CHAPTER–III

DISHARMONIOUS MARITAL RELATIONS :
CONTESTING PATRIARCHY

Patriarchy offers woman such an unprotected social system where she is not supposed to exercise equal rights and play equal role with man, as "the customs were devised and sustained by male members" ("Status" 12) of the society. Even the institution of marriage, which is considered sacrosanct, doesn't provide her social justice. Inspite of giving her the right of 'ardhangini' which emphasizes her equality and 'oneness' with the husband, wedlock renders her to the secondary status to her male counterpart, ultimately reducing her to a self-effacing persona. She has no autonomy and individuality since she has been assigned a subordinate position in the society. A survey on the "Status of Women in India : Problems and Concerns", observes :

The Indian society's unique social structure is an oppressor of women in almost every sphere of life due to its denial of equal status to them. The patriarchal system of the society forces women to be confined to the four walls of their homes largely engaged in the household chores. (32)

The institution of marriage imposes on woman the rigid customs which make her a 'type' and 'subordinate' to her male counterpart, subsequently reducing her to a homemaker and a procreative device. Inspite of the efforts on the part of the government, to treat her at par with man through legislative and judicial reforms, she is deprived of her rights and choice. Gur Pyari Jandial aptly remarks :

While she has played different roles – as a wife, mother, sister and daughter, she has never been able to claim her own individuality. The words which we always associate with what we consider to be the concept of an ideal woman
are-self denial, sacrifice, patience, devotion and silent suffering. A woman was and is expected to subordinate every wish and every desire to someone else—a parent, a husband or a child. (211)

In Hinduism, the institution of marriage is sacrosanct. Man and woman represent the two halves of the divine body. The relationship between husband and wife is considered as a relation for ages and ages or for several births. Gradually, the woman's position in the patriarchal society became miserable as many social and religious customs and practices made her a faithful servant to her husband. The religious dogmas expected her to completely merge her 'self' with her husband's and to strictly follow the ideal of pativrata. She is considered to be an embodiment of feminine virtues such as affection, devotion, silent suffering, humility and sacrifice. Confining to the four walls of the house, she is silently supposed to perform the gender roles—to serve the husband and the family. In the patriarchal society her role is restricted to child bearing and housekeeping, consequently converting the institution of marriage into a trap of misfortunes and tortures. Trapped in the role of procreative device and homemaker, she loses her personal identity and individuality.

In spite of woman emancipation, the situation of the contemporary middle class Indian woman is status quo, as she cannot enjoy a harmonious and congenial relationship in marriage. Materialistically her husband offers her a rich life full of worldly objects, but in fact she finds such marriage quite meaningless as she cannot get the fulfillment of her emotions, passions and desires because of the patriarchal attitude of the husband. On the surface she enjoys a very high status earned by the husband, but in reality she is suppressed and psychologically tortured, ultimately creating an inner turmoil in her. A leading sociologist, Uma Vasudev aptly observes, "Even the poorest Indian male is fortunate in having opportunities for releasing his impulse to
domination and the fury of his frustrated ego, because he always has a wife whom he can treat as an inferior" (62).

In the patriarchal social structure, the institution of traditional marriage offers woman a life full of domestic violence which is considered a part and parcel of the marital life. The dependence syndrome makes her too weak and meek to escape from the life of recurrent mistreatment. Man believes that woman's inferior status gives him the right to abuse her in order to set her right. Sheela Saravanan, in her literature review on "Violence Against Women in India" aptly observes:

Violence against women is partly a result of gender relations that assumes men to be superior to women. Given the subordinate status to women, much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys social sanction. Manifestations of violence include physical aggression... psychological violence through insults, humiliation, coercion, blackmail, economic or emotional threats and control over speech and actions.

Cultural and social factors are interlinked with the development and propagation of violent behaviour. With the traditional process of socialization that man and woman undergo, man takes up stereotyped gender roles of domination and control, where woman takes up that of submission, dependence and respect for authority. That is why he thinks himself the controller of her life and body. Simon de Beauvoir, a feminist asserts:

Man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man. And she is simply what man decrees.... She appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with
reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. (qtd. in Sheeba Azhar and Syed Abid Ali 8)

Manju Kapur has been very realistic in presenting women, their problems and sufferings which they face in their personal and social life. She highlights the traumas of her female protagonists to reveal the hypocritical and inhuman marital relations in the patriarchal society. She views that these alliances in the middle class Indian society keep woman imprisoned in the chains of patriarchy where she becomes a prey to suffocation and suppression. In her wedded life she is trapped in such a complex net of relations where she is supposed to be a sacrificial being whose duty is to serve the husband and the family silently, consequently effacing her individual identity. She has to annihilate her 'self'. She has no individuality but is recognized by the name of her male counterpart. In an interview with Ira Pande the author accepts that she wants to explore "the space that women occupy in domestic relationship". That is why the novelist constructs the stories of her novels in a manner in which her female characters seem to have no moorings, and sometimes they are left destitute with no rights and money.

A deep analysis of Manju Kapur's novels from feminist perspective unfolds that through her female protagonists the novelist tries to reveal the psychological, financial and other existential problems which a woman has to face in marital relationships. The writer emphatically presents how the institution of stereotyped marriage in the patriarchal society reduces woman to the subservient partner. She is supposed to see herself in connection with others, resultantly making herself virtuous and submissive that negates her rights to autonomy and individual independence. She also explicitly reveals the fact that woman also helps man in the victimization and subjugation of the members of her own sex as in the patriarchal society the mother-in-law regards the
daughter-in-law as a member of her family till the latter fulfills the patriarchal interests. If she fails to perform the expected role, the mother-in-law tortures her, subsequently making her more submissive.

Manju Kapur seldom talks of recognizable form of physical violence on women in marriage. Clearly, most of the violence she talks of, is a subtle and inhuman form of violence, a sort of beating where blood and bruises are not conspicuous. In her works she effectively depicts the torture which affects the psyche of woman adversely and makes her life a hell.

But as Kapur, through her works, demands for female freedom from the stereotyped conventions, she vividly presents the struggle of the contemporary woman against the conception that man is the provider of basic necessities for the family, and woman is the child bearer and caretaker of home. She envisions the institution of marriage, which is sacrosanct, not as a trap of suppression and oppression but as an institution of relationship based on equality, sharing and understanding. Her female protagonists, while finding self-annihilation in marital relationships, refuse to accept the torturous patriarchal norms, and rebel against the orthodox tradition for self-actualization. They want social space. They aspire for selfhood. Though sex is a taboo in the middle class Indian society, they assert their sexuality to get autonomy. They are representatives of modernity in real sense. Kapur creates the characters of her female protagonists in the manner in which they can motivate the middle class Indian women to liberate themselves from the trap of patriarchy. Through her female protagonists she wants to prove what Nahal says, "A woman should be aware, self-controlled, strong-willed, self-reliant and rational having faith in the inner strength of womanhood. A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense"(17).
In the novels, *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, *The Immigrant* and *Custody*, and the story, "Chocolate" Kapur exposes the disharmonious marital relationships. She paints the shades of male dominance in the lives of middle class Indian women. Astha's and Nina's husbands in the novels, *A Married Woman* and *The Immigrant* respectively, do not dominate them directly, but they have a patriarchal control on their wives indirectly. Through Astha's and Nina's suffering Kapur unearths the truth that woman suffers not only by man's act of physical violence but she is often emotionally and psychologically hurt and crippled through his arrogance, selfishness, cynicism and indifference.

Through the example of Nina, Kapur presents the social and psychological predicament of an immigrant woman who is marginalized doubly. On the one hand she is an alien to the western society, on the other hand she is victimized due to male domination. Her husband, Ananda tries to exercise his control on her completely as "alone in this country, she was emotionally, financially and socially heavily dependent on him" (*Immigrant* 215).

Manju Kapur creates the character of Ananda in the manner in which he reveals a tale of conservative approach of a husband towards his meek and mild wife. He is an Indian immigrant who successfully integrates himself in western society in order to be a true Canadian. He initially showers love and affection on Nina, and ensures her comfort and happiness when she arrives in Canada. But as the story unfolds, we can see a subtle patriarchal side hidden in his character. Desiree Lydia Gomes observes:

However, the patriarchal issues as portrayed by the male protagonist, Ananda, are not completely overt. There is a subtle underlying patriarchal tone to his character and his actions. He is not seen as one who overtly tries to control
and oppress his wife. However, through his various attempts to change her and steer their lives according to his reasoning, we can see how he tries to control Nina throughout the story.(18)

Ananda wants Nina to erase her identity as an Indian woman by discarding the Indian dress and eating habits completely so that she can adjust herself in the white Canadian society, whereas Nina loves the Indian culture in which she sees her identity. When with his wife, Ananda visits his friend named Gary, Nina wants to wear Sari, an Indian dress. But Ananda shows aversion to this dress:

'My God, they'll think I've married a Christmas tree.'

'Isn't it a party?'

'It's a barbecue. People will be wearing jeans and T-shirts'.

'I didn't bring ordinary saris.'

'Here, all saris are extraordinary. Wear your salwar kameez.'

Nina put the brocade away and wore one of the five salwar kamzees she had been living in since she came.

(Immigrant 144)

Ananda's satirical remarks on Nina's dress expose the patriarchal structure of the society where man is the controller of woman's life and being the head of the system, offers her little choice. Simone de Beauvoir points out, "The situation of woman is that she – a free and autonomous being like all creatures – nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other" (qtd. in Swami 115).

Instead of praising the beauty of the costume, Ananda condemns it. Actually he has no guts to have pride in Indian ways. His desperate
efforts to assimilate into western society control Nina's choice of
dressing sense. The following dialogue between Ananda and his wife
proves how a patriarchal mind dominates his wife:

'Here I'm thought of as a cultured man, as Canadian as
everybody else. So I don't want folks to get the wrong
impression'.

'What impression?'

'That you are a traditional, backward Indian girl, like
some of these women you see at the Indian club'.

(Immigrant 147)

The above dialogue clearly depicts the patriarchal attitude which
is oppressive and hypocritical. The writer successfully highlights the
plight of the immigrant woman who is highly educated and has been a
lecturer in English in Delhi University.

Similarly, Astha's life becomes a distress due to the patriarchal
mind in her husband, Hemant. Like Jaya's husband in That Long Silence
by Shashi Deshpande, he tries to control his wife's talent and potential
too. Astha gives an outlet to her sad feelings in the form of poetry, as
the writer points out:

Writing alleviated the heaviness within her, a heaviness she
found hard to deal with. Discussing her feelings with
Hemant usually led to argument, distance and greater
misery. In the struggle to express herself she found
temporary relief. (Married 79)

But Hemant thinks that she is exposing the secret of their lives to
the world, ultimately compelling her to give up writing. Kapur
comments, "She gave up writing and continued rather sadly to draw,
 sketching with the soft pencils and coloured charcoal" (Married 82).
The author questions the system of power where instead of elevating woman to her genuine rank, the husband forces her to accept his choice silently. The author delineates the anxiety and depression of the woman whose talent or inner potential never gets any recognition in the patriarchal world of the husband. Astha is a great painter and writer. But his husband never recognizes her talent. That is why when Aijaz Akhtar Khan, an artist praises her for her script on Babri Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi issue, she feels a little passionate towards him.

Kapur highlights the bitter truth of the patriarchal society where woman's distress goes unnoticed. Taking care of his own patriarchal interests, the husband remains insensitive and cold to his wife's pain and agony. Ananda suffers from a problem of premature ejaculation. His wife is left sexually unsatisfied, but he never feels her suffering. Moreover, in Canada she feels loneliness as her husband goes to his clinic early in the morning. She feels homesick. Manju Kapur comments:

The immigrant who comes as a wife has a more difficult time. If work exists for her, it is in the future and after much finding of feet. At present all she is, is a wife, and a wife is alone for many, many hours. There will come a day when even books are powerless to distract when the house and its conveniences can no longer completely charm or compensate. Then she realises she is an immigrant for life.

(Immigrant 122)

Nina represents the disturbed psyche of the immigrant woman who experiences loneliness on an alien land that results in frustration. At home she has nobody to talk to, she is all alone. She keeps waiting for Ananda to come home, and after his arrival she speaks the first words of the day. In order to remove this loneliness from her life, and develop some belongingness to Canada she thinks of having children. She thinks:
If she had a baby, the next twenty years would be taken care of. Her interest in Canada would grow, her child's home after all. Would she/he have an accent? Read at an early age like her mother? Shine in school like his father?  
*(Immigrant 160)*

In spite of having a keen desire for having children, Nina fails to conceive. When she asks her husband to consult a doctor, his response is cold. His male ego denies to get him examined by a doctor, and in this way he controls over Nina's choice of enjoying motherhood. He takes an excuse of not having children so soon. He is a representative of male chauvinism who fails to realize his wife's misery. Through Ananda's insensitive and unresponsive attitude the novelist tries to highlight the callous patriarchal social order where woman faces mental crisis. The following dialogue exposes his patriarchal attitude:

"Then please, please, Ananda consult someone. Am I the only one here who wants a baby?"

"At this he lost his temper.... To get pregnant as soon as you married was a very stupid, backward thing to do, it was more important to settle down first. *(Immigrant 166-67)*

Nina goes to consult a doctor alone. She is put under fertility test and the initial reports regarding her are normal. Now the couple is required to be examined together. She gathers courage to ask Ananda to go for examination:

"When should I make the next appointment with the doctor?"

"Which doctor?"

"The gynaecologist said we should go as a couple'.

"What reason did he give?"
'Well, his initial findings were normal so far as I was concerned.'

'That's good'.

'Not good enough. We need to investigate some more'.

'Will you shut up about doctors?'

'I'm sorry, but please don't go on talking about this.'

'We will go when the time is right'. (Immigrant 178)

Ananda is well aware of his sexual inadequacy. So he evades consulting the doctor. It is his male ego that prevents him to put himself under an examination. He thinks that "he would feel great shame if he had to submit his orgasms to the scrutiny of a doctor" (Immigrant 136). It seems as if he becomes a western only outwardly, but in his attitude and approach, he is traditional.

It reflects his paradoxical approach. On the one hand he presents himself as a modern man in the Canadian society and compels his wife to give up the traditional Indian culture in which she sees her identity, but on the other hand he proves himself conservative in attitude by not submitting himself to medical examination, consequently leaving her wife in the world of loneliness. Thus due to his paradoxical behaviour Nina, as a wife, is victimized doubly. Once as an alien to the new culture, and next as a childless woman, who, inspite of having a keen urge, fails to conceive because of her husband's impotency. Whereas the male ego in Ananda doesn't permit him to fill the emptiness in her life.

Because of Ananda's problem Nina suffers doubly. She fails in getting conception as well as she suffers from sexual frustration. When she suggests him to take treatment from the hospital, Masters and Johnson, he turns hostile. He is aware of his problem but "the one word yes would mean acknowledging his inadequacy. And that hurt too much" (Immigrant 184). Here the author highlights the patriarchal ego that
doesn't allow male to accept his "inadequacy". He doesn't go to the
doctor with his wife only because if she comes to know about his
problem, his male ego will be hurt. While Nina is ready to go for any
kind of examination because she, not having any complexes, wants to
lead a happy married life.

Tara, the central character in Manju Kapur's short story entitled
"Chocolate", is similarly victimized due to the male ego in her husband
who is insensitive to his wife's agony of not conceiving. His patriarchal
attitude of being supreme doesn't allow him to go for medical
examination. When Tara requests Abhay to consult a doctor, he replies
coldly, "You go if you want to" as "there is nothing wrong with me" (2).

Nina and Tara are bitterly upset for not having any child. But
their husbands cannot feel their inner turmoil. Ananda is not ready to
support Nina in her efforts for breaking her solitude and assimilating
herself into the alien culture. Similarly, Abhay is insensitive to Tara's
misery.

Likewise, Astha, an artist and writer, is one more victim of the
social system which curtails her individual freedom by reducing her
merely to an enduring wife and sacrificial mother. As in the childhood
she is taught to conform with the tradition, so she takes care of the
household but gradually feels the emptiness in her life. Her husband,
Hemant, also brought up in the male-dominated society, proves
unresponsive and insensitive, while Astha, being an educated, talented
and modern woman, wants existence and recognition of her individual
self in the historical backdrop of Babri Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi
episode. Along with the nation's communal issue, the heroine of the
novel articulates her physical, psychological and emotional stress
syndrome. She wants freedom from this stress along with the nation's
freedom from communalism.
Manju Kapur creates the character of Astha in such a manner in which she, nevertheless, an educated and talented woman, finds no means of self-expression in her marriage. Her corporate employed husband never tries to understand her disturbed emotional state, consequently crushing her sense of self-identity and fulfillment. He exercises his patriarchal control in every sphere of life. Hemant is a materialist who runs after money, but Astha thinks, "Money isn't everything" (*Married* 50).

Being a modern woman, Astha wants to create a social space for herself. Bhagbat Nayak in his article, "Feminine Assertions in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman: A Socio-Ethical Perspective*" aptly remarks:

> The novel exposes the domestic terrain where woman explores the space in her domestic relationship. Kapur has remained very truthful in presenting the women and the challenges they face in their personal, professional, religious and socio-political levels. (222)

As a wife, Astha fights against her marginal existence. She finds no fulfillment in her marriage as her husband, busy in his own jobs, never tries to understand her distress that fills her life with discontentment and restlessness. Hemant leaves the house early in the morning, and comes late, as "on his way home from work he took to frequenting the club where, swimming, playing tennis or drinking, he met men like himself" (*Married* 64).

Hemant's materialistic approach and his ignorance to his wife's needs completely freeze in Astha the channels of bliss of married life. All day she keeps waiting for him, but as he comes home tired, her passion is left unsatisfied. Kapur comments:

> Astha's desire receded. She felt cold, dreary, and distanced from him. She had been waiting for him all day, thinking of their being together, but nothing of this was reciprocated.
He was a criminal, destroying her anticipation, ruining her happiness. (*Married 50*)

Hemant's cold and unresponsive behaviour starts oppressing Astha. Remaining busy in the business, he neglects his wife's physical and emotional demands, consequently creating in her a sense of alienation and marginalization. But she wants to articulate herself that brings fulfillment and completeness in the life. She doesn't think that marriage is just sex, but it provides interest, togetherness and respect. She tries to give an outlet to her suppressed feelings:

'Hemant, why is it that we never talk anymore?'

'We talk all the time'.

'About the business, the house, or Anuradha. Not about ourselves. Like we did before'.

Grow up, Az, one can't be courting for ever'.

'Is it courting to be interested in the other person? Their feelings?'

'.................................

'I want to be close to you, have a better relationship—'

'.................................

'But I'm not happy, so how can you....,'

'You think too much, that is the trouble'. (*Married 66*)

From the above discussion, Hemant's arrogant superior wisdom and domineering attitude is reflected. Instead of pacifying her demanding emotions and passions, he snubs her that creates a sense of discontent in Astha's life. And this dissatisfaction and discontentment leads her to indulge in the lesbian relationship with Pipeelika, a young widow in whom she sees her fulfillment and liberation from the stress.
Ishita, one of the protagonists of the novel, *Custody*, is also marginalized due to the cold and indifferent behaviour of her husband, Suryakanta. In the early days of their married life he used to claim that Ishita was "the queen of heart, he would die without her" (59), and if she has any problem, it is their problem as they are married. But when Ishita's infertility is investigated, he reveals the truth to his mother against his wife's wish. She is not willing to disclose the problem before the family because she is afraid of the consequences. The following dialogue depicts the fear of Ishita:

'Papa and Mummy will know what to do; said SK at last as the car neared home.

'You are going to tell them?'

'Of course. Don't you think that is best?'

'They will hate me'.

'Naah. They are not like that'. (51)

Ishita is reluctant to tell about her infertility to her mother-in-law but her husband tells the truth to her and he was "closeted in her room for a long time, leaving Ishita tense and nervous" (61). Kapur reveals the reality of the patriarchal society where a husband cannot understand his wife's psychic restlessness and mental anxiety. Instead of supporting her in her misery, he pushes Ishita in a more difficult situation. Kapur comments:

Oh, how far from the truth. At that moment Ishita thought it easier to commit suicide than to live. From the day of her wedding she had thought of this family as hers, revelling in the togetherness, sharing and companionship. Now instead of love all around her, there would be rejection. (61)

Ishita is anticipating the rejection and desertion as in Indian culture a girl is made aware of the role of motherhood from infancy.
Having been brought up in the patriarchal society Ishita is aware of the fact that without child-bearing she may lose the moorings. Simone de Beauvoir also writes that from their childhood women are told that they are made for childbearing.

Kapur underlines the fact that in the patriarchal society man has no social obligation for his in-laws. That is why sometimes his behaviour becomes inhuman and abusive to them, consequently inflicting psychological torture on the wife. When Nina tells Ananda that her mother keeps on asking her about the family expansion, he talks rubbish about his mother-in-law, subsequently making his wife a prey of emotional violence.

Nina gives an account of his anger on referring her mother:

'He said all kinds of unreasonable things such as: if there was anyone she had left out of her discussions, please to let him know, he would fill that person in also, he hadn't realized getting married was such a violation of privacy, and may be if children were so important to her, she should have suggested a fertility test before the engagement.

.... Back and forth, back and forth, the anger mounting, the words meaningless, except to wound. (Immigrant 167)

One of the main concerns of the female world is the rigid social structure where the parents cannot claim their right on the daughter after her marriage. Moreover, the daughter is caught up in such a complex web of social relations and positions where she cannot look after her parents in the hours of need even if she is their only child, and they remain alone like an issueless couple. Such situation hurts the daughter. That is why Astha's mother has to shift to Rishikesh in an Ashram after her father's death. In such situation, the daughter suffers from a guilt of not taking care of the mother in her utter despair. When Astha's mother says to her, "It is a lonely life" (Married 94), Astha is touched to the
core, and fills with "dreadful sense of guilt" (Married 94). She insists her mother to live with her. At this her mother says, "After all Hemant's parents are staying with him, aren't they, not with their daughters" (Married 94). The author highlights the helplessness of the female in the male dominated society that is a psychological torture on her. This is the main cause of the evil, female foeticide prevailing in our society. Astha "wished she had a house that was more clearly hers" (Married 89).

When Astha's mother goes to Rishikesh, she gives up the lease of her flat, and wants to get rid of most of her belongings. Astha wishes to put with her the twelve boxes of books which are in her parents' house as her "Papa's memory" (Married 87), but Hemant insists to donate them to library as he doesn't want to clutter up the house with old books. She requests him, "Please, Hemu, my father's books" (Married 87), but the husband advises her not to be "so sentimental" (Married 87) and the books are donated to a library without giving due respect to Astha's feelings. When she questions her mother why she donated the books as Astha wanted to keep them with her as her father's memory, her mother tells that "It is Hemant's house, and he said there was no room" (Married 87). At this Astha receives a severe jolt. She cries, "Then who am I? The tenant?" (Married 87). This is the question which the feminists want to raise. In her in-laws' house she should be regarded as the part and parcel of the family, enjoying the privileges of a daughter, her feelings getting due consideration.

Manju Kapur unearths the rigid conventions of the patriarchal society where woman has no say in financial matters. If she takes any interest in money matters, instead of understanding her, the man accuses her of losing trust in him. After Astha's father's death, her mother sells the plot, and starts living in an Ashram in Rishikesh. As Astha is her only child, so the money is left with her. But her mother delivers the money into Hemant's hands as being the male member of the society he knows good management. It hurts Astha and she asks her why she gave
it to him, she says, "He is a man, he knows about money. He will invest it for you and the children. I have discussed the whole thing with him" *(Married 97)*. The novelist highlights the point that it is the cultural conditioning of children that girls are supposed to learn the "household accounts" *(Married 97)*, and boys are taught to manage the money, resulting in the dependency of female on her male counterpart. When Astha wants to discuss about the investment of the money given by her mother, Hemant sees it as an attack on male-dominance. He annoys and blames her of not trusting him. Astha pleads to understand her. "Asth a was pleading now, begging Hemant to understand. She meant nothing personal. She didn't want to feel dependent, that was all" *(Married 99)*. But the male ego in Hemant can not understand her innocence. Hemant frowned:

> What has gotten into you I don't understand. I will tell your mother to give the whole thing to you, you will handle it yourself. She should have consulted you first, before she handed anything to me. In fact why didn't she ask you to look for a buyer and get a lawyer to check the sale deeds? *(Married 99)*

The patriarchal mind in the husband forces the wife to suffer silently. Whatever Astha questions him he simply crushes her right to speak. Astha realizes, "She had a good life, but it was good because nothing was questioned" *(Married 99)*. The most important thing is how woman is taught the virtues of adjustment and compromise since her childhood for the smooth sailing of the boat of life but the boys are kept unknown to them. The process of socialisation makes woman submissive. Astha broods over, "This boat could not be rocked. She should paint that on a canvas and put it up on the wall, and stare at it day and night, so that its message burnt its way through her brain into her heart. This boat cannot be rocked" *(Married 99)*. This silence makes her distant from her husband. Anita Nair in her book review observes
that "Asth a the good wife, ... is hit by existential angst and there fore begins an internal rebellion" (1).

Kapur vividly presents the fact that in the patriarchal society man gives no place to the sharing of emotions and problems in his marital relationship. Like the psychoanalytic feminists, Kapur opines that it is due to his patriarchal upbringing where boys are taught to prove their superiority in the world. That is why when Ananda, somehow, goes to California for the treatment, he keeps it a secret.

Though it is preferable to treat couples, he goes alone. He hides the reality from his wife and tells a lie that he is going there to attend a conference. The writer reveals his ill-mentality:

On the plane to California Ananda had six hours to think about his situation and the lies he had told. He didn't even know why he had lied. Nina would have been enthusiastic about any move to overhaul him sexually, participated in the process wholeheartedly, but, he argued with himself, as a husband did he want his wife to expose her the most private moments to a sex therapist? Especially when she didn't have to, the problem was after all his... but he didn't want to start out with Nina complaining about his shortcoming, though he had to admit she was the one most affected.... If he improved, he could tell her. If he didn't this would be one failure about which she need never know.

(Immigrant 186-87)

He gets treatment with the help of a surrogate, and gets his problem cured to some extent. After coming back to Halifax, he discloses the reality to his wife. Now Nina gets a setback as she can not understand why he lied. It reflects his patriarchal behaviour that does not permit him to reveal his inadequacy to his wife as man is supreme. But as a modern woman, Nina wants a relationship based on sharing. For
the sake of the happiness of their married life she rationalizes, but the lie told by Ananda sinks in her subconscious mind that makes her feel betrayed, resultanty creating in her an inner turmoil.

Similarly, Tara's husband, Abhay does agree to see the doctor after a "somewhat acrimonious discussion" ("Chocolate" 2), but he goes alone because of the fear of a threat to the male dominance. When Tara expresses her will to accompany him, he rejects her wish and says, "I'll deal it on my own" ("Chocolate" 2). After his medical examination he remains tight-lipped, and also checks his wife to go to the doctor. It is explicit that he suffers from some inadequacy but the male ego in him prevents him to disclose the reality to his wife, ultimately keeping her deprived of the bliss of maternity and motherhood. Moreover, due to Abhay's patriarchal attitude Tara has to suffer a lot. She has to "take a trip to Vaishno Devi crawling on her hands and knees" ("Chocolate" 2).

The author successfully explores how the dominating attitude of man prevents woman from being empowered and emancipated that is a challenge to his superiority. During Ananda's tour to California Nina gets a part-time job in a library where she meets Beth, a student doing her Masters in Library Science. Beth suggests her to join a support group functioning on feminist principles. Ananda is against it as it promotes woman emancipation. When once she reads the book, *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir, Ananda reacts suspiciously:

'Why are you reading it?'

'Because what she says is really relevant.'

He looked at her uneasily. 'But why do you want to read such stuff? You are not deprived in any way. (*Immigrant* 217)

When Nina joins the feminist group, her husband fears that his patriarchal world may be challenged. He doesn't support the idea of
being a feminist for his wife and tries to exercise his control over Nina's choice of getting empowerment.

Similarly, Astha's husband, Hemant also discourages her interest in political activities. He doesn't permit her to take part in such activities, and when she discusses with him about the politics being done on Hindu-Muslim sentiments, he advises her, "Please keep to what you know best, the home, children, teaching. All this doesn't suit you" (*Married* 116). Kapur deliberately exposes the complex society where woman is denied to take part in political activities because man thinks that it disturbs the family. That is why he prefers teaching to other jobs for his wife because it is less time taking as after the closing of school or college, she can take care of the husband, children and family. Indu Swami rightly observes:

> In marriage a woman barters her time, interests and energies to the needs of the family, husband and offspring-commits her life in return for emotional dependence, financial security, protection and of course the status of being happily married. (89)

After Aijaz's death Astha joins the Sampradayakta Mukti Manch that holds demonstrations and meetings against communalism. Once she wants to go to Ayodhya with the Manch, her mother-in-law snubs her, "Don't you care about your children or husband"? (*Married* 187). Hamant also rebukes her in the same tone, "As my wife, you think it proper to run around, abandoning home, leaving the children to the servants?" (*Married* 188). Kapur vividly exposes the existing tension in the life of the woman who is supposed to sacrifice her every wish and desire for the well being of the husband, children and family. Bhagabat Nayak in his article aptly remarks about Kapur's protagonists, "Marriage, the social institution, traps and curbs their spirit by binding them to the responsibilities of home" (231). Hemant never tries to
understand and respect Astha's individual self, that is why her desires, aspirations, emotions, passions and dreams remain unfulfilled in his company. The patriarchal mind and heart in Hemant tries to subjugate his wife completely.

Manju Kapur explicitly reveals the nexus between patriarchy and capitalism. Like Juliet Mitchell and Nancy Harstock, the socialist feminists, the novelist emphasizes that women must attack both patriarchy and capitalism to achieve liberation. Man is the controller of the economic power within the institution of the family. Being the head of the family he is not accountable for his expenditure to anybody else but does have a patriarchal check on his wife's expenses as she is a subservient partner.

Nina is dependent on her husband financially as she has no proper income. After getting sex therapy Ananda involves himself physically with a white Canadian girl, and spends a lot of money on her. But when once, her wife purchases a sweater for three hundred dollars, he snubs her for the extravagance. He tries to exercise his control over her expenditure:

'Three hundred dollars! You spent three hundred dollars on your clothes? Why?....

..........................................

'You could have bought an ordinary sweater. Why do you have to dress in Cashmere?'

..........................................

'I should have come with you. You go alone, you lose your head'. (Immigrant 273)

On seeing the receipt of the bill, he becomes furious at her frivolous expenditure. When Nina comes in Canada, he encourages her to wear western clothes, but now as he spends a lot of money on his
mistress, doesn't allow his wife to spend much on dress. Manju Kapur constructs the plot in a manner in which as it unfolds, Ananda's patriarchal approach and attitude is revealed. Being independent economically, he can squander even on immoral deeds, while his wife's genuine expenditure is also questioned. Indirectly he makes her feel guilty for spending his money, consequently exercising a financial control on her. Desiree Lydia Gomes aptly remarks:

Financial control over women is one of the main acts of patriarchy by men. This is especially true if the woman is not working and/or is financially dependent on the man who is earning (qtd. in Bowlby). In this way, if a woman does not have any money of her own, it then curtails various other aspects of her life that involves certain expenses. She cannot socialize, buy herself necessities, have an emergency fund, pay for health needs, or even something paying for transportation. She thus can be confined physically and financially. (21)

The writer reveals the bitter truth of patriarchy where women are not free to spend money for themselves, whereas men need neither to curtail their expenses nor to give any account of their expenditure to anybody else as they are the earners. This is the reason why Ananda doesn't tell about his income to his wife. When she says that she doesn't know how much he earns, he replies that it is difficult to tell because he doesn't earn any fixed amount. Moreover, when she asks, he shows the list of his debt. He argues with Nina:

'Who knows what you earn, you never tell me, never share, how am I supposed to know?'

'I'm self-employed', he shouted. 'I don't earn one fixed amount, is that so difficult for you to understand?'

'You never even give me a basic idea.' (Immigrant 274)
A couple is supposed to share everything with each other. But when one partner hides something, the other loses faith in him or her that leads to conflict, and it is what happens with Ananda and Nina. The Central Information Commissioner, M. Sridhar Acharyulu said that wives of government servants have a right to know salary particulars of their husbands. When a government servant is supposed to tell his wife the particulars of his salary then why not the man who runs his own clinic.

Though Astha earns money, Hemant like Nina's husband, Ananda has a patriarchal control on his wife's expenditure. Kapur points out that "their money spending was decided by him, not by her" *(Married 167)*. After fifteen years of their marriage, Hemant offers her to go to Goa on the money earned by Astha. In Goa market she sees an antique silver box, priced at five thousand rupees. She likes it very much and requests Hemant to purchase the box, but he denies the offer rudely injuring her sense of self respect and self dependence. The writer comments:

The tone, the refusal both hurt her. She was an earning woman, why couldn't she have a say in how some of their money was spent? She never said anything when he chose to squander money on airline tickets, why couldn't she buy a box she liked. *(Married 165)*.

A husband can squander money on the things what he likes, but he expects his wife to spend it very judiciously even though she earns. He never cares for the inner turmoil in his wife which is due to his patriarchal behaviour. He never ensures his wife's peace of mind. This uncaring and dry behaviour of the husband sinks in the head and heart of Astha as her mother says, "she is always so tense and angry" *(Married 85)*.

Kapur emphatically exposes one more concern of the female world. Man indulges in extra-marital relations inspite of the faithfulness
and loyalty of his wife, consequently leaving her emotionally and sexually dissatisfied. In the beginning Ananda, in the novel, *The Immigrant* suffers from some inadequacy due to which Nina cannot enjoy the bliss of married life. But even after getting sex-therapy he involves himself with a white Canadian girl, subsequently creating an emptiness in his wife's life. Similarly, Tara in Kapur's short story, "Chocolate" becomes a victim of his husband's infidelity. To keep his extra-marital affair a secret, Abhay feeds his wife chocolates too much that she develops a craving for it, ultimately, getting disfigured. Kapur comments, "This was the only pleasure she had in her life" (3).

Alvin Troffler observes, "Parenting is a shared responsibility and a shared pleasure" (qtd. in Swami 56). Manju Kapur vividly presents the stark reality of the middle class Indian society where men never help women in the process of child rearing. In such society the reproduction of mothering is created in the girl child by making her take care of the younger siblings or mothering the dolls while playing. The boy child is kept away from such type of activities as he is considered to deal with the outside world. The traditional socialization of the boy child reflects in his married life, consequently victimising his wife. Astha's husband helps her in looking after her daughter, the first child, as he has just returned from abroad. But after the birth of her son, Himanshu, Hemant doesn't help her in taking care of the child, as he says to Astha, "It's your job" (*Married* 70). When Astha shows her helplessness to do everything herself, he says, "It's woman's work'

...'Hire somebody to help you or quit your job' (*Married* 70). The author explicitly expresses how the patriarchal mind reduces woman to a fettered existence. Like Nancy Chodorow, a psychoanalytical feminist, Kapur advocates for 'dual parenting' where the both parents look after the offsprings. If man helps woman in the process of child-rearing, she can escape oppression.

Huband's insensitive and uncooperative attitude becomes a hindrance in pursuing the career successfully and satisfactorily. Astha is
a teacher in a school. She is overburdened with the responsibilities of the school, looking after the children and the housekeeping. Moreover, her passions, feelings and emotions, can not find any outlet in her corporate thinking husband that creates an inner turmoil and conflict in her leading her to a victim of migraine. She has to fulfill the demands of growing children and, tolerate the dull and dry attitude of the unresponsive and non understanding husband.

Kapur in her latest novel, *Custody*, traces exactly an Indian attitude that recognizes woman only through her role as a wife and mother. She negotiates those issues of patriarchy which neglect the individual self of a woman, and give much importance to motherhood. The novel exposes the shallowness of an urban middle class family of Delhi where marital relationships are based on patriarchal interests. Such orthodox families have faith in those rigid conventions which believe that woman's identity depends on child bearing through which she is supposed to find completeness. Not giving birth to a child is woman's ultimate sin. Asha Saharan in her article, "Treatment of Infidelity and Infertility in Manju Kapur's *Custody*" aptly remarks:

> When a woman is unable to conceive, she is stigmatized and rebuked by family and society which inflicts multiple psychological tortures by labelling her 'incomplete' and 'worthless'. Infertility is viewed as deviance from the cultural norms, rendering a woman helpless; it is also the ground for divorce. So, childlessness is to be understood not only in terms of reproductive health in a physical sense, but more so as a social concern. (68)

Through Ishita's life Kapur highlights the hollowness of the relation where a woman gets love and respect because of her body, and if the body fails to perform the traditionally expected role, her marriage may be damaged. In the patriarchal society marriage is the subjugation
of the female in the interest of the continuation of her husband's bloodline and woman is considered as a reproductive machine having no individuality.

Having passed B.A., Ishita, at twenty three, marries Suryakant, the lonely son of a traditional merchant in Delhi. The family showers a lot of love and affection on her for a time being. She is happy with her husband, and is friendly to her sisters-in-law. But after eighteen months of the marriage, the family starts questioning about conception for "Suryakanta was their only son, and grandchildren were expected within a year" (Custody 51). Very soon Ishita sees a sea change in their behaviour. When her mother asks her whether they treat her well, she responds in a "listless nod" that is a "further reason to panic" (Custody 54). Now she anticipates the storm of misfortunes coming in her life very soon.

Through Ishita Kapur highlights the psychological trauma of the woman who seems to have no existence because of her infertility. She goes to the gynaecologist with her mother-in-law, and when her abnormal anatomy is exposed, she feels alienated internally. The novelist reveals her fear explicitly:

Smaller than the ants on the ground, smaller than the motes of the dust in the sunlit air, smaller than drops of dew caught between blades of grass in the morning was Ishita as she sat in the gynaecologist's office with her mother-in-law, watching as the doctor sketched out the messages concealed in her body. Here were the tubes, here the eggs, here was where conception occurred. The loss of normal anatomy meant fertilization could not take place without intervention. (Custody 62)

The novelist effectively exposes the plight of the barren woman, who is being made aware of maternity and motherhood from childhood
as Asha Saharan remarks in "Treatment of Infidelity and Infertility in Manju Kapur's Custody":

In Indian culture the role of motherhood is inscribed in the personality of a girl child from early childhood, either by encouraging her to play maternal roles by caring for younger siblings, or by allowing her to play only with dolls around the house. The reproductive role of women is highly recognized in these settings.... The second stage, one that further determines the initiation of the girl's role as a mother is marriage. The ritual of marriage is seen as a pathway for the creation of offspring. (68-69)

Kapur negotiates the problem of hierarchies in the middle class Indian society. In this hierarchical system one woman is placed against another crushing the rights of the latter. A mother-in-law, who is submerged in patriarchal ideology, can not be supportive during her daughter-in-law's misery. Instead of being cooperative she aggravates the problem. For the fulfillment of her patriarchal interests she tortures her a lot. Satish Kumar Harit says that in such situations the mother-in-law becomes "not only an advocate but even the custodian of the tradition" (93). The novelist presents how women act as agents of the patriarchy in the victimization of the member of the same sex. To reveal the enigma of an infertile woman in the patriarchal society, Kapur purposively chooses a sensitive woman who on the one hand, suffers from psychological torture in the hands of husband and mother-in-law, on the other hand is tortured physically also as her body becomes a site for hi-tech reproductive technology. When Suryakanta tells his mother about her infertility, Ishita is terrified as if she has committed a sin.

Kapur highlights the bitter truth of the middle class Indian society where the best part of the youth of an infertile woman is wasted in the quest to attain motherhood. Ishita has severe blockage in her fallopian
tubes, so she has to go for a hi-tech reproductive technology, IVF, "fertilization that took place in a culture medium outside the body, with egg and sperm extracted from respective donors" (Custody 63).

The author constructs the plot in a manner in which Ishita surrenders the energetic days of her life to tension related to child-bearing. Kapur depicts how the hi-tech treatment turns into a device of torture for a woman:

Every two or three days she visited the doctor, with hope in her heart. Her blood had to be tested, ultrasounds taken....


When it was time to harvest the eggs, she was given an anesthetic.

To extract them from the follicles, needles were inserted through the vagina into the ovaries. Once they were retrieved, she could go home, pumped full of antibiotics....

For six days her baby lay in the IVF lab. Days of tension, days in which in the deepest recesses of her mind she allowed the faintest of hopes to flicker. She whispered to herself, my baby....

Back to the embryologist, back to the doctor, back to lying on her back and having a catheter inserted into her. The catheter which contained her baby....

Prayers, prayers, more prayers Please stay, please grow. You are my only chance of happiness.... I beg you. (Custody 64)

What O'Brien, a radical feminist, says that patriarchy has the overall control on the process of reproduction seems true in the case of Ishita. In her book The Politics of Reproduction (1981) she contends
that "men control women's reproductive process through medical, social and cultural structures" (qtd. in Hekman 93).

Kapur highlights the atrocity perpetuated on an infertile woman by the patriarchal society where a woman is considered a procreative device. If she fails to give birth, she is made to undergo various tests and treatments. Even after getting hi-tech treatment, if she fails to conceive, she is discarded. Same is the case with Ishita. When she fails to conceive even after getting a costly treatment, her family members become rude to her. They don't give any value to her individual self. They behave in a manner as if Suryakanta married her for reproduction only. Kapur comments:

It didn't take long for the loving atmosphere around Ishita to grow so thin that it became hard for her to breathe.

Was it possible for them all to change towards her, SK, Chandrakanta and Tarakanta?

Hadn't they valued her for herself? (Custody 66)

In spite of being a woman, Ishita's mother-in-law can not understand the woes of her daughter-in-law. Instead of sympathising with her distress, she adds fuel to the fire, and prepares her son, Suryakanta to give her divorce. She tells to Ishita that "it is essential that Suryakanta has a child. As the only son, he has to make sure that the bloodline of his forefathers continues" (Custody 66). Kapur brings out the reality of the patriarchal society where a woman gets identity and recognition through motherhood. Ishita has been showering her love, affection and respect on the family for three and a half years but now for her in-laws she is just an 'incomplete' woman, who can not carry forward the name of the family.

For the woman, marriage means sacrificing herself emotionally and physically, suppressing her own needs wholly; for man it is fulfillment of all his interests. Manju Kapur highlights the selfishness of
a husband in the middle class Indian society where he values his wife till his interests are fulfilled. He may break the marital alliance with her, if she cannot meet the demands of the patriarchal society. Kapur underlines the fact that in such families there is no place for true love in the institution of marriage, ultimately making woman rootless. That is why Suryakanta, who used to love Ishita very much, shows a sense of contempt for her after the investigation of her infertility, and at last he seeks divorce from her. Through Ishita, Kapur depicts the predicament of an infertile woman:

And what was more important, though she didn't say it, he did not even touch her any more. In bed all she saw was his back.... She felt degraded, non-person, certainly a non-woman. He was determined there should be nothing left between them.

She was only twenty-six. She could look for a job, but the meaning of her life came from SK. For three and a half years she had been surrounded by his shy and tender love, she had sat down roots in this home, the thought of being expelled from it was heartbreaking. (Custody 68-69)

The woman who was very friendly to her sisters-in-law, like a daughter to her mother-in-law, and a loving tree to her husband, suddenly becomes a prey of their disgust. Everybody shows a sense of derision to her as if she were a criminal. The author tells :

The mother began to call her shameless, the sisters refused to talk to her, the father and SK avoided her. She only saw her husband at the dining table, a place to which she now seldom came. Who can eat if they are treated as invisible? She stayed in her room, reading magazines, flicking through TV channels, waiting for it to be late enough so she could take a sleeping pill. (Custody 69)
The patriarchal society doesn't care for the dignity of a woman. She sacrifices her whole life in the service of the husband and the family, but in return she gets woes and wounds. Ishita’s mother-in-law utters some painful words for her, subsequently inflicting psychological torture on her, as she says:

You must have known you couldn't have a child.
You will never get a paisa from us.
How long do you think you can go on eating our salt?
There are ways to deal with shameless women like you. *(Custody 70)*

Due to Ishita's infertility her happy married life is damaged. Kapur very artistically weaves the plots and the sub-plots and throws light on the misfortunes faced by an infertile woman. She is paid for that which is not her fault. Pew Maji aptly remarks in her article, "Feminism in Manju Kapur's *Custody*":

Kapur is successful in exposing the fact how a daughter-in-law is discarded from the household and the family for only one reason. Ishita has to bear the cost of her infertility. The theme of loneliness in marriage is running throughout the novel in every plot and subplot. Mostly women have to bear the burden of loneliness in life. (4)

Marriage is not a union of two hearts but the subjugation of the wife in the interest of the perpetuation of the husband's name. How the institution of marriage reduces a woman like Ishita to a meek and mild character. We can see that Simone de Beauvoir is apt in her conclusion that "One is not born but rather becomes a woman...it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature... described as feminine" (295).

Asha Saharan observes in her article, "Treatment of Infidelity and Infertility in Manju Kapur's 'Custody'":
Ishita undergoes "internalized exile" where the body feels disconnected from it as though it doesn't belong to her and she has no agency. She is considered a failure by her culture, and worse, since failure is internalized, she believes it herself. She is doubly exiled from her body-once as a woman, an outsider to patriarchal power, and next as an infertile woman who cannot fulfill her biological destiny.(70)

Similarly, in her novel *Difficult Daughters* also, Kapur exposes how woman is unable to get a social space in marriage. Virmati, in quest for self-actualization, marries a married Professor, Harish Chandra. Her marriage gives her nothing but suffering. Having got herself free from the traditional chains of her parents, she is caught in another whirlpool of struggle at Professor's house where she is considered as second wife. Here she can not enjoy the privileges of a wife, subsequently facing self-effacement. Anindita Chatterjee observes:

Virmati's married life was a sheer disaster. She was ostracized by her family, and forced to compete for her share of her husband's love alongwith his first wife, Ganga. Virmati was forced to compromise and adjust in order to adapt herself into her husband's family and eventually died an insignificant death. (5)

The question, whether men and women are essentially different because of biology or are socially constructed as different, also prevails in Manju Kapur's fiction. Inspite of being married and a father of two children, the Professor remarries Virmati, consequently victimising and marginalising the first wife and the children. As he is the controller of the system of power, he enjoys the bliss of both the worlds. Ganga, his first wife, is like a maid servant who fulfills his everyday needs. She keeps his house tidy, washes his clothes and cooks food for him. Virmati
satisfies his academic urge and physical needs which Harish can not seek in his weak and meek wife, Ganga. The writer explores the reality that in the patriarchal society it is always woman who suffers. She has to adapt, compromise and adjust everywhere as she fails to create a space for herself. Instead of snubbing the Professor, his mother snaps at Virmati for this marriage. Kapur reveals her thoughts:

Kishori Devi's eyes blurred. She could make out the terrified look on the face beside her son's, but she had no-sympathy for her. All this was her fault. If she had not gone after him, he would not have strayed, the family would not be torn about. (208)

Kishori Devi still has a soft corner in her heart for her son. She says, "He was a good son. How was it his fault if he was caught in the trap of some shameless young Punjabi?" (210).

At her husband's house, Virmati is humiliated. She gets no respect, and can not enjoy the privileges of a wife. Instead of getting love and affection she is abused, as Harish's son utters, "Who is this gandi lady? Send her away" (208). She is considered as a trespasser in her husband's house. She feels herself lonely and forlorn. The author comments, "She wondered drearily whether this isolation would continue till the end of her life" (215). The author exposes the reality of the paradoxical male-dominated society. On the one hand, Virmati is considered as a "pariah" in this house as she marries an already married person, on the other hand, the Professor, who is the real culprit, still enjoys the status as he used to earlier.

Virmati's parents desert her because of her love marriage with a married man and even in her husband's house, she can not carve an identity for herself for which she marries against the wish of her parents. Here also, she has to face her rival who makes her life more difficult. If "Virmati had the bed, Ganga was going to have the house"
Manju Kapur highlights the fact that in the male-oriented society man in order to fulfill his interests, gives pain to woman, as the author claims, "Virmati had achieved through Harish, education, work, marriage and suffering" (253).

Virmati, as a daughter, is forced to confine herself within the four walls of the house, she is shrewdly trapped in domesticity. As a wife also, she can not assert her autonomy in her new house. She yearns for freedom, "And me, thought Virmati, what about me?... I feel so utterly left out', so utterly cold. Will there be any change in my life, I wonder?" (Difficult 255). Virmati, instead of getting freedom and autonomy, finds herself caught in a net of psychological torture.

Like Virmati, Ganga also gets rejection in her marriage. The Professor and Ganga had a child-marriage, but afterwards, as he became a learned person, he couldn't find a true companion in the uneducated wife. When his mother asks him about the need of remarriage, he bursts out, "I am supposed to live my life tied to a woman with whom I have nothing in common, who cannot even read. Who keeps a ghunghat in front of my friends."(209)

Ganga does all the jobs for her husband, nevertheless, he never admires her services and sacrifices for him and takes them for granted by the institution of marriage. Kapur describes:

> From washing his clothes to polishing his shoes, to tidying his desk, dusting his precious books, filling his fountain pens with ink, putting his records back in their jackets, mending his clothes, stretching his shirts and Kurtas, hemming his dhotis, seeing that they were properly starched – Ganga did it all. His sleek and well kept air was due to her. When his friends came, he sent orders to the kitchen that their favourite samosas – Kachoris – Pakoras – mathris should be made. Along with the khas, almond or rosewater
sherbet of the season. All the effort of pounding, grinding, mixing, chopping, cutting, shaping, frying was hers. Was this Harish's idea of nothing much. (216)

How thankless the Professor is! His wife has sincerely devoted her life in the service of her husband even then he has no consideration and sympathy for her. Only because of the lack of proper education in her he rejects her and brings her rival in the house. To compete for conjugal bed with her husband's second wife is a tragedy in a woman's life, and Ganga is the victim of the tragedy. In this connection Jyoti Singh rightly analyses:

It would not be a hazard to state that the Professor is utterly selfish and shuts his eyes to Ganga's intrinsic goodness; he is apathetic and seeks fulfillment outside marriage, ruthlessly hurting her. Her selfless devotion, instead of being rewarded, is punished by his rejection.(110)

How explicit it is that in the male dominated society it is the woman who is supposed to adjust, compromise, adopt and sacrifice, not the man. He does not know the essence of these virtues. Kapur highlights this bitter truth of the society through the example of the Professor who doesn't compromise and sacrifice for the happiness of the family, and in the search of an educated companion, he violates all the norms of the society, and remarries Virmati.

Through the plight of Ganga, Kapur focuses on the need of education for women. Had Ganga been a highly educated woman, her husband might have not remarried. O.P. Dwivedi aptly remarks, "By giving the educated Virmati an advantage over an illiterate Ganga, Kapur highlights the importance of female education in the modern world"(34).
Manju Kapur envisions a world where woman should be treated as equal to man. She conceives the characters of her protagonists in the manner in which they find themselves confined to the traditional feminine role which makes the atmosphere torturous for them. Gradually, Astha, Nina, Shagun, Ishita, Virmati and Ida realize that marriage has offered them nothing, but a meaningless life—a life which is full of anxiety and tension. Being educated and modern women who yearn for selfhood, the protagonists challenge the male-dominance by involving themselves in lesbian relationship, extra-marital relations and by breaking the traditional marriage.

The author doesn't clip the wings of the protagonists but lets them fly. On realizing that she is undergoing a gradual process of self-effacement due to the domineering attitude of her husband, Nina joins a feminist group to come out of the feeling of loss. Before the group she gives vent to the sad feelings of being betrayed by the husband. This group functions to strengthen its members as they share their problems and sufferings created by the male members of the society and "create therapeutic situations for each other" (Immigrant 212). The expression of her feelings relieves her from the burden. The writer comments:

As they spoke, Nina grew tense. Her turn was coming. What was bothering her most at the moment. Her inability to conceive or Ananda's going to California without telling her? Among these women, she became conscious of how hostile his secrecy had been, why had she accepted his explanations so easily?... this only made her feel empty....

.... As she started to talk, she realized what a burden she was carrying. She yearned to put it down. (Immigrant 215)

She becomes bold enough to reveal her secret because she feels burdened with it. So before the feminist group she emerges as a bold and self assertive persona.
Kapur's heroines cannot be rubber dolls in the hands of others. They have their own aspirations, and the same is the case with Astha. Although Astha doesn't want to spoil her marriage as she has been taught to conform to the patriarchal norms, yet she yearns for selfhood. She has her independent thinking that can not be crushed by the conservative society. Hemant's rigid and dry action, behaviour and language in daily routine sinks in her head and heart that creates a conflict, a sense of dissatisfaction and non-fulfillment in her, resultantly developing an urge to live a meaningful life by violating the rigid customs, practices and norms.

Pramod K. Nayar quotes Virginia Woolf, "Economic independence and a separate space are crucial to the woman" (86). Through her novels Manju Kapur also emphatically insists on the need for economic independence for the empowerment of woman. She sees self-reliance as a means of deliverance from the dependence syndrome which makes her subordinate to her male counterpart, subsequently making her life miserable. John Stuart Mill advocates that "the power of earning is essential to the dignity of women' (qtd. in Swami 9).

In Canada, in the beginning Nina wants to do a job only for whiling away the time as she is alone at home. But gradually, Ananda's patriarchal approach makes her realize that she is spending his money, which hurts her dignity and self-respect. Now a strong urge for economic independence arises in her head and heart. When Ananda snubs her for purchasing an expensive sweater for three hundred dollars she determines to be independent economically "From now on, I will only buy clothes when I have money of my own" (Immigrant 274).

Similarly, Astha believes in economic independence, as feminists regard it as a stepping stone towards women emancipation. In the beginning of his married life she joins teaching just as a leisure. Gradually, she realises her autonomy and liberation in it. With the
demands of the growing children and household chores, her job is an extra burden on her, even then she doesn't want to leave it. The job gives her not only economic independence but an identity also. Kapur comments:

Asth a was now virtually a single mother. Beleaguered by job, small children and house, she sometimes toyed with the idea of resigning from school, but between her marriage and the birth of her children, 'she too had changed from being a woman who only wanted love, to a woman who valued independence. (Married 72)

Kapur's protagonists struggle to live life meaningfully. What is important to point out is that a woman does a job not only for mercenary motives but also to make her individual and independent identity. She has a keen desire to attain personal recognition, which is denied to her by the oppressive and exploitative institution of marriage that recognizes her only as a wife. She doesn't want to be only the shadow of her husband, but wants her talent to be recognised. The author depicts very realistically how Astha craves for valuing her individual self:

At school she had grown to be her principal's right-hand woman, appreciated and valued for one tenth the work she did at home, and paid for it too. Her salary meant she didn't have to ask Hemant for every little rupee she spent. (Married 72)

Likewise, Ishita, after having been deserted by her husband, instead of sitting idle at her parents house, starts working on voluntary basis with an NGO in a school as she longs to "fly" (Custody 127). This school is "a new world" for her as here nobody is concerned about her infertility. Here she finds self-respect that was hurt by her husband and in-laws. Here she gains confidence and feels "valued for the first time by the outside world" (Custody 130). Ishita like a modern woman, after
getting divorce, crosses the threshold of the house and does something meaningful that can give value to her individual self instead of the body. Here she gets her identity and individuality among poor children.

Kapur reveals the truth that woman in an orthodox traditional family is rejected due to her barren body, but she can overpower her inability by adopting and caring for poor and orphan children. She can get autonomy over her body by showering love and care on a motherless child. When Ishita encounters the divorced Raman and his little daughter, Roohi, she pours out her love and care on Roohi, a motherless and abandoned girl. Her motherly love for his daughter arouses the feelings of love in Raman's heart for Ishita, and he marries her. By bestowing love and care on a motherless child she removes the stigma of being 'incomplete' determined by the patriarchal society. Her motherly instincts, that were suppressed till now due to her infertility, are fulfilled as she enjoys an intimate emotional bonding with Roohi. Due to her emotions and loving heart she enjoys the marital and motherly bliss in her new home. She confidently speaks before the judge in the court, "Ever since my marriage I have put her welfare above everything. I think of her as my flesh and blood. If anybody is like a step mother it is this lady. To be a mother you need a heart" (Custody 412).

Kapur seems to support the idea of radical feminist, Shulamith Firestone who advocates for artificial reproduction through test-tube babies. She very artistically explores the avenues for an infertile woman to enjoy the status of a mother. By adopting an orphan child and showering motherly love on it even a barren woman can develop a bonding with it, as Ishita does in a school. If a husband wants his bloodline to be continued, the option of surrogacy is also available. The author very successfully expresses the fact that if a woman can not become a mother through her body, she can become a good mother through her heart, and get fulfillment and completeness. So the adoption and surrogacy challenges the male domination and patriarchal
mechanisms of control over female body that reduces an infertile woman to a destitute. So Kapur has raged a war against orthodoxy through Ishita.

Kapur, through her literary works, raises a voice against the power which controls woman's reproductive process. Adrienne Rich, a radical feminist advocates and supports woman's privilege of motherhood. Susan Hekman in his article "Feminism" observes, "Rich emphasizes the positive role of mothering and identifies it as the distinctive contribution of women" (93). The radical feminists argue that woman should be the sole emporor of her body and take away man's control on her reproductive process.

Ida, the daughter of Virmati, symbolizes the changed mindset of the Indian woman who refuses to be treated like a puppet in the hands of man. She is modern in her views, and challenges male hegemony. She is married but divorces her husband, as her husband doesn't allow her to have a child. He compels her to abort which leads to the termination of their marriage. Through Ida's forced abortion, the novelist focuses on the complete dominance of man on woman's body. For the fulfillment of his own interests, he takes away the right of child-bearing from his wife. She is deprived of the pleasure of motherhood. Ida is a radical feminist who believes in maternity and motherhood. Being a modern woman she prefers to live alone. She doesn't like the patriarchal mind in her husband, and gives him divorce. She is contrary to her mother, Virmati, who inspite of the suffocation of her married life, can not spoil her marriage. That is why, Ida says in the beginning of the novel, "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother" (Difficult 1). Dr. Shaleen Kumar Singh says that Ida "revolts the traditions of her mother in a more aggressive and bold manner" (12).

Manju Kapur's heroines are action oriented who try to overcome their cultural identity. They want to participate in the social and
political activities by throwing the mental of the traditional female role that confines them to the domesticity. Astha is determined and strong-willed. The readers can trace the wings of feminism fluttering in her. As a modern woman she questions the destructive norms of patriarchy. When her mother-in-law and the husband attempt to exercise their patriarchal control on her will to go to Ayodhya with the Sampradayakta Mukti Manch, she realizes her wish and desire of being a social activist crushing ruthlessly under the pressures of cruel social system. The novelist gives a realistic description of her conflict:

That night she couldn't sleep. Her mind refused to rest, roaming restlessly among the things that made up her life, her home, children, husband, painting, the Sampradayakta Mukti Manch. Was it too much for a woman to handle, was her mother-in-law right? But why? Her children were well taken care of, she had trustworthy servants, she had someone who cooked better than she, she had left her teaching. And yet she was chained. (Married 190)

The tone reflects the rebellion inside Astha. On their protest, she doesn't drop the idea of going to Ayodhya, rather she becomes all the "more determined to go" (Married 187).

Kapur's protagonists, who are modern in action and thinking, go a step ahead from that of her contemporaries by involving themselves in extra-marital relations. Being the prototype of modernity and liberation, they do not want to suffer from non-fulfillment and incompleteness due to their husbands' indifference, arrogance and cynicism. Through their sexuality they challenge the male dominance over their bodies for the fulfillment of the desires and aspiration. The author underlines the fact that if a woman like Ishita gets disempowerment through her body, she like Shagun and Astha gets empowerment through the same body.
In the beginning of her married life Nina is left unsatisfied sexually due to her husband's impotency. But even after getting the sex therapy by her husband with the help of a surrogate she can not enjoy the bliss as when they are in bed, she is reminded of the surrogate. Moreover, her husband, after getting treatment develops intimacy with a Canadian white woman. So, making love becomes mundane and dreary for the couple. In such circumstances she has no fulfillment and suffers from sexual frustration. So when she finds opportunity, she satisfies her passions in extra-marital relations. She is pursuing graduation in a library school. She indulges herself in physical relation with one of her classmates named Anton during an educational trip to Ottawa. In her article, "Perspective of Body in Manju's Kapur's Fiction" Asha Saharan remarks aptly, "She now claims her body and sexuality and looks forward to re-invent her body as a site of self-achievement" (4). Now Dismantling the patriarchal role of a wife, she starts thinking about her rights in America. The narrator focuses on the assertion of flesh when she writes that "every citizen in North America regarded good sex as their inalienable right. It was her right too" (Immigrant 260). After making love with Anton, Nina feels herself free from the trap of the patriarchal mind. "For the first time she had a sense of her own self, entirely separate from other people, autonomous, independent" (Immigrant 260). It is Nina, a modern woman, who doesn't want to be subordinate to her husband. She thinks that none has control on her body and life. Kapur comments, "Her life was her own; she didn't owe anybody any explanations" (Immigrant 270).

Similarly, in her husband, Astha doesn't find a complete and absolute loving and giving relationship which creates a void in her married life. She feels herself "a willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day and obedient mouth" (Married 231). She realizes that her relationship with her husband is based on "power rather than love" (Married 233). Bhagabat Nayak observers, "in the deep
recesses of her mind Astha desires to be loved, respected and to
revitalize her life with a delicious secret that goes beyond the land of
Kamasutra (233). That is why, as a modern woman she crosses the
limits of sexual codes imposed by the traditional society and indulges in
a lesbian relationship. During her visit to Ayodhya she meets Pipeelika
Khan who is a strong woman of the world. Pipee initiates Astha into a
secret lesbian relationship. As Astha's need for romance is still
unfulfilled, she feels fulfilled and happy. "When she was with Hemant
she felt like a woman of straw, her inner life dead, with a man who
noticed nothing...." (Married 287). In the relationship with Pipee, she
finds "the teasing and pleasure of an intimacy that was complete and
absolute, expressed through minds as much as bodies" (Married 231). In
her new lover she enjoys the bliss of love, respect and togetherness.
Kapur comments, "She thanked God again for this love in her life, when
she had thought all chance of love was over" (Married 235). By falling
in love with each other, both feel the union not only of the bodies but
hearts also:

Slowly Pipee put her arms around her, She could feel her
hands on the narrowness of her back... feeling her back
with her palms... in no hurry to reach any conclusion. They
were enclosed in a circle of silence, the only sound, the
sound of their breaths, close together and mingled.
(Married 230-31).

With Pipeelika she finds herself complete and contended
emotionally and physically. So Kapur, in order to take out her
protagonist from the web of tortures, goes a step beyond marriage, and
presents Astha indulging in homosexuality for the gratification of her
passion and emotions. If Astha had failed to fall in a lesbian
relationship, she would never have enjoyed the joy of togetherness and
fulfillment, and died every minute in the trap of suppression and
oppression. She symbolizes the changed mindset of modern woman who wants to carve out a meaningful life for herself.

Tara similarly becomes successful in challenging the male domination by taking a revenge on her husband for his infidelity. She involves herself physically with one of her husband's friends, and gets pregnant for which she has a longing. Kapur comments:

Given the circumstances of her revenge, she needed an affair to give it a finished ending. She chose a friend of his, the most convenient male to hand.... She had long given up the possibility of conceiving, and when she found herself pregnant, she was exhilarated. ("Chocolate" 4)

Manju Kapur negotiates the rejection of the patriarchal control which imprisons a woman in the trap of silent suffering, sacrifice, humility and submissiveness, and curbs her rights, freedom, identity and individuality. To contest the patriarchy her 'new woman' is not afraid of even breaking the marital alliances. In her attempt for establishing self-identity, she refuses to be treated like an object.

The author wants her heroines not to live a passive existence but be well aware of their independence and individuality. It is Nina, who rejects the domineering world of the husband when she comes to know about his extramarital relations. Asha Saharan in her article "Perspective of Body in Manju Kapur's Fiction" asserts:

Nina discovers the infidelity of Ananda and this breach of commitment results in estrangement of companionship in marriage. She gathers her determination to re-establish herself independently by throwing away the yoke of marriage. At the moment of crisis, she overpowers the disturbances of mind and leaves all the bondages behind, triumphant in her new found visibility and power, impinges on her quest for empowering the female body.( 4)
Nina needs not only a shelter, but wants the individual self to be valued. She wants to go where she can realise her identity and individuality without being a shadow of somebody else. She like Astha wants completeness and togetherness in which search she leaves her husband and home. Kapur comments "When one was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home. Pull up your shallow roots and move. Find a new place, new friends, a new family. It had been possible once, it would be possible again" (Immigrant 330).

Similarly, Shagun breaks her marriage when she doesn't find any fulfillment in the marital relations and goes to the man in whom she sees autonomy. To present the urge for fulfillment and individuality in a modern woman, the novelist constructs a story of Shagun and Raman, a couple with two children. Raman is a victim of corporate sector who can not cater the feelings and emotions of her beautiful and gorgeous wife, Shagun. Before her marriage she wants to be a model, but her mother doesn't allow her to go for modelling, and gets her married off with Raman. Her urge for establishing self-identity is suppressed. After marriage also she can not think of her career as Kapur tells that "after marriage there had been a child. Then the claims of husband, family and friends made a career hard to justify, especially since money was not an issue" (Custody 11). The novelist exposes the reality of Indian culture where husband, children and family are preferred to career in a woman's life. Indu Swami aptly remarks, "Motherhood is also a hindrance in pursuing any career successfully and satisfactorily" (55).

Manju Kapur desires to make women free from the subjugation of male. She doesn't portray her heroines living in an environment of suppression and suffocation, so she delineates the character of Shagun in a manner in which she dares to break her marriage on getting fulfillment in extramarital relations. Shagun meets Ashok Khanna, Raman's boss, who seems to her more caring and loving. She feels that she is more deeply in love than ever in her life. Kapur gives her heroines the
freedom to assert the claims of the body. Asha Saharan in her article, 'Treatment of Infidelity and Infertility in Manju Kapur's Custody' observes:

The contemporary writers comprehend that if the women want to be empowered and emancipated they have to overthrow traditional sexuality culture and involve themselves in dispute and conflict between sex morality of supremacy (patriarchy) and female sexuality. It is not in its inhibitiveness and suppression but in privilege and assertion that the new sexual ideology is structured. (67)

Kapur shows how Shagun loses her individual identity in the web of the orthodox tradition where a woman is supposed to find happiness and fulfillment only in the service of husband and children. But the author presents her as a 'new woman' who doesn't surrender herself to the regulations of the society. She realizes her inner-self, and emerges as a self-reliant, powerful and independent character. Her act of sexual violation challenges the male control over female sexuality, and gives her satisfaction and fulfillment. The novelist depicts Shagun's inner feelings, "She sank down next to him; she knew she would have a happiness she never had before. If she were to die tomorrow, it would be as a fulfilled woman" (Custody 113).

The novelist deeply analyzes how the cherished ideals and values of an orthodox society are distorted. It is the female body through which a woman is victimized and marginalized in the name of motherhood and maternity in the patriarchal society, but on the other hand, by asserting her sexuality she can attain individuality and fulfillment through it. Through the example of Shagun's infidelity, Kapur effectively emphasizes the fact that if a woman's feelings and passions don't find outlet in her marital relations, she can not be happy. Her emotions can be suppressed but can not be killed. She wants fulfillment that can not
be purchased with money. As a modern woman she doesn't bother the boundaries of home and marriage, and crosses the threshold in the search of selfhood. Similarly, when Ishita sees no respect and love for her in the heart of her husband and in-laws, she decides to leave the house. She says, "I will agree to divorce by mutual consent…. I need to live with dignity" (*Custody* 70). Now she doesn't want to live with the people who hurt her self-respect.

Manju Kapur's novels are purely feminist texts which expose the issues of gender discrimination and the struggle of the suffering Indian woman in the domineering and exploitative set-up of the middle class Indian society. She vividly describes how the institutions of marriage and motherhood become a trap of misfortunes for woman who is expected to confine herself within the four walls of the house. Inspite of her sincere dedication and devotion to the husband and the family, she doesn't find the marital relations absorbing, congenial and harmonious as man does not give any place to equality, sharing and understanding in his relationship with the wife. She can not feel togetherness and warmth in her conjugal relations. She is always seen in relation to man, ultimately getting the annihilation of her individuality and personal identity. She is considered an embodiment of female virtues such as sacrifice, silent suffering, affection, devotion and humility. She gets recognition and respect only through her gender roles as a procreative device and perfect homemaker and her individual self is not valued. Her feelings and aspirations are cruelly crushed down by the destructive social norms, subsequently creating an inner turmoil in her. She is considered the part and parcel of the family till she fulfills the patriarchal interests. When she fails to fulfill the expectations of the male-centred society, she becomes rootless.

The writer effectively resents the disharmony in marriage caused by male chauvinism. The lack of sympathy and understanding in the man-woman relationship leads to the disintegration of their marital ties.
Kapur reveals the bitter truth of the patriarchal society where marriage means the annihilation of the individual self for woman as she cannot enjoy the bliss of marriage due to the husband's patriarchal attitude. Through the suffering of her female characters, Nina, Ishita, Shagun, Virmati, Ganga, Ida and Astha, the Author reveals how man's insensitive and unresponsive attitude, which he develops during the process of his patriarchal upbringing, becomes the real cause of woman's victimization and marginalization.

He wants to keep her happy with the worldly objects but doesn't care for her completeness and fulfillment. In the sexist society woman is discouraged to participate in the outdoor activities, as firstly, it disturbs the household and secondly, she becomes independent to some extent, consequently creating dependence syndrome in her.

Kapur's Fiction mirrors the reality of the Indian society where the cruel and destructive practices and norms make women's lives miserable. Nina suffers due to her husband's cold and dry patriarchal attitude. Ishita becomes the victim of the oppressed mechanism of the closed society where infertility is considered as a stigma for a woman. Shagun and Astha are oppressed due to man's materialistic and inconsiderate behaviour, moreover, the corporate sector where their husbands are working also affects their marital relations adversely. Virmati and Ganga's misery is due to their husband's selfishness. So in Kapur's novels man emerges as a controller of the physical, sexual, social and economic power in the patriarchal society, ultimately reducing woman to a puppet, who is supposed to play the role of an ideal wife and excellent homemaker without expecting the fulfillment of her own demands.

The basic concern of the present study is to explore the female psyche where rests an urge to create space for herself. Manju Kapur seems aware of the fact that women in the middle class Indian society have not attained true independence even in the globalized age. So she
portrays her protagonists in the manner in which they defy the patriarchal notions and plunge into efforts to articulate themselves.

Being modern women, they want sharing of feelings and equality in marriage. Kapur's heroines do not want to play subservient role as they expect equal partnership in the wedlock. To assert themselves they become strong-willed and determined. When Nina finds it difficult to share her emotions with her husband she feels suffocated. She determines to be self-reliant as she observes patriarchal check on her expenditure. Finally she rejects the domineering set-up, ultimately breaking the institution of marriage in search of autonomy and independence. Similarly, Astha involves in a lesbian relationship to get togetherness and fulfillment which she cannot find in her husband. At last her husband becomes caring as he observes the rebellion in her. So Astha successfully subverts the system of power by attacking it indirectly. Ishita, after the divorce, showers love and affection on a girl child and enjoys the motherhood. In an attempt to enjoy the bliss of marriage Shagun also seeks divorce and gets autonomy by asserting her sexuality in extra-martial relation. In Kapur's fiction female body becomes the site of oppression but the same is depicted as a means of empowerment and autonomy. Virmati, by marrying the married man against her parents will, certainly defies the patriarchal norms. But her marriage offers her such a complex web of social structure where again she is unable to carve an identity for herself. She compromises with the situation as she has realized the complexity of the male-centred society where it is very difficult for a woman to create space for herself. But her struggle for self-actualisation can not be ignored.

Thus contemporary Indian woman has started questioning the male-dominance. She challenges the patriarchal mechanisms of surveillance and control. Throwing away the mantle of the ideals of a good wife and pativrata, she steps out of the house to take part in the political and social activities and contribute in the re-invention and
development of the nation. Through self-reliance she frees herself from the dependence syndrome and values her individual self. She rebels for the fulfillment of her aspirations and dreams, subsequently emerging as a 'new woman'.

As a modern woman she aspires for the freedom to express herself. She now questions the male-domination. She attains autonomy through the same body which becomes a site for oppression and suppression for a traditional woman. The 'new woman' resists the colonization of her body through which she is tried to be reduced merely to an object. She defies the patriarchal power structures where she is recognized only in her gender role played through her body and not accepted in totality. She resents the destructive social ideals which perceive woman as body, and give no importance to her head and heart, subsequently annihilating her individuality. As the modern woman craves for individual identity and autonomy, she wants to be the sole emperor of her body. She negotiates her sexual and social role and determines to re-establish herself independently by involving in extra-martial relations or by throwing away the yoke of marriage. The modern woman challenges male hegemony by claiming her body and sexuality and re-inventing it as a site of self-actualisation.
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