freely
and boldly and on a variety of themes without adopting feminist postures. It is in
the backdrop of such distinguished company that Manju Kapur made her entrance
into the world of Indian writing. Manju Kapur’s novels acquire a significant new
meaning when read in the point of view crisscross dogmas of cultural critical
thinking. Kapur’s novels furnish examples of a whole range of attitudes towards
the importance of tradition. The lives of women lived and struggled under the
oppressive mechanism of a closed society were reflected in the novels of Manju
Kapur. Manju Kapur herself asserts:

I am interested in the lives of women whether in the political arena
or in domestic spaces. One of the main pre-occupations in all my
books is how women manage to negotiate both the inner and outer
spaces in their lives – what sacrifices do they have to make in order to keep the home fires burning – and at what cost to their personal lives do they some kind of fulfillment outside the home. (Kapur: Faber Book Club Guide)

Manju Kapur (1949- ) was born in Amritsar, a town in the northern state of Punjab. She teaches English Literature at Miranda House College, Delhi University. Her first novel *Difficult Daughters* received huge international acclaim. This novel was published in 1998. Her second novel *A Married Woman* was published in 2002. Her third novels *Home* was published in 2006. Her fourth novel *The Immigrant* (2008) has just been published. Her next novel *Custody* was published in 2011.

*Difficult Daughters* was awarded the Common Wealth Writers Prize for the best first book and was a number one best seller in India. Kapur started her first novel when she turned forty one. She feels, “Writing is a solitary Vacation”. All her novels start with the seeds of hope. If *Difficult Daughters* was about education, the seed of *A Married Woman* was friendship between women. *Home* was about how families sustain and destroy. And the seed of *The Immigrant* was the phenomenon of NRI marriages. Kapur promises that her next work will be out by next year. The theme of her next work *Custody* is about an adopted child, with themes of custody, blood and non-blood relations.

*Difficult Daughters* (1998) pays tribute to the enduring bond between mother and daughter. It is based partly on the life of Kapur’s mother Virmati, which is also the name of the novel’s main character. The novel’s dedication, “to
my mother and her mother and to my father”, emphasizes this deep and abiding woman-to-woman attachment that is also the book’s central thematic concern. *Difficult Daughters* tells the story of Virmati, a young and rebellious girl, who falls in love with a married professor and eventually becomes his second wife. This historical context of the book is framed by the massive, turbulent and emotive history of modern India, particularly the cataclysmic events of the subcontinent’s partition in 1947 that destroyed and disrupted so many lives.

*Difficult Daughters* is narrated by Virmati’s daughter Ida who is determined to resurrect her mother’s life and give her parents “scandalous” marriage, the respect it deserves. Ida, who is divorced, childless and isolated, revisits all the places and she associates bygones with her mother, especially the city of Lahore, where her mother and father celebrated their courtship. The rebel in her mother might have actually exchange one kind of slavery for another. But towards the end she becomes free, free even from the oppressive love of her husband. The title of the novel *Difficult Daughters* is an indication to the message that a woman, who tries in search of an identity, is branded as a difficult daughter by the family and the society as well. The story tells how she is torn between family duties, the desire for education and elicits love. This is a story of sorrow, love and compromise.

Kapur’s second novel *A Married Woman* (2002) deals with two sensitive themes—love between women and the love of one’s own religion: complex, seductive and potentially destructive emotions and also reveals a woman’s obsession with love and lesbianism. In this novel, through the protagonist – Astha,
Kapur has carved out an independent life of the woman for self-fulfillment and advocated for inter-religious marriage and female-female bond contrary to the patriarchal norms of traditional society. The novel is a kind of narrative on a woman’s incompatible marriage and resultant frustration and contemporary political turmoil in its historical context. In the novel, Kapur has taken writing as a protest, a way of mapping from the point of a woman’s experience. She negotiates different issues emerging out of a socio-political upheaval in India.

With zeal to change the Indian male perception, she describes the traumas of her female protagonists from which they suffer and perish in for their triumph. She is shocked at the growth of fundamentalism and the rise of religious zealots to uplifts and elevates the country by a crusade and establishes paranoia by presenting evil as a historical necessity. The first part of the novel is a bit slow and long as the author builds to assert it pulling power when Astha reaches the turning point of her life, in meeting Aijaz. Kapur resonates with her feminine assertion, hatred of violence, blood, death and ill feeling in the name of god and religion and her feminine assertions remain untouched by the history, politics and human interpretations. It is basically a novel for women at large. Astha, the protagonist of this novel, a young woman brought up in Delhi, is a typical middle-class lady. She succumbs to her parents finding her husband in a traditionally arranged manner, within the bounds of marriage, she discovers a latent sexuality that is driven by love and passion and her desire is to assert her individualism. The main ideas conceived in the novel are based on family life, sexual relationship, gender discrimination, social-political upheaval and the desire for peaceful co-existence.
Manju Kapur takes the reader through a brisk and strangely captivating account of three generations in her third novel *Home*. Banwari Lal comes to India after partition and with the help of his wife’s jewellery, carves out a sari business in Karol Bagh, Delhi. Success comes slowly. Meantime he is forced to marry his daughter, Sunita, to a man of dubious Credentials. Even as the family gets richer, Sunita is abused and murdered by her husband. Ultimately, her son Vicky is to be brought up by Banwari Lal.

Vicky becomes a bone of contention. Banwari Lal, his grandfather, feels guilty about what happened to Sunita and hence responsible for him. But his sons and their growing families have less reason to make space for Vicky. Of the two sons, Yashpal falls in love with the beautiful Sona and employs astute emotional blackmail to get his parents to accept her. The other son, Pyare Lal, has a proper arranged marriage and all the sons, daughter-in-law and grandchildren pull their varying weights in the cramped family house and the family sari shop.

As the time passes Banwari Lal dies and the whole family is rife with tensions. With the death of the benevolent Banwari Lal, the shop is modernized and the family house changed into self-contained flats. The joint family and even the business are fragmenting, the price of both cohesion and fragmentation being paid in different ways by different characters. Of these, Nisha, Yashpal and Sona’s beautiful daughter, bears the brunt of the tensions that are tearing at the family, make home a site of manipulation, repression, even sexual abuse.

Nisha, the seemingly docile central character of *Home*, claims her space halfway through the novel when she demands an education. But life at university
offers little more than cribs to help with her exams. More significantly, she has a clandestine romance with the boy and decides to marry him ignoring his caste and creed. From these few bricks, Kapur creates a novel full of bright spaces and dark corners. Her way of telling is brisk, unsentimental and capable of turning domestic drama into suspense.

_The Immigrant_, published in 2008, is the fourth novel. The story revolves around the 30 year old unmarried English professor, Nina and a recently immigrated Ananda, a dentist from Dehradun. The novel is structurally divided into three parts: in the first part, the insipid past and present lives of Nina and Ananda are respectively brought to focus; the second part shows Nina’s passage to Canada and the third part deals with Nina’s inadvertent but nonchalant acceptance of Canada, as she is away from her home.

Nina is living with her widow mother. She is a lecturer in Miranda House College. Her mother always thinks about her daughter’s marriage. Then, suddenly a proposal comes to Nina. Ananda is a Non-Resident Indian Person, whom Nina marries. Nina unhappily leaves from her mother and her country, to live with her husband in Canada. According to Canadian culture, Ananda changed his character. But, Nina is passively distressed of Canadian culture and her main distress is food and clothing later. Because of her husband’s wish, she changes her food and clothing, but she doesn’t change her attitude in Canada. She used to be alone and she suffered due to cultural displacement, so she expects more fondness from her husband. But he has some medical problem related to intimate function and he has been taking treatment regarding that in California. Later, she comes to know the
truth that her husband had illicit relationship after the marriage. Meanwhile her mother dies, totally disturbs her, as she was already devastated by her marital life.

Before marriage she was an economically independent woman, but after marriage she loses her identity and culture, then she spends the time alone in her house. Because of all these reasons, she is affected psychologically. From her immigration Nina’s life gets changed a lot and she faces a lot of problems in her life. She lives in a silent world and she doesn’t express her sorrows with anyone. Finally, she exposes all her feelings and sufferings, which breaks their marriage bond. She joins the University of New Brunswick as a teacher, after which her life becomes peaceful and independent, representing that of an empowered woman with Indian culture.

Manju Kapur’s novel *The Immigrant* is about a woman and her changes in her vision and various relationships in this speedy changing world. At last, the protagonist of this novel, Nina’s dream of a happy married life ends with a sour note and she is surging ahead with the hope of establishing herself independently on her own foot in an alien country.

Therefore, Manju Kapur's novels present the changing image of women moving away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self-sacrificing women towards self-assured assertive and ambitious women making society aware of their demands. Her novels acquire a significant new meaning when read in the point of view of crisscross dogmas of cultural critical thinking. The life women lived and struggled under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society are reflected in the
novels of Kapur. Manju Kapur has her own concerns, priorities as well as their own ways of dealing with the predicament of their women protagonists.

This study makes an attempt to critically analyze the selected novels by Manju Kapur. This thesis entitled *Women’s Stoicism and Self-Identity in Select Novels of Manju Kapur: A Study* consists of seven chapters which deal with the position of women in the society, their struggle for identity and the alienation they face as they try to fight the patriarchal society, also of the oppression of women with a sense of outrage and discusses the plight of women through different women characters.

The works are published during the near three decades spanning from 1975 to 2001. The turn of the century made an insurgent sweep into the feminist consciousness, when feminism in its third wave, which extends from the 1990’s to the present, and initiated global changes in the wave where women are preceding. The wave seeks to challenge the nation of the second wave concept of femininity and dismantle centralized concerns of perception of the white women taken as a norm, or a measuring yard for evaluating the status or position of women from other countries.

These novels are women oriented novels, narrated from a women’s point of view with the central concerns being essentially feminist in their search for the self-identity, finding an autonomous and independent existence, getting empowered through internally acquiring strength and restoring their self-dignity as well as developing a strong force to face life and emerge as a survivor. And also
an attempt has been made to make a strong sense of self-esteem, leading to their empowered self-existing to a woman.

Indian Women Writers throughout the centuries have been marginalized and erased from the general canon of literature. It is to the credit of feminist scholars in particular that the works of many women have been recovered, revaluated and reintroduced into the literary canon. Through the work of recovery, many women writers are finding a place of visibility that they did not enjoy just a generation ago and concomitantly many readers of literature have found a whole new body of written works to excite.

Indian English Fiction, in recent years has centered round the unsung plights of Indian Women. The aforementioned task has been taken up by the Indian Writers in English especially the women writers comparatively of the younger generation. A host of brilliant women writers have traced in their works the role played by women to stabilize their identity in a conflicting environment. Their writings are gaining recognition and have paved the way for a promising research in the ground of feminism.

In the last decade or two, Indian Fiction in English has been its profile raised worldwide. The surprising facet of this growth and exposure is that women were the chief upholders of a rich role tradition story-telling, through myths, legends, songs and fables. Many third generation Indian Women Novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity that is not by a patriarchal society. These writers were born after Indian independence and the English language does not have colonial associations for them. Their works are
marked by an impressive feel for the language and an authentic presentation of contemporary India, with all its regional variations. The Third Generation Indian Women Writers are recognized throughout the world for their originality, versatility and the indigenous flavour of the soil that they bring to their work.

This study analyses the trials and tribulations of female protagonists in the chosen novels (*Difficult Daughters, The Married Woman, Home and The Immigrant*) of Manju Kapur and their progress towards self-identity. It also focuses on the image of modern women as projected in her novels. An attempt has been made to use the specific feminist approach to read her novels and analyze her literary discourse to unearth the hidden ideologies that construct a woman in Indian society, keeping its culture, philosophy and values in perspective.

The first chapter is about a brief outline of the growth of the Indian English fiction and a bio-critical sketch of Manju Kapur and her works on the central concept on Self-Identity. The word ‘Self-Identity’ is paradoxical in genuine self, meaning both sameness and distinctiveness, and its contradictions proliferate when it is applied to women. Self-image moulds and transforms self-identity. One’s identity is rooted in the culture in which one lives and hence alienation from culture leads to lose one’s socio-cultural identity. The urge to identify authentic self with present stimulates one in the quest for identity, which operates at public and private levels.

Manju Kapur in all her novels depicts her female protagonist’s search for authentic self-identity as a female. She portrays identity as a continuous journey than a fixed construction. This sense of movement further reinforces the notion
that the identity of new and enlightened woman is forever evolving, they cannot remain in a stable life because disruption and change are the mean of their survival. They recognize that in the past, whether temporally, spatially or both are dangerous to the development of their identity. For survival, they keep on changing and evolving. The surrounding environments influence the formation of their identity and they navigate between temporal and spatial locations, their perception of change, thereby resulting in a multiplicity of consciousness. These create a tension within them and they feel the need to reconcile these conflicting perceptions so that they do not wage a psychological war inside them.

The second chapter starts with a brief introduction of Indian feminism and an idea of some of the leading exponents of Indian Feminist Literature. The main theme behind this study namely, ‘self-identity’ is discussed within the framework of Indian culture. Keeping this in mind, thereafter follow the reasons for choosing Manju Kapur’s work, in particular four of her novels *Difficult Daughters, The Married Woman, Home and The Immigrant* for the present study.

The third chapter deals with the predicament of Indian Women in the novel *Difficult Daughters*. The action of the novel is located in Amritsar at the time of partition. It is a story of a daughter’s journey back into her mother’s painful past. The daughter Ida does not want to be like her mother as she does not want her voice to be suppressed by anybody. She hates any such attempt which denies her freedom. This is a story of a woman who is a sufferer of male egocentric attitude. The chapter also focuses on women’s education, marriage, women’s privileges, exploitation of women and polygamy. It exposes the struggle of a woman trapped
in the conventional society. It examines how the protagonist carves to create an identity of her own in such suffocating situation.

The fourth (subsequent) chapter deals with Astha, the protagonist of the novel, who likes to have a break from dependence on others and proceeds on the path of full human status that poses a threat to Hemant, her husband, and his male superiority. Although she finds herself trapped between the pressures of the modern developing society and shackles of ancient biases she sets out on her quest for a more meaningful life in her lesbian relationship. She canonizes and commemorates her insulted feminine sensibility raising the male tantrum to transform a society. It also deals with the antagonism between the society and the feminine self. It inspects how Indian women are curbed by the institution of marriage. It reveals the conflict between the society and the protagonist’s self. Finally it is pursues for the realistic and distinct self in Manju kapur’s *A Married Woman*.

The fifth (forthcoming) chapter is on *Home*, and it depicts how the characters struggle between the three generation gaps. It is their individual struggle with family and society through which they plunged into a dedicated effort to carve an identity for themselves as qualified women with faultless backgrounds. It studies the psyche of a woman who strives to create a business firm in a traditional society which never allows a woman to involve in business. The protagonist’s struggle to get rid of these limitations and her success in creating a business firm is exposed. It also reveals the protagonist’s resilience and fortitude to evolve her own self. The novels not only brings the cultural conflict
with feminine self but also shows how to tackle these cultural limitations through establishing their feminine identity and the need for reshaping the past value and breaking the tradition of silence.

The Sixth (penultimate) chapter says of how the novel *The Immigrant* depicts an intimate portrayal of an arranged marriage. It also explores the complex terrain of the Indian family with much insight and affection in the protagonist like Nina who is a thirty year old, struggling to make both ends meet for herself and her widow mother but her pursuit is a useless. Her turning from a meek wife to a daring woman and her valiant absconding of the mechanical relationship with her dentist husband are the major concerns of this study. In short, the story takes its force from the various sufferings of a girl who grows into a woman while negotiating in the male dominated world and her fragile new life begins to unravel but also her courage in facing her problems, resolving it with her intelligence all because of her unfailing source of strength.

The seventh chapter, Summation, sums up the ideas of previous chapters and contains the research findings and attempts to analyse the central characters in Manju Kapur’s novel. A relative study of all the novels of Manju Kapur in the context of stoic woman who urge for their authentic self and how woman are endeavored to become independent in a traditional society and the conflict between the woman psyche and the conventional society is discussed. It also gives an optimistic view of the liberated women who will rise again and again.

A close observation of Manju Kpaur’s novels projects the view that when an Indian woman tries to transcend the limitations of her old custom she acquires
self-fulfillment and inner freedom. In their social milieu they appear to be educated, modern and intelligent, sophisticated, bold and assertive. All the protagonists are caught up in the conflict between tradition and modernity. It is through their individual struggle with family and society that they plunge into dedicated efforts to crave an identity for themselves as stoic woman with faultless backgrounds. They represent the needs of adaption in the traditional system. In all her novels she presents the problems and struggle women go through and their aspiration towards self-emancipation.