The term binaural can be taken as to “to hear with two ears”. It was introduced in 1859 to intend the practice of listening to the same sound through both ears, or to two discrete sounds, one through each ear. Here it is used to explain in the theory of thesis, antithesis and synthesis of feminine sensibility in the novels of Manju Kapur and Githa Hariharan. How there are two different and opposite factors working any single issue which create problem in maintaining relationships. Issues like gender issue, caste system, migration, poverty, illiteracy, economic issues, culture, language can come under the compass of binaural issues.

In contemporary scenario people are obsessed with the superiority of western culture and traditions. They think westernization is the real symbol of modernization that’s why they follow it blindly and become limited and self-centered in their thoughts. The same thought and mentality can be presumed in the works of postcolonial writers. They have varied contradictory perceptions in the descriptions of woman in their works. In the postcolonial era the thought of freedom and liberty is carried out in the country from western education. Indian English women novelists have vividly drawn the new picture of female harassment and culture against the exploitative social customs of the male governed society. The image of woman in quest of her identity has come out from the original image of woman in history.

As in her latest novel Custody, Manju Kapur discloses the deviations and the hollowness of the life of modern human beings. She portrays the conflicting picture of the parents for the possession of their children and number of ways in which modern Indian women aspire for independence. Manju Kapur presents the new picture of woman who is against the one sided social customs of the male governed society. Kapur narrates the pain, sorrows and consolation of two women characters, Shagun and Ishita, and their various efforts to fulfill their desires in Custody. Shagun, the protagonist of the novel is strong and courageous enough to choose an epicurean lifestyle in order to create her own space in the world. She is a middle class woman, the wife of Raman, a corporate advertiser. Shagun, the mother of two children, develops an extra marital affair with Ashok Khanna, Raman’s boss. Since her teens, Shagun has a number of boys and she “was looking forward to the freedom marriage would provide.”
Kapur presents treachery and infertility as the two conflicting feature of female psyche. The novelist illustrates the pain and suffering of women as a result of freedom in thought in sensibility of women. Custody represents the uncertainty of marriage in Indian society. Shagun, the main character of the novel presents the picture of new women who plays a vital role in the society. Kapur depicts the picture of illegal relationship between Shagun and her husband’s boss Ashok Khanna. She depicts a female protagonist Shagun rejoices her sexuality. Her sexuality is a dome of happiness and outfit in which she is empowered to employ her body for herself. She defies the male subjugated and patriarchal system of observation and control. She convenes Ashok Khanna, a business man who is attracted by her beauty. Raman and Shagun wedding is set with this standard lines, “…she the beauty, he the one with brilliant prospects”. The instant pregnancy makes her the centre of all attention, and as a respectful daughter -in- law as she isgives birth to the boy baby.

Her son had inherited her looks and colour, a further source of gratification.²

However things get changed when she unwillingly gives birth to her daughter, that she was not prepared mentally and physically. Shagun is also enticed by Ashok Khanna tender words and genuine grace and leaves behind the essential constraints of marriage and flouts its sacredness through sexual lapse. But as a married woman she is worried from her love affair. As Kapur mentions in the novel,

In the beginning she had so brave and matter-of-fact, now she was more fearful.³

She encounters with negation as she neither sustains the strong stoic and self sacrificing figure of her precursors nor restrains her perilous feminine wishes. She is confused whether to surrender herself to social conventional or stand against it. Her mother who having patriarchy visions, her mother requests her daughter that not to convey disgrace to the family and be a purpose to disdain with her extra marital relationship. Her remarks show social outlook and treatment towards a female in extramarital relationships also signify that the support association for the female is equal in material world as society expels a revengeful outline on the infidel female. In this novel Custody, Kapur says that
Shagun has mislaid herself in her earlier marriage life with Raman. Now she is looking for the missing self in her love affair with Ashok. This gives her an entertaining experience and makes her to be independent, convinced, powerful, self-governing and inspired as her chasing sexuality consensus and self reliant. She replicates her individual personality with boldly and then forms appropriate rejoin perceptively. Shagun describes her modern wishes, to fulfill them she considers Ashok is the most suitable. As he states:

Traditional versus modern values, individual versus society.\(^4\)

Shagun’s husband Raman is too much engrossed in his business and does not give time to his married life. This non-caring attitude in conjugal relationship and Ashok Khanna’s interest made reasonable changes in Shagun. Now she struggles to define her role as wife, mother and lover. Her frustration can be seen clearly in her words.

…was it true he was a marketing genius? Had he managed to produce results so far? Where was his wife? How come he was not married?\(^5\)

Their frequent meetings aroused her craze and passion. For the first time Shagun started to enjoy her freedom and real love. Ashok is also very much delighted.

“…he knew he had been destined for. In her coloring, her greenish eyes and demeanour, she was a perfect blend of east and west.\(^6\)

Ashok is very much attracted towards Shagun, which is apparent in addressing her as his little wife. Shagun feels that she would do anything to pay heavily for this happy life given by Ashok. She wishes that she would find happiness which she never had it before.

She blamed Raman for her predicament, thinking of the years she had been satisfied with his love making, tender attentive, pedestrian and so much waste of time\(^7\)

**Custody** redefines the changing scenario in middle class Indian homes. Despite Kapur’s neutral attitude, the reality is conveyed through loneliness and emptiness in maintaining matrimonial relationships. Divorce was not a tradition of Indian family structure in the
past. In *Custody*, Kapur has explored the after-effects of divorce. The lives of Raman and Shagun are destroyed by the slow movement of legal system for custody of their children.

Kapur goes deeper to give an insight into the behavior of children and the ill effects on them as a result of legal contest between the mother and the father. The children find their own methods to solve the problem because they are confused and feel divided due to tension of legal battle in the court over the issue of their custody. Arjun and Roohi become instruments for their parents for accusing each other. The son is deeply affected by the change of relationship in his family. He ignores his schedule of study in school as his colleagues are aware of the situation of divorce in his family. Arjun misses the presence of his father at the time of admission in a new school, “a school where his new step-father has been a legend”. On the other hand, Roohi is not aware of her parents’ separation and considers Ishita as her real mother. Thus Shagun creates a situation which is not beneficial for any member of her family. According to Shagun, love with Ashok is an experience to fulfill all her unfulfilled desires of her youth.

Ishita is second leading heroine of this novel who is a victim of wrong choice of marriage. Through family values, she wants to attain happiness and freedom. Her parents have given her good education and they wish Ishita to get a good income from the government job. Here Manju Kapur draws the attention of the readers to the fact in modern India that women should have a career and income of their own. It’s just like Virginia Woolf’s essay, *A Room of One’s Own* states that:

> A woman must have money and a roof of her own if she is to write fiction.\(^8\)

Kapur shows the realism of modern marriages in which the characters like, Raman, Shagun and Ishita feel emptiness and detachment in their life. Ishita is a very simple looking Indian girl, believes in traditional marriage and wants to lead a peaceful life with her husband Suryakanta. Ishita is victim of Indian patriarchy notions as her in laws want grand children for their family. After the eighteen months of her marriage life, Ishita is not pregnant. She faces a very difficult and perplexing question

> Why haven’t you conceived.\(^9\)
She is criticized by her in-laws and society for being infertile. In Indian culture, infertility is considered as woman’s fault and not the dilemma of the couple. On the one side, Ishita continuously prays for a child, while on the other hand, the second pregnancy becomes a bone of contention between Shagun and Raman. Shagun considers the birth of daughter as the worst part of her life. In contrast, Ishita, in spite of her inability to give birth to a child, maintains always that everything should be shared with her husband Suryakanta. Her excitement and passion for Ashok leads Shagun to struggle between desire and duty. She feels annoyed because:

She had to be constantly vigilant, continuously invent excuses, convincingly justify absences from home, phone calls even a preoccupied expression.  

Ishita goes to hospital for diagnosis of her problem of infertility as her life is passing through doubt and desolation due to continuous torture of her in laws. A gynecologist examines her and tells her about her blockage of her fallopian tubes. She is declared as an infertile woman. She gets minimum empathy, particularly from her in laws. Her problem of infertility becomes the issue of her anxiety, social disgrace, emotional abuse and psychological stress. Ishita feels that her happy married life is going to be disturbed. Kapur quotes,

Already clouds were entering her soul and shedding heavy drops of unworthiness, and such was the weight she couldn’t even hold his hand and tell him that she loved him more than life itself.

The dear daughter-in-law of the family is treated as undeserving and infertile. In the hospital, she feels that:

Smaller than the ants on the ground, smaller than the motes of the dust in the sunlit air, smaller than the drops of dew caught between blades of grass in the morning, was Ishita sat in the gynaecologist’s office with her mother-in-law, watching as the doctor sketched out the messages concealed in her body.
Ishita’s married life with Suryakanta was going on smoothly but her barrenness interrupts their relationship. Suryakanta’s mother wants to seek divorce on the ground of infertility. Suryakanta is also ready for divorce, “Ishita sat as though a mountain of stones were pressing upon her.”(p.69) With the passing of time, Suryakanta starts neglecting Ishita. For three and a half years, Ishita has been surrounded by Suryakanta’s tender love. She knows she is twenty-six and she can look for her job, but she can not imagine her life without Suryakanta. Kapur describes the reality that in a traditional and patriarchal society woman has to face disgrace and insult due to her infertility. Suryakanta becomes ready to give her divorce while he loves Ishita too much. Her marital life with Suryakanta is strained and her infertility disrupts the loving relationship. She is considered as a failure by her in laws and society. She has to face all rejections from society because of her infertile body. Ishita feels rejection instead of love:

In bed all she saw was his back. And last night he moved into his parent’s bedroom. She felt degraded, a non-person certainly a non woman .He was determined; there should be nothing left between them.\(^{13}\)

Ishita cannot compromise with her dignity on the cost of her in laws’s ignorance. Now she wants to go away from all of them, but Ishita’s mother Mrs. Rajora insists her to live with them to save her marriage. Ishita realizes that it is disgusting to live in a place where she is not needed. Asha Saharan presents the pitiable condition of 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 does not belong to her and she has no agency. She is considered a failure by her culture, and worse, since this 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. So, this problematic, natural and essentialized assumptions of motherhood is imposed on her body.”\(^ {14}\)
Both women Shagun and Ishita are fully different personalities from each other but both face the same problem divorce. They are in search of pleasure they face the buffets of misfortunes in the shape of divorce. Shagun tells Raman which clearly shows her longing for freedom in her life,

Don’t make this harder. I have left you the best part of the marriage. Surely my freedom is not too much to ask in exchange?¹⁵

Shagun leaves Raman for her liberation, she feels suffocation. It is the clash between the people of different temperament. Ishita also agrees for divorce and feels that now she can not live with her husband and his family. After divorce, Ishita’s life becomes so pitiable, depressed and lonely so she feels failure in her life. Ishita’s parents supports their daughter to face the miserable situation of separation from her husband. She has much of negative and stressful experience of married life. Now, she tries to forget her matrimonial relationship and prepare herself to divert her mind and think about her job. Ishita involves in social services and becomes a new woman. She meets Raman and she comes to know about the reason of his divorce. They develop relationship as both of them float in the same boat. The close relationship turns into the shape of marriage. Ishita forgets her curse of infertility. She discharges her motherly duty ans shower affections on the daughter of Raman. She seeks complete man in Raman who tries his level best to extend full support to Ishita. Raman finds her new woman in Ishita and experiences a different relationship. Raman compares his both wives Shagun and Ishita. On the one hand, Shagun is materialistic in her approach while on the other Ishita cares for Indian values and culture. Shagun experiences a delighted mood when she meets Ashok in New York. She does not surrender to the society but displace her power to remove problems to get delight in her new relationship. The novelist aptly shows how infertility disturbs a woman, yet motherhood can be achieved through alternative ways. While Shagun shares her all happy moment with her mother.

Sometimes I feel so happy mama, I wonder how I am among the lucky ones. We were in Times Square when his huge glittering ball desdended. Everybody was screaming and dancing-Ashok and I danced too, he said he would never have gone to such a tamasha if it hadn’t been for me.¹⁶
In the conflict between aspiration and determination, the protagonist of the novel *Custody*, Sagun has been once so sentimental, but at last she loses her position due to her too much involvement in pursuit of materialistic pleasure. Shagun is an ambitious woman who is overridden by individualism and her personal interest instead of any social code of conduct. She is a modern woman who fulfils her individual aspirations instead of social fulfillments. “Guilt sees accusation everywhere. It was her conscience that made her so uneasy.” (1) and when “he was away, she made thousand resolutions: be wife like, be good, docile, complaint, but the mare sight of him sent these decision out of the window.” (50) Shagun has no regrets about lying to her husband for her mother. All her energy is diverted in keeping secrets. The extent of her selfishness and cruelty can be seen in her choice to leave her kids with her mother in order to go for weak end trip with the new found lover. In fact, she crosses all limits to brain wash her children against their father. Manju Kapur inculcates minute social observations in plot of her novel. She skillfully demonstrate how Shagun’s mother does her best to persuade her daughter to remain faithful to her husband and tells her “Even if you don’t care for Raman, for heaven sake preserve some appearances… what about society? What about your children?” (79)

But actually, it is a very selfish step to put the life of children in risk to fulfil their own dreams and happiness. In that condition Parents are responsible for their children’s improper development when they are minors and dependent on them. Dr. Carl Pickhardt narrates the impact of divorce on children’s psychology in his article:

Divorce introduces a massive change into the life of a boy or girl no matter what the age. Witnessing loss of love between parents, having parents break their marriage commitment, adjusting to going back and forth between two different households, and the daily absence of one parent while living with the other, all create a challenging new family circumstance in which to live. In the personal history of the boy or girl, parental divorce is a watershed event. Life that follows is significantly changed from how life was before. Somewhat different responses to this painful turn of events occur if the boy or girl is still in childhood or has entered adolescence. Basically, divorce tends to intensify the child's dependence and it tends to accelerate the
adolescent’s independence; it often elicits a more regressive response in the child and a more aggressive response in the adolescent. Consider why this variation may be so.\textsuperscript{17}

Through this novel Kapur shows how the parents manipulate their kids for the sake of their custody and divorce. The two children, Arjun and Roohi, become the pawns in the dispute of their parents. On the hearing date of custody case, Ishita, Raman, Roohi and Shagun reach Tees Hazari Court. Kapur depicts the affectionate behavior of Roohi towards her step mother who overlooks her real mother Shagun due to her negligence. Roohi tells the judge that Ishita is her mother and she wants to live with her. Ishita has already prepared Roohi for all questions which can be asked in the court. Eventually, Roohi’s custody is provided to Raman and Ishita, and Arjun’s custody is given to Shagun, till the kids become eighteen years old. Ishita is happy and confident after the decision of the court in her favour. Finally the worst feeling of Ishita of losing Roohi, is over-

Ishita’s thoughts were with her husband as they slowly negotiated the evening traffic along the stretch of Ring Road leading to South Delhi. Somewhere in the depths of the lower courts, he was mediating his past and present lives. This was something he had to do alone. Meanwhile she was carrying most precious part of the marriage with her. She stretched out a hand and clutched her daughter’s first firmly in it.\textsuperscript{18}

Kapur shows us picture of young and confused mind of a woman who follows her own path rigidly without caring for social, moral or conventional traditions. In the long part of the novel \textbf{Custody}, Kapur conveys the typical middle class mentality of Indian families in tackling such crucial issues like marriage, and divorce. The well knit plot of the novel signifies the layers of unhealthy thinking among the middle class families. The novel reflects woman’s struggle for freedom. The Indian women are always expected to follow the ideals as Sita, Draupadi and Gandhari but the pertinent issue is that these ideal women existed only in ancient epics and have their strong identities of their own. Kapur exposes the hidden qualms of marriage. Kapur brings to fore the dilemma of the spouses, the real pain and pleasure of family life and finally the happiness in the lives of those characters who could mould, and adjust. The writer exposes both the genders as the victims of
conventional traditions. She advocates that women should be given equal opportunities in social, political and economic spheres of life. This entire novel is the representation of Indian Modern woman, who chooses her own to maintain her identity and struggles for her survival. Kapur tries to show that woman should make an effort for her rights and realize her own importance as a human being.

In the present novel, Kapur analyzes those factors that are responsible for woman’s marginalization in a world dominated by man for their selfish considerations. Mostly Indian women are particularly trained by tradition and they willingly accept the parental responsibility of the family. Commonly it is seen that family establishes the dominating atmosphere and constructs the primary identity of woman which defines and prescribes the social roles that woman should play in familial terms as a daughter, a wife and a mother. Thus family becomes the major institution of woman’s oppression. Indian woman is yet to seek identity as a human being with equal status in the family in which she is born and in the family to which she is given in marriage. The realization of rootlessness and marginalization provides her energy to protest against the injustice she faces in the society. She rejects the idea of being meek and suffering, therefore, objects to the injustice being meted out to her by the society. Manju Kapur successfully portrays this journey of woman through her novels with extreme sensibility. Her protagonists pass through a phase of growth, self-discovery, alienation and a conflict of generations which lead them from innocence to knowledge. In one of her interviews Kapur states:

I am a feminist. And what is a feminist? I mean I believe in the rights of women to express themselves in the rights of women to work. I believe in equality, you know domestic equality, legal equality. I believe in all that. And the thing is that women don’t really have that- you know even educated women, working women. There is a trapping of equality but you scratch the surface and it is not really equal.19

With rich heritage and traditional values, India is one of the ancient countries. Woman in the country is identified as an ideal mother and a symbol of creativity but she is deprived of equal rights. Now the women are literate, that’s why they are conscious of their rights. But the happiness in their day today life is not decided by their new found
liberty but their mindset. Githa Hariharan in her novel *In Times of Siege* deals with the number of social problems as politics of caste-division and intolerance, and aggressiveness of fundamentalist Hindu organization. There is the demolition crisis that occurs in the life of Shivamurthy, a fifty-two year old, modest and innocent history professor at the Kasturba Gandhi University. This novel narrates the two chief life events of his life from 31st of August 2000 to 15th of October 2000. The first is that he gets a call that Meena has broken her leg in a bus accident. Sumati requests her childhood friend, Shiv, to be the local guardian of her daughter Meena in Delhi. He brings Meena in his house, but in absence of his wife Rekha, helping her becomes difficult for Shiv. Rekha is in America with her daughter Tara, who has recently joined a job in Seattle. It seems to be a campus novel with a predominantly political theme. This novel comprehends a male protagonist unlike her previous novels. When asked about the idea of choosing a male protagonist, Githa Hariharan replied:

Commenting on there being no powerful female character ‘Yes’ I have portrayed a man at the centre, Githa replies- But it is a man with a large female component in him. He transcends gender, I want to show that the complex male figure is as much a victim of society.20

Meena is a very bold, intellectual, self-possessed, political minded and sexually aware woman of twenty-four year old. She is also an activist. Though Shiv hesitates in helping her, but she knows what she has to do:

Meena, from what Shiv has seen on her for a day, certainly seems to know her own mind.21

She can manage to do her routine work:

Once they are in the bathroom, he is not sure what to do. But she has apparently thought it out. She leans the stick against the wall and groans with the effort of easing herself down to a sitting position.22

When Shiv asks Meena how she got a fracture, she replies:
If only it has been at a rally or something you know, if it had been the mistake of the police, breaking a leg would have been of some use.\textsuperscript{23}

The second and the most important incident of Shiv’s life, which disturbs his peace of mind, is the controversy and stand of Itihas Suraksha Manch against his article written about Basavan, a poet and social reformer of the twelfth century. The article was prescribed for B.A. Students with a correspondence course in Medieval Indian history. Many newspapers and news channel ask him for interviews. Shiv, trapped in a very difficult situation, assumes the person who may make his article, controversial. Shiv doubts on his colleague, Dr. Arya, an orthodox person. Hariharan exposes the orthodox thinking of some stereotype people through the character of Dr. Arya, who presents an article “Problems of the Country and their Solutions”, in a meeting in the university. He reads out his paragraph:

Our land has always been a temptation to greedy marauders, barbarous invaders and oppressive rulers. This story of invasion and resistance is three thousand years old. Lakhs of foreigners found their way to India during these thousands of years, but they all suffered a humiliating defeat. Some of them we digested. When we were disunited we failed to recognize who were our own and who were foreigners, and we were unable to digest them. Today, apart from Muslims, even Christians, Parsis and other foreigners are also recognized as minority communities. But in many of the states the Hindus have been reduced to a minority, and the Muslims, Christians or Sikhs are in a majority.\textsuperscript{24}

Dr. Arya’s speech makes Mrs. Khan, the secretary, uncomfortable as Dr. Arya, during his speech, calls Muslims as foreigners in India. Shiv is critical of Dr.Arya because of his orthodox attitude towards Muslims. Mrs. Khan goes on leave due to comments by Mr. Arya against her:

Obviously the leave was planned many days back. But now she has a week to recover from the new stature thrust on her – Muslim Mrs Khan, Foreign Mrs Khan. Mrs Khan, a woman who has travelled leagues from her
grandmothers and mother’s lives to work in an office and make a modest contribution to the family income. Now she is being pushed back to square one, to the old diminishing religious identity. She has seven days to examine her new status and, hopefully shed it. To come back the same sweet, helpful secretary they know, incorrigible only when it comes to telling n’s and u’s apart on her typewriter.\textsuperscript{25}

Professor Arya is irritated because of Shiv’s article, written on Basava, his father and the treasurer of the city Kalyana, since Shiv has emphasized in his article dominancy of Brahmins in Kalyana city and Basava’s struggle against them. In the twelfth century, Basava tried to create equality in Kalyana that banished no one – not even the lowest castes’ people. All were given equal status in that community and were called, Veershaivas or warriors of Siva. A Brahmin girl who married to a son of shoemaker to set an example of equality, became a challenge to the theocratic society and traditionalists, who couldn’t tolerate any interference in their monopoly of god and power:

King Bijjala was pressured into joining the condemnation of the marriage. He sentenced the fathers of the bride and bridegroom (and the young untouchable bridegroom) to a special death. Tied to horses, they were dragged through the streets of Kalyana, then what was left of them was beheaded.\textsuperscript{26}

Finally, Basava’s followers created a havoc in the city in protest against the punishment of king Bijjala. Even Basava continuously pleaded the inhabitants of the city for non-violence but no one heard him and the city was destroyed. Basava left the city for Kudalasangama. As a result of this episode, Bijjala was put to death and after some time, Basava too died under mysterious circumstances. Shiv’s interpretation of Basava and the Kalyana city is taken seriously by the fundamentalist organization Itihas Suraksha Manch:

Vested interests. Hinduization of the past. History as armour. History as propaganda. History as battleground. History as the seed of hatred. History in the hands of the mob conspiracy theories. Rightist conspiracies, leftist conspiracies. Foreign-handed conspiracies. A Babel of voices is trapped in
Shiv”s head, a play with a cast of thousands. These characters never stand still; they run from meeting to rally to interview. All of them have something urgent to say and they say it in as many words as possible.27

Hariharan has shown Meena as the representative of younger generation of woman of modern India. She is representative of progressive feminist movement who stands against the caste bias social system. She helps Shiv in his fight against history protection movement and supports him in difficulties. Her view of world is shaped by his study of revolutionary texts such as The Politics of Hate, Onward United Action, Women's Voices and The Communalist Agenda. Amar, one of Meena’s friend sticks posters on the wall in order to convey her message. At the top of a poster is written “Speak up! Before it’s too late.” (27) This line shows, Meena is a very confident girl and she knows how to fight for her rights. The lines on the poster clarify her point of view:

In Germany, they first came for the communists and I didn’t speak up because I was not a communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak up because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak up because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the homosexuals and I did not speak up because I was not a homosexual. Then they came for the Catholics, and I did not speak up because I was protestant. Then they came for me… but by that time there was no one left to speak up.28

Hariharan depicts a picture of new woman of modern society through Meena who is aware completely in herself. She can fight not only for herself, but also for others, if she feels they are in trouble. Shiv realizes that Meena is more confident and courageous than him. She is a research scholar of sociology in the University, and writing a thesis on stories of those women who were affected by the anti-Sikh riots after Indira Gandhi’s assassination in 1984. Shiv has a feeling of appreciation for her:

Almost a girl, except that she seems more worldly wise sometimes than he. She talks of causes and street theatre, gender” and courting arrest with the ease of a veteran. She too, he has discovered, is a frequenter of meetings;
though her meetings are played out in a world where a different language is spoken, where it is possible to feel the passions foreign to him. Though she lies in bed, her leg encased in fiber glass, she does not seem aware of her powerlessness.  

Hariharan exposes the emotional relationship developed between Shiv and Meena. He is influenced by her knowledge of political magazines like Asterix and the Normans, Obelix and Orientalism. She has already studied all the pamphlets, brought to her by her friend Amar. As the story progresses, Shiv is attracted toward Meena:

He bounces up and out, charged with energy and purpose as if she has asked him to get her the moon. He buys her Edward said and a pile of Asterix, and for good measure, Tinton as well.

The article of Shiv on Basavan arises controversy in the fundamentalists. A news reporter puts him to question about his controversial article When Shiv is on leave, and informs him about the cause of his extension in leave

Did the university ask you to go on leave or is it voluntary?

Shiv is very shocked when he comes to know about the objection raised by the fundamental group. He stands against the protest because he has written the chapter after a thorough research, based on the historical books. Dr. Sharma, the head of the history department, informs Shiv about the objection, raised by the members of Itihas Suraksha Manch and the demands:

The first is an apology for hurting their sentiments. They want separate apologies from Dr. Murty and from the department, by extension the university. Second, the lesson should be retracted and the material recalled from all students registered for the course, and from study centers and libraries. Third, the rewritten lesson should be submitted to the Manch before it is sent to our printing unit.

Shiv discusses with Meena the details of his meeting and the whole situation. Meena retorts:
The protection of history! Whoever heard of history having to be protected?33

Meena motivates shiv to fight fundamentalists. Being an activist, she knows how to deal with such people:

Meena is a step or two ahead of Shiv. ‘What are you going to say tomorrow? You will have to chalk out a plan. Obviously, you can’t apologize or take back a word of the lesson.’34

In an interview with Kala Krishnan Ramesh, Hariharan says:

It is not just Shiv of the novel, but all the decent respectable people like shiv are required to come and say that they need these basic freedoms as the mildest short of tolerance of any bigotry or chauvinism will bite like cobra in the pitcher if you put your hand in.35

Meena has number of plans in her mind to defend Shiv, and she doesn’t want Shiv to apologise in front of the Itihas Suraksha Manch. She accepts it as a bold challenge to protest against the Munch.

What’s the plan of action? How do we beat your fundoos at their game.36

Meena’s motivation step is like a balm to Shiv in the conflicting situation. Thus, when his apology is demanded, he refuses to accept it -“I will not apologize.” (69) Finally, the protest against Shiv becomes grander, and the head of the department declares that the students need to know only about the dates and achievements of great saints and kings. The head of the department charges Shiv:

One: Backward-looking. Two: Contradictory accounts of Basava’s life, conflicting narratives. Three Birth legends fabricated. Four: called a bigoted revolutionary by temple priests. Also called a dangerous man, a threat to structure, stability and religion. Five: The comfort of faith wasn’t enough for Basava. Six: There were rumours that Basava used money from the royal treasury to look after his followers. Seven: The lines of social
division in the great city of Kalyana were sharply drawn. Caste was a
dominating factor. Eight: There was tension between the Brahmanical
religious orthodoxy and the popular religious reformers and saint-poets.
Nine: Basava met and could have been influenced by the mad men from
Persia; the dancing, drinking Sufis. Ten: Bijjala, the king of Kalyana, was
pressured by4 Brahmin leaders to commit atrocities on low caste devotees,
especially untouchable devotees were shown to be superior to Brahmins. 37

Shiv is shocked after such serious charges against him from the head of his own
department. He represents his case with an emphasis on validity and authenticity of his
article

Part of the challenge of getting to know Basava’s life and times is
reconstructing it out of literary texts, legends inscriptions and other records.
The bibliography for the lesson includes all the major sources that have
been used for quite some time now by medieval historians.  38

As a result of the protest of Itihas Suraksha Manch against Shiv, his leave is
extended by the university as a punishment. He gets threatening letters. Shiv, is charged of
destroying the ‘Great Hindu Past’, and advised to go to Pakistan:

If you want to rewrite Indian history with our Hindu saints as cowards and
failures in exile why not go to Pakistan and do it? They will welcome you
and give you all attention and praise you are desperate for. 39

Meena, with her friends, becomes active to help Shiv, and motivates Shiv to call a
press conference in order to represent his point of view. Meena informs Shiv that
protection strategy is not new concept. To convince people, they should fight against it
and challenge the protection racket, in place of surrendering and apologizing . before
persons like Mr Anant Tripathi, the junior vice-president of the Itihas Suraksha Manch,
who calls people to revive Hinduism:

We have to shed the cowardice that has grown in us with Muslims, then
Europeans storming Indian shores. Though Hindus were among the bravest
of the ancient peoples, repeated outside conquests have made them cowards. Even Mahatma Gandhi said so. We want to make the Hindu strong and courageous again. A meek person cannot survive. I am not only talking about muscle power. We must return to our old militant spirit if the Hindu nation is to become great again. We must spread moral and spiritual strength in the younger generation by taking teachings of courage and valour to schools and colleges. 40

Shiv always wonders about Meena. At this age, usually girls think about love and mysteries of human heart. But Meena is a different girl, he has ever known:

Instead she sits in a meeting to rescue an aging historian from the mob. Her eyes fill with yearning, but it is not a desire Shiv has seen in a woman’s face before Meena’s fisheyes, made for poetry, yearn to look a starker terror in the face. They do not flinch at the prospect of violence, of violation. They wait, with a youthful certainty Shiv finds unbearable, to meet halfway some brutal, premeditated injury, the very opposite of love. 41

At university, there are number of professors like Dr.Arya and Dr.Kishan Lal, who always humiliating for no fault of his own. Professors like Dr.Amita and Dr.Menon help him in his crucial time when he is opposed by a number of colleague in the university. In a meeting, Dr.Arya attacks and humiliates him in the meetng of the university body.he is escorted by his friend Dr. Manon who pulls Dr. Arya in well. Another researcher of Dr. Shiva is Amita who helps Shiv in excicuting Plane. Some of the followers of Dr. Shiv do not permit him to go to his department. Arya and his companion have made sure to make Shiv a full-time fugitive and as a result of it he feels alienate in his own home.

His room has been pushed into no-man’s land. Like other disputed structures, it has a lock on the door. All it takes, it appears is a simple little lock to keep history safe. A shower of glass, a flying chair, papery confetti, his books, stripped naked. A sullied place, no longer anyone’s refuge. 42

There is an atmosphere of gloom and despair due to anti social activities in the university. And a direct confrontation between Shiv and Arya. From Shiv’s side, Amar, a
committed young activist, distributes leaflets written- “Is the past up for grabs?” (132) On the other side, Arya hired students to stick posters against Dr. Shiv in a reply- “Down with foreign craze! Long live Patriotism!” (132) Amar and Meena plan a rally, followed by a small public meeting outside the university gate. Meena also includes the students of Kamla Nehru University in the rally, and she also participates in the rally with her broken leg.

There are many other organizations which come forward to join the rally. He sees the number of posters with slogan.

There is a sea of placards before him and the names of the organizations are often longer than the slogans on the placards. Secular Women Against Patriarchy (SWAP); Forum Against Hindu Terrorism (FAHT); People’s Association of Secular Scientists (PASS). The guiding principle seems to be the more the merrier, or the more diverse, the broader front. Their slogans remind Shiv of the appeals to all possible gods that truck drivers paste on their lorries, not taking any chances; betting on all horses at one go. He sees placards saying everything from STOP TALIBANIZATION OF INDIA! TO HISTORY DESTROYED! TO WHO’S AFRAID OF THE MANCH? 43

In fact, the novelist foreground the fundamentalist aggressiveness of unsocial forces. In times of siege reveals the impartial voice of a liberal academician professor Shiv who comes under siege of the fundamentalist Hindu organizations. Obviously, the novelist touches upon the crucial problem of our times, the politics intolerance, aggressiveness and caste division of fundamentalist Hindu forces. In Times OF Siege deals with the life of common man who is thrown into political trouble and force into taking a defensive position.

Shiv’s wife Rekha is very much worried of his safety when she comes to know about the protest. She requests him to finish the matter and leave struggling against them. She thinks about the harms that can bring to Shiv and her family:
‘It’s not as if I don’t see the principle of the thing. But to be idealistic at such a time, and with such people!’ Her voice shook again, then fell almost to a shamed whisper. ‘Don’t forget, you’re dealing with hoodlums who have pulled down mosques and churches that have stood for so many years. They’ve engineered riots, for god’s sake, what’s a little violence to them? And they’re so powerful. What can we do- Shiv, don’t you understand? I’m afraid.\textsuperscript{44}

In spite of enjoying family life Shiv always feels a sort of incompleteness, and lacks of self-confidence. His wife dominates and takes all family decisions and his daughter Tara also has no sharing with his father:

Tara seems to have entirely escaped Shiv’s jumbling, yearning uncertainties, his whole hole-in-the-soul sense of being incomplete. Tara overcome doubt very early in her life. Shiv remembers the time when she was seven or eight, a plump, neat little girl. She sought him out in his study and told him, with all the confidence of a conformist bent on survival, ‘My teacher and my friends say there’s a god. The whole world says it; only you say there isn’t a god. I’ll believe the whole world, not you.\textsuperscript{45}

After attending a Congress workers’ meeting on 7th June 1962, Shiv’s father disappeared when he was returning from Indore to Coimbatore by train. Shiva always keeps thinking of his father’s safety, and accident that might have happened in his life. He always tries to share his feelings with his wife, Rekha who pays no attention to it. This attitude of his wife towards him always hurts Shiv:

Rekha has never understood the pleasures, or the uses of speculation. The first few times he spoke to her of his father, of what may have happened to him so that he disappeared. Rekha listened to him with sympathy. She lost patience when she saw that his father’s ghost refused to be exercised; when she saw that he refused to leave, or, more accurately, that Shiv refused to let him go. ‘What’s the use of beating it to death when you can’t possibly know
for sure?’ she asked him sharply when she heard him go over that last day, again and again painfully piecing together fact and supposition.  

Meena listens to Shiv attentively and also understands him very well like a caring friend. She infuses him confidence and attention, which encourages him to carry on his mission. After his father’s sudden disappearance, Shiv depresses and grows up in fear from his very childhood. Meena’s presence in his home for almost two months fills his emptiness of the heart. Hariharan beautifully emphasized upon man woman relationship between Shiv and Meena. Meena plays the role of a good friend and help Shiv In Times of Siege

Sometimes he catches her staring at him as if her eyes can tell her what he is worth. Once or twice he meets her look steadily. Their eyes hold each other in a no-man’s land of possibilities. Two pairs of eyes locked together, two walls leaning against each other, neither willing to give way and crumble.

Shiv feels alienated and lonely in the world as his father disappeared at a very early stage of life. It also reflects Shiv’s individual upbringing in unfavorable circumstances.

I was thinking of my father. Shiv takes a deep swallow of his whisky. ‘He was a freedom fighter, but for him the freedom movement didn’t end in 1947. In fact, the burdens of the new world—the travails of a free India sat heavy on his shoulders.

The stormy and fearful aspect of Shiv’s life coincides when professor Shiv is in the company of Meena in his garden. The turbulence in life has made him powerful:

Together they watch the storm, Meena, Shiv and Babyface. Meena leans against Shiv, her upturned face filled with frank, sensuous enjoyment of the sound and fury about them. Storm or Shivs memory of them, will never be the same again. This is what it must be like to perform a funeral rite for a father.
Hariharan exposes the real face of modern media that is always in search of breaking news. The controversy gradually ends with the occurrence of important events happen. Hariharan’s succeeds in narrating the siege like situation through her novel. Meena recovers in two months. She leaves Shiv’s home to return to her previous life again:

Let me do it alone, she hisses, though he can see from her set face that she needs help. His days as Meena’s guardian are numbered. Soon she will walk again, walk on. Walk away.” (197) Meena has been protective towards Shiv as a guardian, “She steps back, places a gentle hand on his cheek in a brief, almost maternal caress. Don’t come with me ‘she whispers.’ I can manage.  

Githa Hariharan is a personality of a very creative mind through which she has set to cause a silent revolution or change in the attitude of modern Indian woman. Since she writes in English, her readership may have been limited to the upper and upper middle class educated women, but her involvement in different groups, her conscious attempt to question the gender bias proves that she is a woman of substance, a socially committed writer and a true citizen with awareness of her rights:

As both author and citizen, I can say that despite fears like my character Shiv, I would not be able to live with myself if I didn’t speak up about prejudice and injustice. I think the best way to begin doing this is the tried and tested method – to be part of concerned groups. Later, you develop the toughness to disagree with them if you must. 


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