CHAPTER–I

INTRODUCTION

Feminism is an intellectual and social movement that tries to secure women's rights on the one hand and self-empowerment on the other. It focuses on women's predicament all over the world and their struggle for identity and existence. Their miserable condition inspired some women writers like Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf to expose the male ideology by tracing the construction of masculinity and femininity.

In fact, feminism originated in England, but the term was coined by Charles Fourier, a Utopian Socialist and French Philosopher in 1837. "The Oxford English Dictionary lists 1852 as the year of the first appearance of "feminist" and 1895 for "feminism" ("History" 3). Both words first appeared in France and the Netherlands in 1872, Great Britain in the 1890s and the United states in 1910.

Feminist literary theory, which is the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical discourse, is not a unified theory with a single corpus of work. There is no feminist who defines feminism as a single theory and method. What all feminists share is a focus on women. There aim is to understand the nature of gender inequality. Different feminists give different meanings of feminism. They do not have a shared understanding about the situation in which women find themselves. It is sure that all the feminists talk about the position of women in the society but no single definition can encompass it. Rosalind Delmar in his article, "What is Feminism" observes:

It is certainly possible to construct a base-line definition of feminism and feminist which can be shared by feminists and non-feminists. Many would agree that at the very least a feminist is someone who holds that women suffer
discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change (some would say a revolution even) in the social, economic and political order.(8)

Feminism evolved as a literary form when educated women, from all age groups belonging to different sections of society, started questioning the inadequate representation they were given in literary texts, and attempted to study and solve various issues from a feminist perspective. It also questions "the lines of power struggle between man and woman" (Nayar 83). The major components of feminist theory are the rejection of patriarchy in family and home, to challenge the representation of women as 'other', as 'lack', to come out of the patriarchal oppression in order to acquire self autonomy and separate identity, and to raise the question whether men and women are essentially different because of biology or as consequent to socially constructed stereotypes.

The first feminist movements started from Britain as many of the earliest feminist writers and activists such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Barbara Bodichon and Lydia Becker were Britishers. Questioning and rejecting the stereotype of the Victorian gentle lady, who was not treated as equal to man, these feminists campaigned for seeking political, economic and social equality for women. They advocated the improved female rights in the law, marriage, education and employment. In the 1850s Barbara Bodichon led the first organized movement for British women's suffrage. In 1860s her efforts for the extension of university education to women resulted into Girton college, Cambridge. Lydia Becker was also a leader in the early British suffrage movement.

Feminism arrived in English literature with the works of Mary Wollstonecraft in the 1790s. The first major feminist manifesto,
Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* published in 1792, is an attack on the social and economic systems and advocates women's education and their protection by laws. Wollstonecraft demands that women should be treated equal to men. She writes:

> Dismissing them, those pretty feminine phrases, which the men condescendingly use to soften our slavish dependence, and despising that weak legacy of mind, exquisite sensibility, and sweet docility of manners which are supposed to be the sexual characteristics of the weaker vessel, I wish to show that elegance is inferior to virtue, that the first object of laudable ambition is to obtain a character as a human being, regardless of the distinction of sex and that secondary views should be brought to this simple touchstone.(82)

Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855) was a great feminist of the Victorian age. She believed in the concept of equality between men and women in marriage, as well as in society at large. Through her works she revolted against the Victorian ideology regarding women who were repressed and deprived of rights. In her novel, *Jane Eyre*, published in 1847, Bronte portrays the character of Jane Eyre who crosses the boundaries in her quest for independence. The novelist’s feminist views radiate throughout the novel which is a rebellion against the orthodox society which rendered women merely an object.

Barbara Bodichon was a leading feminist writer and activist in mid nineteenth century. In 1854, she published her *Brief Summary of the Laws of England Concerning Women* in which she discussed women's rights. In 1858, she set up the *English Women's Journal* as a source for expressing equality issues directly concerning women. She advocated for the reform of laws pertaining to the weaker sex.
John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) strongly pleads for women education and their economic independence. Mill condemns women's oppression as domestic slavery.

George Eliot (1819-88), penname of Mary Ann Evans, was one of the significant feminist writers in the 19th century. Her masterpiece *Middlemarch*, published in 1872, embraces many feminist views in opposition to the Victorian feminine ideal. The novel is a fine blend of Eliot's idealism and Victorian realism. Dorothea, the protagonist of the novel aspires for an ideal society against the reality of the Victorian society where women were looked down upon as inferior and oppressed by the society in which they lived. The novel is a rebellion against the patriarchal society. Eliot shows herself struggling against male-dominated society not only in her works but also in real life. She was a great advocate for women's education.

Lydia Becker is also one of the earliest British feminists. She founded the *Women's Suffrage Journal* between 1870 and 1890 for discussing the issues for granting voting rights to women on the same terms as men. The journal became the most popular publication relating to women's suffrage in 19th century Britain.

Virginia Woolf's contribution to feminist literature is certainly very significant. In her *A Room of One's Own* published in 1928, she asserts, "A woman must have money and room of her own if she is to write fiction" (126). A woman writer should have power, freedom and contemplative thinking to write. She analyses the gender bias and oppressive structures in literary practices where women are forced to write in masculine tongue. She observes a sense of bitterness in women novelists as they cannot express themselves in forced literary cannons. Woolf advocates a freer language for the female writers. She feels that literature is a cultural product where women can voice their experiences
in their own language more explicitly. Writing about the difference in male and female experience and its expression in literature, she writers:

There is the obvious and enormous difference of experience in the first place; but the essential difference lies in the fact not that men describe battles and women the birth of children, but that each sex describes itself. (qtd. in Swami 14).

Claire Johnston is one of the great feminist critics of documentary film which in its early years was characterized by an alarming lack of women producers and directors as well as very few documentaries about issues concerning women. In 1973 Claire Johnston published her essay, "Women' Cinema as Coutner-Cinema" in which she advocates the formation of an alternative feminist film movement where there are women producers and directors as man's depiction of women cannot be real. Johnston proclaims:

Within a sexist ideology and a male-dominated cinema, woman is presented as what she represents for man... despite the enormous emphasis placed on woman as spectacle in the cinema, woman as woman is largely absent (qtd. in Kwheeler 1).

The lives and works of various British social activists and feminists explicitly show how the Victorian era in Britain was characterized by gender inequality. Women had no equal rights. They were supposed to marry, produce children and be perfect homemakers. They were to be educated in only those subjects which were considered appropriate for making them ideal wives and mothers. The education for self-empowerment was discouraged by the patriarchal society. The feminist activists dared to push the boundaries set by the patriarchal expectations, and campaigned for seeking equal political, social, and economic rights for women. Through their works the feminists writers
sent the message of feminism to the Victorian society where women had an inferior position and status. Through the campaigns and writings the feminists challenged the male domination in every sphere of life and were successful in creating the awareness for equality among the masses, subsequently sending the sparkles of feminism throughout the world.

To analyse women's role and position in society from a woman's perspective, different or specific types of feminism came into existence. In order to seek gender equality it passed through many stages.

Liberalism demands equal participation and equality before the law for women. Liberal feminists had no way of explaining or rectifying the continued inequality of women under the conditions of political equality. Now another feminist movement, Marxist feminism came into existence. It locates power in economy. It demands the overthrowing of capitalism to liberate woman. Some feminists are of the opinion that it is not only capitalism but also the patriarchal system which is responsible for woman's predicament.

It is socialist feminism which challenges capitalism along with male supremacy or 'patriarchy'. Socialist feminists argue that capitalism strengthens gender inequality because man is the controller of power and money. The nexus between capitalism and patriarchy weakens woman as man controls the resources, and provides woman lesser opportunities.

Radical feminists analysed women's role in reproduction. Hekman observes that Shulamith Firestone in her work *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) argues that child bearing keeps women in a subordinate position for achieving true emancipation, she advocates a form of artificial reproduction – test tube babies. But other radical feminists take mothering positively. Mary O'Brien, one of the radical feminists in her book, *The Politics of Reproduction* (1981) argues that man controls woman's reproductive process through medical, social and cultural
structures. She avers that by reclaiming this control, women should redefine mothering positively.

The radical feminists argue that it is the cultural creation of the concept 'woman' that keeps her in a subordinate position. One's sex as a man or woman is determined by anatomy but gender is a social construct that is generated by the pervasive patriarchal biases of our civilization. In her work, Second Sex Simone de Beauvior, a radical feminist puts it, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.... It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature... which is described as feminine" (295). It is the patriarchal culture which identifies masculine as active, dominating, adventurous, rational and creative; the feminine is to be identified as passive, timid, emotional, irrational and conventional. Woman is not born, she is made by the society.

Psychological feminism turns to psychology to explore the difference between men and women. The psychoanalytic feminists view that the psyche is a social product, a result of formative influences early in childhood rather than the expression of an innate nature. In the late 1970s the feminist theorists, Dorothy Dinnerstein and Nancy Chodorow argued that women differ from men due to their cultural conditioning in their childhood. They asserted that mothers bring up male and female children according to very different nurturing patterns due to which their psyche becomes different when they grow up. Nancy Chodorow in her book, The Reproduction of Mothering writes that the contemporary child-rearing methods make girls more emotional and insecure. It produces a need for connectedness in girls and separateness in boys. Mothers teach girls how to mother 'dolls' and to deal with emotional relations, ultimately giving way to the subordination of women, while the boys are encouraged to go out, and identify themselves with the socially accepted male role. This is the reason that boys become more detached, while girls become emotionally dependent and exploitable. In
the conclusion of the book, Chodorow argues that this difference can be erased by 'dual parenting' practice.

Jean Baker Miller in *Toward a New Psychology of Women* recognizes the development of women's personality in the context of others. She says, "Women stay with, build on, and develop in a context of attachment and affiliation with others" (83). And therefore, for many women, "the threat of disruption of an affiliation is perceived not just as a loss of a relationship, but as something closer to a total loss of self" (Miller 83). Women annihilate their selves in the service of home, husband and children because they see themselves in relation to others. Negating self-enhancement they sacrifice their lives for others. This leads to the annihilation of their identity and the merging of their 'selves' with others. Chodorow says:

The role of a mother, matched with the virtues of care, nurturing, tolerance, empathy, self-denial, deferral to others' needs, is idealized and enforced by society. This has a profound effect on their lives, which converts them to the role of 'nurturant supporters.' (qtd. in Singh, Jyoti 5)

Chodorow argues that mothers inculcate the instincts of mothering in girls, while the boys are kept away from such conditioning. She asserts:

Women, as mothers, produce daughters with mothering capacities and the desire to mother. These capacities and needs are built into and grow out of the mother daughter relationship itself. By contrast, women as mothers (and men as not mothers) produce sons whose nurturing capacities and needs have been systematically curtailed and repressed.

(7)

Postmodern feminism emphasized that the identity of 'woman' is a fiction. Judith Butler in her book *Gender Trouble* in 1990 asserts that
the identity of 'woman' exists because woman acts and is supposed to act in accordance with this identity that constitutes gender identity.

Contrary to radical and psychoanalytic feminism, that emphasizes how woman is constructed by our society, Butler argues that there is no essential subject, 'woman', but this subject is created and maintained by the actions that are dictated by the concept.

Feminism became an important strand of opinion in the second half of the nineteenth century. The history of feminist movements in United States is divided into three waves. Each wave dealt with different issues concerning women's liberation. The first wave feminism sought to win women's suffrage, female education rights, better working conditions, to eradicate gender inequality. In the 19th and early 20th century it fought against basic political inequalities. The voting right to women in the United States is the result of first wave-feminism. Even after getting voting right and franchise in United States, women were not equal citizen. Susan Hekman in his article "Feminism" observes:

Most women continued to occupy an inferior status politically, legally, economically and socially. Consequently, in the 1960s women began to push for more extensive changes in society. They organized to remove laws that discriminated against women and challenged barriers to certain kinds of employment. (91)

It is the period of 'second-wave feminism' that focused on cultural equality issues, such as ending discrimination in family and society at large. "The movement encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives" ("Second Wave" 15). It attempted to analyse women's role in society from a woman's perspective. In 1963, Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* voiced the discontent of women who were pushed into house making positions after their college graduations. The second-wave feminism fails to solve the problem of gender inequality as
it does not deal with the issues concerning sexuality. So in the early 1990s, third-wave feminism came into existence as a response to the perceived failures of the second-wave feminism. It "fought to hasten social acceptance of female sexual freedom". ("Third-Wave" 18). Feminists during this period fought for sexual equality and "sexual liberation" for women.

Inspite of the fragmentation of contemporary feminism, all the feminists talk of gender inequality. Rosalind Delmar observes, "Feminism becomes defined by its object of concern—women, in much the same way as socialism has sometimes been defined by an object—the poor or the working class" (12). It is a social movement which advocates equality of sexes and an end to gender discrimination. It attacks the patriarchal ideology of the society which, in the words of Nayar, sees woman as "only the 'other' of the male" and attacks the literary texts that "naturalises the oppression of women through its stereotypical representation of women as weak, seductress, obstacle, sexual object of the male's desire, and a procreative device" (Nayar 83). This male domination in every aspect of life, which subjects woman to a secondary position, has prompted feminists as Mary Wollstonecraft argues, "I don't wish them (women) to have power over men, but over themselves" (81).

Thus all the feminists attempt to combat sexism in the society. Though their strategies to eradicate gender biasness are different, their motive is the same i.e. to establish a society free from discrimination by seeking equal political, economic, cultural and social rights for women. All of them challenge the representation of woman as 'other' so that she can acquire autonomy and individuality. With their efforts they become successful in providing choice and right to women for living a meaningful life by making themselves free from the dependence syndrome.
The feminist thoughts and movements in the West influenced the developing countries also. The strong wave of feminism impacted India as an organized movement in 1970s. Jyoti Singh analyses that two definitions, commensurate with the cultural exigencies, have been accepted by India, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh in two South Asian Workshops. According to one, feminism is "an awareness of women's oppression and exploitation in society, at the place of work and within the family and conscious action to change the situation" (qtd. in Singh 19). And the other more explicitly says:

Feminism is an awareness of patriarchal control, exploitation and oppression at the material and ideological levels of women's work and in society in general, and conscious action by women and men to transform the present situation. (qtd. in Singh 19)

Sushila Chaudhary and Usha Sharma, in their article, "Feminism in India and Manju Kapur's Fiction" remark that 'feminism' as a social movement seeks to redress the imbalance in society by providing women with the same rights and opportunities as men, in order to be able to take their rightful place in the world. They further observe that the term 'feminism' became popular from the early twentieth century struggles for securing women's suffrage in the western countries and the later well organized socio political movement for women's emancipation from patriarchal oppression.

Due to the difference in the historical and social culture of India from the western countries, Indian feminism is different from that of West. India's patriarchal society which is dominated by hierarchies has its own cultural specific issues. Patriarchy is just one of the hierarchies. "Relational hierarchies between women within the same family are more adverse. Here women are pitted against one another. Not all women are powerless at all times" ("Feminism" 3). The specific historical and
socio-cultural system gave birth to some bad practices like widow immolation known as Sati, Purdah Pratha, child marriage, ban on remarriage etc., consequently victimising and marginalizing women. Besides these evils, women education was also discouraged. So Indian feminists raised their voice against these social evils to eradicate women's predicament. Because of some rigid traditions and practices the situation of women became paradoxical. It has been observed:

'Matri Devo Bhavo' is an old sentiment shared by the Indians. From time immemorial, women have been considered as goddesses like Durga, Parvati, Kali, Shakti, Vaishnomata, Bhairavi so on and so forth. Indians put them on the pedestal and offer prayers and sacrifices. In contrast, more 'goddesses' are being killed in womb, burnt alive for dowry, harassed in workplaces and streets, raped, abducted, exploited and discriminated. Indian citizens venerate and salute this country as 'Janani' or mother. On one hand, they worship this mother and on the other hand, they disregard their sisters, mothers and wives. (qtd. in "Socio-Economic" 2).

Thus due to historical and cultural specificities of the region, the feminist movement in India had to think in terms of its own agendas and strategies.

The history of feminism in India can be divided into three phases: the first phase from 1850s to 1915, second phase from 1915 to 1947, and the third phase, post 1947.

Indian feminism in its first phase was initiated by men and later joined by women. The male feminists made efforts to improve the situation and status of Indian women by eradicating the prevailing bad practices in the patriarchal society. "The rise of the concept of nationalism and introspection of discriminatory practices brought about
social reform movements related to caste and gender relations" ("Feminism" 4). During this period some male social reformers raised their voice to uproot the social evils of Sati (widow immolation), to remove the ban on widow remarriage, to ban the child marriage and to promote women education. Later, some upper caste Hindu women joined the movement to reject the domineering traditions of the patriarchal society.

During the first phase of feminism various social and political activists and crusaders raised voice against the atrocities done to women. Raja Ram Mohan Roy played a great role in abolishing the evils of Sati and child marriage, and supported women education in India. Maharani Luxmi Bai protested against the British Rule when the Britishers tried to grab her reign and, to save her kingdom she participated in the freedom revolution of 1857. Pandita Ramabai who wrote a book entitled The High Caste Hindu Woman (1888) was a pioneer of women's education and champion of women's rights. D. Murali Manohar remarks that "this book is a critique of Hindu customs and traditions of women in terms of caste, marriage, children, duties of a wife and widowhood" (5). In the book she also appeals to people to help Hindu women by making them aspire for self-reliance and providing them education in order to improve the condition and status of women in India. Toru Dutt who is "the first Indian woman novelist in English and the first woman novelist of India" (Manohar 9) raises some feministic issues related to education and marriage in her novel, Bianca : Or the Young Spanish Maiden (1878). Murali Manohar asserts that Bianca is the first woman character in Indian English women's fiction. In this novel the protagonist is an 'educated' woman who exercises her own choice in marriage. She rejects a marriage proposal on the ground that the man who proposed was already in love with her sister Inez. She falls in love with Henry Montague Moori and marries him against the wishes
of his parents. So Toru Dutt in the nineteenth century envisions such society where women exercise their choice and rights.

The second phase of Indian feminism (1915-1947) is concomitant with nationalism. During this period M.K. Gandhi gave a new direction and dimension to the feminist movement in India, subsequently taking women out of passivity and domesticity and getting them involved in struggle against colonial rule. Peasant women played an important role in the rural satyagrahas of Borsad and Bardoli. During this period "women were grappling with issues relating to the scope of women's political participation, women's franchise, and leadership roles in political parties" ("Feminism" 4). Annie Besant (1933-1947), a women's rights activist, asserted that in ancient times Hindu women were educated and moved freely in society. She urged women to return to this golden age.

In the 1920s localized women's associations came into existence. The associations also organised national level women's associations such as the All India Women's conference (AIWC) that was closely affiliated with the Indian National Congress. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi it worked for the national freedom. "This made the mass mobilisation of women an integral part of Indian nationalism" ("Feminism" 4).

Sarojini Naidu, who is called the Nightingale of India, was the first Indian woman to become the Governor of a state. She tried to awaken Indian women by making them aware of their rights and to re-establish self-esteem. She motivated women to erase the internal difference between men and women. In her presidential address to the All India Women's Conference in Bombay in 1930 she asserts:

We are not weak, timid, meek women, we hold the courageous Savitri as our ideal, we join how Sita defied those who entertained those suspicious of her ability to
keep her chastity. We possess the spirit of creative energy
to legislate for the moral of the world. I think this
conference is writing the history of women of the world.
The demand for granting preferential treatment to woman is
an admission on her part of her inferiority...we must
transcend differences. We must rise... above religion and
above sex. (qtd. in Behtash 112).

Some women developed a feministic vision, subsequently
stepping out of home to participate in the political issues of the country,
and also becoming aware of their rights in independent India that led to
the introduction of civic rights of women in the Indian constitution.
There were provisions for women's upliftment like maternal health,
child care provision, equal pay for equal work etc. as Indian constitution
states that women are a 'weaker section' of the population. Thus like
their western counterparts, women in India didn't have to struggle for
basic rights. But the orthodox socio-cultural patriarchal system, which is
dominated by traditions and religious customs, didn't allow them to
enjoy the fundamental rights and democracy. S.S. Singh and P.S. Singh
observes:

India is also a patriarchal society, which, by definition,
describes cultures in which males as fathers or husbands are
assumed to be incharge and the official heads of
households. A patrilineal system governs the society, where
descent and inheritance are traced through the male line and
men are generally in control of the distribution of family
resources. (qtd. in "Feminism" 5).

Words of Gerda Lerner seem apt in this context:

Patriarchy means the manifestation and institutionalization
of male dominance over women and children in the family
and the extension of male dominance over women in
society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and the women are deprived of access to such power. (qtd. in Swami 115)

Indian middle class patriarchal society still confined woman within the four walls of the house. She didn't take full advantage of her constitutional rights because she was not properly aware or well informed. In Indian society culture has played a great role in relegating woman to a secondary position. "Many customs and traditions that have been an important part of Indian culture for hundreds of years" ("Feminism" 5) expected her to be a faithful servant to God and her husband. These religious and social norms made male the controller of the sexual, economic, political and social power, consequently making woman dependent on her male counterpart. Rashmi Sahi observes:

Our society is full of paradoxes and contradictions. Here a female is considered to be a peripheral member of the family, both in her parents' house as well as husband's. Throughout her lifetime she is unable to decide her roots and this leads to her insecurity. (130)

Due to this social conditioning mothers compel their daughters to be sacrificial beings so that they can meet the needs of the patriarchal system.

Post independence feminists (third phase of Indian feminism) realized the inequalities between men and women (like unequal wages for women, relegation of women to 'unskilled' spheres of works etc.) and questioned them. The feminists recognized the inequalities not just between men and women but also hierarchies between woman and woman due to which women's lives became miserable. Hierarchy is a system, especially in family or society at large in which people are organized into different levels of importance from highest to lowest. In Indian society there are relational hierarchies between women within the
same family i.e. women are pitted against one another, e.g. the relation between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Religious and social norms in the Indian society fail to give the meaning to the concept of marriage and women's individual identity. They are supposed to silently bear all the injustice done to them. They have to crush their feelings, desires and inner potential to become an obedient and submissive daughter, mother and wife. In the late 20th and early 21st century, the Indian feminist movement focused its attention towards the domestic lives of women. They depict the misfortunes of the women who are burdened with the problems of negotiation surviving in a complex cobweb of familial relations. It emphasizes the self-enhancement through higher education, economic independence and self determination. Contemporary Indian women novelists give an artistic expression to the problems and predicament of Indian women. In order to highlight the plight of the Indian woman these writers construct the plots of their works in the manner in which the self is wounded by the socio-cultural matrix. For these novelists feminism means putting an end to all the sufferings of a woman in silence.

So the women writers like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Gita Hariharan, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur and others have intuitively observed the gender issues upsetting women and presented them as the victim of the orthodox tradition of the patriarchal society. They have projected and delineated the real status of the suffering women. To make the society free from male domination they analyze and discuss women's miseries realistically. Feminism becomes a literary movement for these writers. Through the depiction of the dilemmas of women, oppressed by male centered society, these novelists raise a feminist voice. They portray the characters of the female protagonists not to surrender and suffer silently but to challenge the male chauvinism by rebelling against the hackneyed
tradition. Their heroines do not find any sense in self-effacement, but aspire for self-assertion, individuality and autonomy.

Manju Kapur, who has contributed a lot to the Indian literature in English, is a writer of international repute. She was born in 1948 in Amritsar. She graduated from the Miranda House University College for Women, Delhi and did her M.A. from Dalhousie University in Halifax, and M.Phil from Delhi University. Manju Kapur is a Professor of English at her alma mater Miranda House College, Delhi. With five critically acclaimed novels to her credit, Difficult Daughters, A Married Woman, Home, The Immigrant and Custody, she has emerged as significant and eminent novelist on the contemporary literary scene. She was awarded the prestigious Commonwealth Writers Prize in 1999 for her debut novel, Difficult Daughters. A Married Woman and Home were both shortlisted for the Hutch Crossword Prize for fiction, and The Immigrant was shortlisted for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. Besides novels, she also has written a number of short stories.

Kapur speaks for the middle-class, and has earned several comparisons with Jane Austen for her sharp-eyed, finely turned characters caught in tricky situations. In her interview with Sophy, for The Times Kapur asserts, "I love being compared to Jane Austen,... there is one thing in common, and probably one shared by a lot of women writers—addressing larger social, economic and gender issues through the prism of the family."

Manju Kapur has achieved a high degree of critical success in India and abroad, as all her work is equally interesting and stimulating. In her character portrayal she displays a deep understanding of the female psyche. Her major preoccupation has been a description of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships. A feminist attitude and approach is strongly apparent in her fiction.
Her fiction vividly depicts the contemporary picture of today's woman who yearns for self-expression. She wants to value the individual self and erase the image of the traditional and sacrificial woman. In her fiction there is an emergence of 'new woman' who asserts her identity and individuality by rebelling against the age-old patriarchal ideology. In the quest for autonomy she challenges the male dominance over her spirit and body. Manju Kapur is a writer who takes her protagonists one step ahead of her predecessors negotiating salient issues such as infidelity, infertility, lesbianism, divorce, adoption etc. In order to attain fulfillment and completeness, her protagonists assert their sexuality by indulging in extra-marital and lesbian relationships.

Through her fiction Manju Kapur artistically projects the feminist concerns. Her works provide centrality to woman in every aspect—stylistically, thematically and structurally. The novelist seeks to rule out the myth that man is supreme and woman is subordinate. Her protagonists-Virmati in Difficult Daughters, Astha in A Married Woman, Nisha in Home, Nina in The Immigrant, and Shagun and Ishita in Custody are well educated and modern middle class Indian women. Education liberates them and gives them the boldness and the assertiveness that enable them to fight against the society which never allows them to claim their rights. As Kapur is well aware of the marginalization of women even in an independent nation, she explicitly expresses her feminist vision in giving them the voice to entertain their rights by challenging the patriarchal system. In the interview with Saudamini Jain for Hindustan Times Kapur clearly asserts:

Well, I am very aware of feminist thinking. I have been deeply influenced by it, and I would call myself a feminist as well.... I don't set out with a conscious feminist agenda, but in describing the relationship between men and women a feminist perspective is often inevitable and this applies to books written well before the term was invented.
Her works highlight the image of the middle class women sandwiched between tradition and modernity. In the novels *Difficult Daughters* and *Home*, she presents girl-children facing domestic violence, whether physical, mental or emotional. Virmati and Nisha, the protagonists of the novels respectively, face the gender discriminatory mode of upbringing that turn down their aspirations cruelly. Kapur presents the plight of girl-children in the patriarchal society which eventually deprives them of the right of education, to choose a career and above all to choose their life partners. But Kapur, as a feminist writer, paints the characters as prototypes of liberated women who assert their individuality by defying the patriarchal structure of the society.

The novels *A Married Woman* and *Custody* present women's predicament in the fast changing socio-economic milieu of India. Through the mouthpiece of Astha, Shagun and Ishita, the protagonists of the novels respectively, Kapur explores the innerseves of wounded women due to male chauvinism. They symbolize 'new women' who aspire for autonomy and individuality. They get fulfillment and completeness in extra-marital relations. In the novel, *The Immigrant*, the writer exposes the nostalgia felt by an immigrant woman, Nina, the protagonist of the novel. She is marginalized and victimized doubly due to her husband's patriarchal attitude. But Kapur offers her with new choice of dissolving marriage to challenge male-dominance. Kapur's story, "Chocolate" reveals the insensitivity of the patriarchal husband due to which his wife, Tara, suffers.

The depiction of the theme, the portrayal of the characters and the skill of the narrative technique, that become a feminine discourse, is an attempt on the part of the writer to explore the victimization of women and their urge to be free from the sexist bias in the patriarchal Indian society. Kapur through her works questions the system of power and attempts to change it. Millet points out, "When a system of power is thoroughly in common, it has scarcely a need to speak itself aloud."
When its working is exposed and questioned it becomes not only subjected to discussion, but even to change" (qtd. in Swami 58).

As Kapur has lived through turbulent times in India, her novels reflect the restlessness of the contemporary nation. Along with the depiction of the unrest of the partition times and communal riots in the country, she vividly presents the inner turmoil of her protagonists. She constitutes the plots against the backdrop of the historical events such as partition of India, communal riots and economic boom in the nation. Her interview with Jai Arjun brings out the fact as she asserts:

With years of studying texts, it becomes almost second nature to look beneath the surface at social and economic forces, gender relationships and how they are played in an arena that, in my writing, happens to be the home. But then, all sorts of things happening outside do affect what is happening inside the home. (qtd. in Kahlon 1)

Kapur's themes are autobiographical in tone. Although she writes about the things which she experiences in her life, yet there is a fine blend of reality and fantasy in her writings, as she asserts to Sophy in the interview, "I obviously write about the things I know well—I wouldn't be able to write about them otherwise. But my novels are imaginative reconstructions." In The immigrant, the author vividly presents the alienation and nostalgia felt by an NRI which is an expression of her own homesickness when she was a student in Canada. In her interview with Sukhmani Khorana Kapur reveals her experience as a student in Canada:

I experienced being away from India when I was a student in Canada in my youth, so I wanted to write about it. I recall feeling alienated and being nostalgic for foods and objects that I took for granted at home. I chose to return to India.
In *Difficult Daughters*, Kapur takes situations from her own background as she uses some of the details from her mother's life. In her interview with Neha Dixit for *The Hindu*, she claims:

Virmati was, in a way, inspired by my mother. She was a teacher, a principal. She went out in the world and suffered accordingly. Because once you go out in the world, you are touched by it. You have your own life and you do not want to be contained by the family. But the family objects it violently.

Kapur's themes centre around the idea of home and family. All her works focus on the woman's role in family, as she opines that it is the place where everybody is supposed to get congenial environment for the holistic development of the personality. Her interview with Sophy gives valuable insights into her own perspective on her works. She comments:

I place a fair amount of emphasis on the family because I look at the family as the nucleus of our life. This is where you have your children, where they develop values. And they eventually grow up and go out into the world with those values.

Kapur attempts to scrutinize the problems that women have to face in domestic relationships. She remarks, "The mother-daughter nexus is only one of the many manifestations of the Indian women's roles. She is a wife, a mother, a daughter-in-law,... in fact there are many aspects of a woman's life" (qtd. in Sethi 53).

The variety and richness of Kapur's works, and the thought provoking theme led to a need for the study of her literary creations from every possible aspect. There is a dearth of theses, dissertations and books, but a number of articles have appeared on the novels of Kapur. Her works have been analysed from different angles – psychological,
historical, biographical, moral and sociological. Different critics have discussed her works critically.

In their article, "Mother-Daughter Relationship in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters", P. Samuel and P. Hephzibah explore the uncordiality of the relationship between the mother and the daughter in the middle class Indian society. The girl child, who challenges the traditional patriarchal system to attain freedom and individuality, is oppressed and rejected by the society, particularly by her own mother. Their analysis shows how filial love and affection can be replaced by hate and bitterness, how a mother, an epitome of sacrifice and goodness, can become a symbol of selfishness and resentment to her children. Although the article discusses the disharmonious relationship between mother and daughter, yet it doesn't highlight the root cause of the disharmony.

Paramjit Kaur in her article, "Analysis of Women characters in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters" deals with the plight of the protagonist of Manju Kapur's novel Difficult Daughters. The writer discusses critically how the mother spoils her daughter's childhood by putting the pressure of domestic duties on her. Her sole concern for her daughter is to make her perfect in the household chores which is considered the basic qualification for marriage. She never realizes the daughter's emotional needs that lead the girl to share the feelings and emotions with the outsiders. Though Paramjit Kaur analyses the uncordiality between mother and daughter in the novel, she fails to throw light how the mother promotes male hegemony. So Kaur doesn't present Kapur's feminist perspective explicitly.

Sheeba Azhar and Syed Abid Ali in their article, "Portrayal of Indian Middle class women in Manju Kapur's Novels : Aspirations and Realities" point out that Manju Kapur's female protagonists do not want to be submissive and sacrificial creatures by confining themselves
within the four walls of the house. They are not traditional women who spend their whole life in serving the husband, children and family. The writers bring before the readers Kapur's heroines' journey from self-annihilation to self-realisation, and discuss how they become aware of their rights and choices with education. They do not want to be dependent on their male counterpart fully that is why they want economic independence. The writers see the emergence of 'new women' in Manju Kapur's heroines who plunge into a dedicated effort to carve an identity for themselves. Their aspiration for self-reliance through education and self-assertion leads them to reject the patriarchal notions that enforce them towards domesticity. They nurture the desire of being independent and leading lives of their own. They cease to be silent rebels and become bold, outspoken, determined and action oriented. The writers observe that though Kapur's protagonists rebel against the male-dominated society strongly, they cannot get freedom in the real sense. The writers bring into light the middle class Indian woman's misery, but they fail to discuss how woman helps man in the subjugation of her own sex. So the article doesn't present the viewpoint of the novelist in the true sense.

In her article, "A Feminist Analysis of Manju Kapur's Novel Home," Aarthi S. highlights Manju Kapur's feminist perspective by discussing critically the process of traditional upbringing of the girl child in the middle class Indian set up. How religious and social norms are misused to condition the girl child to accept her secondary status in the society. Her education and career are given least importance, ultimately creating dependence syndrome in her. Her proficiency in household activities gets priority. The novelist creates the character of the protagonist in a manner in which she does not accept the hackneyed tradition of the family silently, and rebels against it to get freedom. The writer says that as the woman is entrapped in the matrix of religion and tradition, so it is not easy for her to arrive at an evolved state of mind.
The writer doesn't deal with the fact how she is not able to exercise her choice.

The article, "Family structure in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters and Home" by Maneeta Kahlon throws light on the problems of women in the male dominated society in the novels of Manju Kapur who presents the modern woman torn between modernity and tradition. Born in the typical patriarchal families her heroines are brought up in a suffocating and authoritative atmosphere at their parents' house where they are given a training for household activities, and in the name of this training, physical and multiple psychological tortures are inflicted on them.

The writer reveals the reality of the oppressive family structure both at her parents' house as well as husband's. If a woman escapes from the torturous world of her parents, she is entrapped in the suffocating atmosphere at her husband's house. Kahlon aptly remarks, "Kapur brings out some disturbing home truths in the novels which still exist in our society and is a very part of social structure" (7). So Maneeta Kahlon's main concern is to highlight the woman's distress in the patriarchal society, she doesn't discuss the root cause of her misery.

In her article, "A study of Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters : Virmati, Ida and Shakuntala", Anindita Chatterjee throws light on the orthodox thinking and closed mentality of a mother in the patriarchal society. Marrying off the daughter is the sole concern of the mother that is very torturous for the girl as it hampers her personality. The writer, through this critical study, brings before the readers the character of mother in a manner in which she cannot understand her daughter's mental turmoil, consequently the latter tries to escape from the suffocating world, but unfortunately in her efforts of getting love and freedom, she is caught in another whirlpool of misfortunes. So the writer brings out the psychic distress of modern woman who has a keen urge
for autonomy and independence. Though Chatterjee underlines the fact that marriage is the sole concern of the protagonist's mother for her daughter, she doesn't discuss why the institution of marriage is considered so important for the middle class Indian woman.

N.S. Warake in his article, "Quest for Identity and Survival : A Study of Manju Kapur's *Home*" throws light on Manju Kapur's protagonist, Nisha who is modern and does not want to be confined within the four walls of the house. She refuses to reconcile with the patriarchal and male governed society and tries to establish her own individual identity. The writer brings out her inner quest for independent existence in rejecting the patriarchal system by doing a job or running a business. As Kapur's protagonists are educated, confident, self-assured and bold, so they refuse to be treated as an object. They want autonomy and individuality remaining connected with the family. As Warake's main concern is to highlight the protagonist's quest for autonomy, he doesn't throw light on the upbringing of the girl child.

Murali Manohar, through the critical study of Manju Kapur's novel, *Difficult Daughters* in his book *Indian English Women's Fiction : A Study of Marriage, Career and Divorce*, brings before the readers the characters of the heroines as educated, bold and assertive who do not surrender under the duress of the patriarchal system. They do not like the joint family system as it is torturous. So by protesting against the orthodox tradition they want to move away from the large family system where they cannot assert their independence and individuality. To escape from the authoritative atmosphere at their parents' house, they prefer to pursue higher education. The writer critically discusses how Kapur's protagonists devote themselves seriously to their career which may give them an identity and recognition. She explores how the girl child tries to seek liberty and autonomy with the outsiders in the lack of filial love and affection at home. The writer also critically exposes the oppression of woman by her male counterpart in the patriarchal society.
As Manohar's main concern is to discuss how Kapur's protagonist becomes the prototype of liberated woman, he fails to bring into light the fact how mother becomes an agent of patriarchy.

Honey Sethi and Seema Dhillon in their article, "The Womanly Observation by Manju Kapur" analyse the feminist views of Manju Kapur in her novels. They deal with the emergence of new woman in her works. They throw light on the characters of her protagonists who are not silent sufferers and upholders of the tradition and traditional values of the family and society but bold, assertive and strong-willed. Kapur's heroines are mostly educated and aspiring individuals caged within the confines of a conservative family. With an independent thinking, for which their family and society become intolerant of them, they struggle between tradition and modernity. They have to struggle with family and society through which they establish an identity for themselves as qualified women. The writers observe that by describing the predicament of her protagonists, Manju Kapur wants to change the Indian male perception about women. The article mainly throws light on the aspect how Kapur's protagonists become new women. It doesn't reflect woman's misery in the patriarchal society in details.

Asha Saharan in her article, "Perspective of Body in Manju Kapur's Fiction" comments on how woman suffers and gets autonomy as well through her body in Manju Kapur's novels. The writer observes that the issues of marriage and maternity are as important as flesh and blood in woman's life as she is no more than a body. Through issues such as child sexual abuse, physical violence in childhood and infertility Kapur shows how woman gets oppression through her body. Society relegates woman to the secondary social position by identifying her with the body and not with the mind. The writer critically discusses how Kapur presents female body as a positive source of empowerment and emancipation, and how she creates the characters of her female protagonists in the manner in which they assert their sexuality to attain
autonomy. To get fulfillment they go to the extent of indulging in extra-marital and lesbian relationships. Saharan discusses critically how Kapur treats body as both empowered and disempowered, subject and object, a source of rejection and celebration in socio-political culture. Saharan discusses how Astha, one of Kapur's protagonists involves in a lesbian relationship but she fails to reveal the root cause of indulging in this relationship.

Indu Swami in her book, *The Woman Question: in the selected novels of Nayantara Sahgal, Manju Kapur and Arundhati Roy* has made critical examination of Manju Kapur's novels *Difficult Daughters* and *A Married Woman*, and shows how woman in the middle class Indian society suffers from inner turmoil right from her childhood. The writer highlights her pain and agony in the familial relationships. She critically discusses the uncordial relationship between the mother and the daughter. She shows how Virmati's mother keeps her deprived of maternal love as the mother is an agent of patriarchy. The writer highlights the suppression and oppression of woman in marriage also in the male dominated society. She depicts how Astha suffers from nonfulfillment in her marriage, consequently leading a traumatic life. She discusses the struggle for individual identity and self-articulation fought by the protagonists, Virmati and Astha critically. Indu Swami discusses how the elder women become agents of patriarchy, but she doesn't point out why they help man in the subjugation of their own sex.

Jyoti Singh's book, *Indian Women Novelists: A Feministic Psychoanalytical Study* is an endeavour on the part of the writer to discuss the novel, *Difficult Daughters* from feminist perspective. The author discusses the nature of mother-daughter relationship in details. The writer, through her critical study, brings before the readers the characters of Kasturi and Virmati to highlight the relationship lacking the filial love and affection. The book throws light on the life of the woman who learns to dream, to think of identity, and to assert her
individuality. The author points out that the modern daughter does not hate her mother, but she cannot accept her traditional attitude. She wants to attain autonomy by rejecting her mother's world, but she also wants to remain connected to her. The writer also explores the suffocating life of the married woman who annihilates her self in serving the husband and the family, but as a reward she gets sorrows and sufferings in the patriarchal society. Though Jyoti Singh highlights the disharmonious relationship between mother and daughter, she doesn't discuss how a child's personality is affected if she is deprived of maternal love.

Jaideep Rishi's article, "Mother-Daughter Relationship in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters" probes into the suffering of the heroine, Virmati in the novel. The writer highlights the torture perpetrated on the girl child by the mother in the patriarchal society. He discusses critically the plight of the daughter in the middle class Indian society where she is supposed to be the second mother to the younger siblings. He also focuses on the urge for independence of the protagonist. Rishi asserts that Virmati's mother considers Virmati as her rival, but he doesn't discusses the reason of the hostility towards her daughter.

Sushila Chaudhary and Usha Sharma in their article, "Feminism in India and Manju Kapur's Fiction" analyze the feminist ideology which Manju Kapur employs in her works. They make a critical study of the woman's psyche and their struggle within the context of the middle class Indian Society. Through this article the writers attempt to present how women in the patriarchal families are coming out of their traditional roles determined by the social and religious norms. This article doesn't deal with the problem of hierarchy between woman and woman.

Suman Bala and Subhash Chandra's article, "Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters : An Absorbing Tale of Fact and Fiction" deals with the life history of the female protagonist named Virmati. How new women like Virmati struggle against the age-old conventions and accept
the new way of life is discussed here. The theme of women's quest for autonomy is the core part of the discussion. The article doesn't throw light on the fact why the mother becomes the custodian of the tradition.

Shaleen Kumar Singh in his article, "Tradition versus Modernity in Difficult Daughters" observes the conflict between tradition and modernity in Manju Kapur's novel. He discusses critically the protest against the male-dominated society, and the assertion of self-identity by the protagonist. The writer analyses how in her conflict with traditional values, Virmati has lost much more than she gained. The writer doesn't discuss in his article how the mother promotes male hegemony.

O.P. Dwivedi's article, The Glorification of The Second Sex: A Quest for Female Consciousness in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters" throws light on the middle class Indian women who are caught up in the complex web of social norms, personal desire and quest for identity. The writer reveals the reality that the struggle for getting autonomy by a woman is always condemned and ridiculed in a tradition bound Indian society. He explores male-dominance in women's lives successfully. The article doesn't reveal how a child's psychology is distorted in the lack of filial love.

Satish Kumar Harit in his article, "Tragic Flight of the Female Protagonists in Manju Kapur's Novels" throws light on the tragic journey of Manju Kapur's female protagonists from tradition to modernity. He critically discusses how they are caught up between tradition and modernity in the domineering set-up. In their attempt to come out of the web of patriarchal norms, they are entrapped into another oppressive cage. Harit doesn't discuss the role of woman in the exploitation of the member of her own sex.

Desiree Lydia Gomes's dissertations, "Transnational Habitus and patriarchy in Indian Immigrant Fiction : An Analysis of the Immigrant by Manju Kapur" is a critical study of Nina's victimization due to her
husband's patriarchal mind. The writer has critically discussed how the patriarchal ideology is assimilated into the character of Ananda despite the fact that he lives in Canada, and how he tries to control his wife, Nina sexually, emotionally and economically. Gomes discusses Ananda's patriarchal attitude, but he doesn't bring into light how man imbibes it in his personality.

Asha Saharan's article, "Treatment of Infidelity and Infertility in Manju Kapur's Custody" is an attempt on the part of the writer to analyse the novel from the feminist perspective. She highlights how female body empowers and disempowers a woman. She discusses critically how infertility brings a wind of misfortunes in a woman's life by labelling her 'incomplete' and 'worthless'. In Kapur's fiction motherhood emerges as an institution of patriarchy that brings social identity to a woman. The writer also throws light on the positive aspect of body through the character of Shagun, the protagonist of the novel who gets fulfillment by asserting her sexuality, but she fails to highlight why Shagun indulges in extra-marital relation.

Pew Maji in her article, "Feminism in Manju Kapur's Custody" throws light on the suppression and oppression of women in the patriarchal system. The writer convincingly points out how the life of an infertile woman exposes the shallowness and hollowness of the marital relations in the middle class Indian society. Maji highlights that Kapur's protagonists can no longer remain bondaged in the hackneyed tradition, they challenge male chauvinism for self-actualization. Maji discusses critically the plight of an infertile woman, but he doesn't highlight how a mother-in-law aggravates her daughter-in-law's misery, subsequently promoting male domination.

After a comprehensive survey of the secondary sources on Manju Kapur's fiction, it has been observed that the critics have mainly focused on the struggle between tradition and modernity, conflict between
mother and daughter, male dominance and woman's urge for individuality as the major themes. The critics have traced how the female characters in Kapur's novels are preoccupied with the difficulties of fulfillment and self-definition in man's world. The conflicting claims of selfhood, wifehood and motherhood have also been dealt with. In view of the above discussed articles, it is explicit that although ample research has been done on Kapur's fiction, yet a comprehensive and systematic research still needs to be done on many unexplored aspects of her writings. Therefore the researcher is motivated to conduct the present study.

The present study aims at exploring the feminist issues raised by Manju Kapur in her fiction. The proposed study will attempt to analyse how woman plays a significant role in perpetuating male domination and female subordination which has not yet been discussed at length. The present study aims at exploring the relational hierarchies between woman and woman within the same family.

The purpose of the study is to unfold the psychological, financial and existential problems which a woman has to face due to the patriarchal attitude of man which he develops during his socialization when a sense of being supreme is inculcated in him. The research will also attempt to analyse that the institution of marriage is not based on the concept of equality, sharing and understanding but on domination, subordination and suppression of woman. The present research also attempts to highlight the adverse effect of corporate sector on the institution of marriage.

The objective of the present research is to explore the different facets of changing woman within the socio religious matrix. It aims at understanding and exploring the changing values, mindset and thought pattern of the middle class Indian woman which have been merely touched upon. The present study attempts to analyse how Kapur's
female protagonists refuse to follow the trodden paths and choose the road hitherto less travelled by women i.e. the road that leads to self-identification and self-realization, and how they redefine the institutions of marriage and motherhood to redefine selfhood.

The objective is to explore how Kapur's heroines comprehend, compromise and at the same time transcend the traditional boundaries and value codes attached to home, family and marriage, and how far they go on to re-evaluate and redefine their individual and social relations as well as spaces in an attempt to achieve a significant breakthrough as far as woman's independent identity and personal recognition is concerned.

The present study also delves deep into the social, moral, sociological and psychological problems encountered by women and their efforts to carve self-identity. The objective of the present research is to analyse the fiction of Manju Kapur systematically by situating it within the framework of feminist literary theory. In this context, different views and opinions of various feminists will be considered and discussed.
Works Cited


--- I am an Obsessive Word Counter. Interview by Neha Dixit. The Hindu. 3 April 2011. Web. 5 June 2012.


