Chapter I

Introduction

When women are empowered, a society with stability is assured

- A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (142)

Indian Writing in English is an offspring of the British Literature. But with the passage of time, it has come of its own. Indian Writing in English has got influence with the British Literature. It is no longer derivative or imitative. The Indian writer in English has a close look at the society and its surroundings and attempts to mirror the contemporary situation in all its nakedness. An unfamiliar language has become a vibrant vehicle of communication in the hands of distinguished writers in English.

Indian English Literature initiated as a needed consequence of the introduction of English education in India under colonial rule. It was formed to conduct trade with India and other countries in the east. Originally the British people tried to learn Indian languages to communicate with Indians. Thomas Babington Macaulay recommended English Language in India. He thought the members of this class would spread their knowledge through English. Macaulay intended to create English atmosphere in India to control over the mind of Indians through English. Indians who had the knowledge of English were fit for the employment.

In nineteenth century, both reformists and orthodox activists supported female education in India. They believe that the social evils could be abolished through education. The system of English education founded on English literature continued. Indian English Fiction occupies its proper place in the field of literature. The novel, as a literary artefact is new to India despite the fact that epics, lyrics, plays, fables and stories have had their proven centuries during a period the centuries that have gone by. Within a century, novel deep rooted its power and supremacy around India. The
novel as a forcible form of expression has acquired to-day the magnificent position in Indian Writing in English.

In the beginning, Indian English novel remained male-dominated and tradition oriented glorifying stereotyped virtues of Indian woman like patience, devotion, and abject acceptance of whatever is thrust on her. Conventionally, the work of Indian women writers has been underestimated due to patriarchal suppositions about the superior value of male experience. The scenario changed with the arrival of the novels in English. But during the post-independence period, Indian writing in English has had a rich harvest of novels from the hands of a cluster of women writers who had the resolve to explode the myth of man’s unquestionable authority and the myth of woman as a paragon of all virtues and to articulate the voice of women submerged in silence. Several talented women novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Kamala Das explores women’s plight in India. Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Pawer Jubwala, Shashi Despande, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukarji, Arundhadi Roy, Shobha De, Gita Mehta, Githa Hariharan etc. have made a significant contribution and have definitely enriched it to a great extent.

These writers have distinguished themselves with their employment of innovative style, portraying the oppression suffered by woman with the consequent suppression of their feelings and depiction of their yearning for emancipation with growing awareness. These writers illumine the inner world of woman who in her search for identity undergoes a transformation from a silent sufferer to a violent rebel overcoming the hurdles and hindrance placed by the male-dominating world rebel verses her growth on freedom. The rebellious attitude of woman resorts to the extreme forms raised on sexual, premarital, extramarital relation which served as a devil in her to assure her secrecy, being discussed.
Fiction by Indian women writers constitutes a major regiment in the contemporary Indian Writing in English. In the long line of Indian English novelists, especially as listed above, Manju Kapur occupies a place of added importance in the context of contemporary Indian Fiction writing in English. Owing to their effective literary works, women writers have been strong. Their works have described the existence of women in different periods like pre-independence during independence and post-independence. The existence of women in every era differs from one another. In the early Vedic ages, women enjoyed equal rights with men, and during the post- Vedic period it slowly changed and in the mediaeval period they lost their power and again in the modern period women regained the position again what they had lost. They were regarded equal in every respect religious or social scenario. This is expressed in Book Five Hymn Sixty One and Verse Eight of Rig-Veda. In Brahmanic literature as well a wife has been called as an equal associate, to her husband.

Vashishta Sutra observes that a woman is a hundred-times superior to a man in instructing and enriching a child. Women were treated in high esteem and good respect during the Vedic period and were respected even in ages following the Vedic period surmised. It is referred to in the Dharma Shastras that woman is the status of presiding divine being (deities) in the houses. Manu adds that the possible danger or problem will be created and a family will surely perish if women are ill -treated. The family never prospers unless women enjoy happiness.

For instance, Sita in the Ramayana evokes veneration and worship in every Hindu’s mind as Goddess. She is the typical epitome and is stated as a symbol of the highest quality of all womanly features. She is praised for her chastity, patience and love. Her innermost confidence overcomes Ravana’s lust. Rama never considers his
personal happiness and he is also ready to sacrifice his life with wife. Both sacrifice
for each other which are concerned with the pattern of chastity, modesty and nobility.
In ancient India, a wife was acknowledged as Sahadharmini or arthangini. She was
considered to a part of her husband, depicting the sense of equality. Some of the sages
from Rig Vedic text are Lopamudra, Mamta, Upala, Surya, Indrans Shachi, Sarparajni
and Vishvavara. Vishvavara not only illustrated verses in praise of Agni, but even
discharged the function of a Ritvika and later ages this kind of sacrifices disturbed by
envious pessimists and egoistic priests. Women in Vedic period engaged themselves
in fine arts too.

Very efficient speakers showed their eloquent speech in Vedic period. Among
them, Gargi was reputable scholar. Women’s talents were admired by the educated
scholars. Another prominent woman in *Upanishads* was Maitreyi the wife of
Yajnavalkya. In the epic-time the spiritual welfare of women was not neglected. In
*Ramayana*, Kaushalya is mentioned to be 'Mantravit' or one who is well versed in
study of the Vedas. About Tara, the wife of Bali also, the same qualifying word is
repeated, denoting the fact that women were generally initiated in the teaching of the
Vedic lore. Sulabha, another lady of spiritual eminence in an answer to Raja Janaka,
related the story of her life and tells that she had spent all her time in acquiring the
knowledge of the sacred scriptures and for the same end she had resolved not to
marry. It is a sufficient proof for the existence of a high social order in which women
had equal rights with men for pursuing advanced theological studies and even
accomplishing big intellectual facts.

In the mediaeval ages there is no girl student in the universities. The seats of
learning like Taxila and Nalanda thousands of male disciples on their roles do not
appear to have had arrangements for the female education the same reasons also
explain the death of women scholars in the later ages. The lady Rishis is the
Upanishada times seem to have gone into complete extinction, only because women
were being denied their appropriate religious status and their spiritual elevation was
absolutely not being attended to. Even though women had meagre rights in the
religious affairs, they were deprived from political rights.

The part of women was very limited in the administration of the country. Women were not regarded worthy of being entrusted with confidential affairs of the
state. They were treated as incapable of shouldering the burden of difficult task like
taxing duties of administration. Women are considered as emotionally weak beings by
nature and that they are inefficient as rulers, governors and even counsellors.

Inside the four walls women engaged themselves in cores like spinning and
weaving without heavy physical exertion they manufactured clothes. Another
occupation of women was agriculture. Women assisted their husbands, who generally
went to fields and performed hard duties themselves leaving the tending of cows,
oxen and other cattle to the weaker sex. This co-operation of women with men was
very much appreciated on grounds of economy as well as of conjugal happiness
which it engendered. In the later ages, women being shut up in houses were denied
the privilege of assisting their husbands in the professions and occupations which they
pursued. They seldom participated in corporate activities of men. They were treated
as tender, delicate and so they were unfit to accompany men in battle field.

After the subsequent centuries, women’s position gradually changed. In
eighteenth century Indian women’s position was changed due to the foreign invaders.
Women were considered as the property in the hands of men. They were not allowed
to take any decisions. British invaders introduced new culture and so the freedom of
women affected. To protect them from the lustful eye of men, they started wearing
purdah. The invaders seduced. They were stamped as immoral or characterless women and were exiled from the family.

Not only purdah system created problem for women, but also child marriage, Sati, and education prohibition girl. Women were forced to die in the funeral pyre of her husband. It is hard for a woman to live after her husband’s death as a widow without any moral support. It was believed that, if a woman followed sati custom they will go straight to heaven. She was given godly respect after her death. Jauhar was a second problem like Sati. In Rajput society, instead of dying at the hands of enemies women themselves arranged a big pyre to die. Child marriage was a third problem for women. Women were not allowed to study but they were trained in housekeeping at the age of eight. Child marriage increased the birth rate without knowing personal hygiene and awareness.

The fourth problem was restriction on widow remarriage. Widows were treated as a bad omen and they had to tonsure. The fifth problem was Devadasis who were the dancers in the temple but molested by the powerful kings. They were converted as Rajadasis who quench the kings’ pleasure. Women are strictly left uneducated. Despite these restrictions, Razia Sultana, a bold woman ruled fifteen years continuously. Nurjahan, Jahangir’s wife had immense power and ruled Mohal Empire. Mirabai was a saint-poet in Bhakti Movement personality. Not only in the period of Mughal’s, during the period of independence, women possessed a vital role. Also the various socio-religious reform movements, such as the Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj, gave encouragement to this awakening.

The first modern organization of women was started in 1917 by the great pioneering woman, Mrs Margaret Cousins, in Madras under the inspiration and leadership of that magnetic personality. Mrs Anne Besant and her Home Rule
Movement which was then a dynamic stream giving expression to the people’s restless urge for freedom. Mrs Besant was interned by the British Indian Government as a result of this agitation and that gave added inspiration to women.

During the First World War, Annie Besant dominated Indian political scene and was elected as the president of the Indian National Congress. She was the first women to occupy this coveted position. The emergence of Annie Besant, Smt. Sarojini Naidu and Bi Amman, mother of Ali brothers marked the beginning of a new chapter in the Indian history in which women started participating in agitation against the government by taking out procession in protest against its repressive policies.

Sarojini Naidu presided over the Indian National Congress. She earned a good name. She led a great role in Salt Satyagraha. She has spent her days in jail with Gandhiji. Sarojini Naidu was the first Indian women to make politics her full-time occupation. She was born in a scholarly family, daughter of a scientist, served in the refinements of Hyderabad culture. She was drawn into the vortex of politics. Gopal Krishna Gokhale was her political Guru. As a member of the Home Rule League, Sarojini led a reputation of women in England, members of which were Annie Besant, Mrs. Herabiah Ardeshir Tata and Miss Mithan Ardeshir Tate, Sarojini Naidu and Annie Besant were an exception while the women still not active enough in Indian politics during the first two decades of this century.

Avantikabai Gokhale took part in the Chaperon Satyagraha launched by Mahatma Gandhi. During freedom struggle, she had to go to jail several times. In 1917 Annie Besant was selected President of the Indian National Congress at Calcutta session. All India Women’s Association was formed. The deputation led by Sarojini Naidu called on the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford and Montague at Madras on 18 December, to demand voting right for women.
During Non-cooperation Movement, women started participating in the national movements on a large scale. They took part in the Satyagraha Campaigns, took out processions and defying the ban on public meeting and organized demonstrations in front of liquor-shops and those shops, where imported cloth was sold, Mahatma Gandhi wrote an open letter to the Indian women on 11 August 1921, thanking them for their contribution in the freedom movement. Basanti Devi, wife of Chittaranjan Das, his sister Urmila Devi and his niece were arrested in Calcutta for selling Khadi. Mahatma declared that women in India should have as much share in winning swaraj as men.

Kasturba was a devoted wife of Mahatma Gandhi. Kasturba shared fully the eventful life of her husband through joy and sufferings and proved herself the very embodiment of all that in fine and pure in Indian womanhood and Mrs. Kamala Nehru is another of our earnest national workers who had joined the struggle as the young bride of Pandit Nehru and had borne bravely every time he has been taken to the prison. To resume the events of National Movement, eminent women like Mrs Sarala Devi Chaudhrai of Tagore’s family. Mrs Anne Besant, Mrs Sarojini Naidu Mrs Kamala Nehru, Chattopadhyaya, Mrs Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Uma Nehru were some of the leaders, who were in the forefront of freedom struggle and led the younger women to fruitful activities.

The vigorous talent among the galaxy of leading patriotic women was Mrs Sarojini Naidu who was primarily a poetess, but being versatile she became a predominant political leader and a Prime figure in the women’s movement. She joined the Congress and worked ceaselessly for the freedom of the country. She went to prison a number of times and worked for various important committees set up for the cause of freedom. The experiences of politics are clearly focused in the Indian fiction.
So M.K Bhatnagar says:

The fiction is the expression of the most intimate social awareness of the society in which it is born and evolves. It can well be perceived as society ruminating aloud and bringing into focus its very sinews. (8)

The Indian English novels first established awareness of lower rank which is response to disagree the colonial literature. Ultimately the Indian English writers started using the techniques of varied language, magic realism enhanced with innate themes. The Indian English language was uprooted into India after establishing the British East India Company. The English language fulfilled the communication gap between the British rulers and the natives. In 1792, Charles Grant, one of the directors of East India Company appealed for the adaptation of the English language. In the early days, the stories and concepts were immersed in folktales and mythologies as India is well-known land of tales.

In the mid nineteenth century, the social reform programmes were commenced by Raja Ram Mohan Raj with affluent information through English language in British publications. His reform movement awakened the people and abolished the self-immolation of widows throughout British India in 1819. The Viceroy Lord William Bentik banned Sati in 1829. As he was well-versed in Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic languages, he felt that all renaissance awareness was mainly piled up in the European languages. Though the Indians reacted with distrust towards the English language, then they greeted the English language and granted a distinct place in India.

The nineteenth century scholars and campaigners started questioning the orthodox preconceptions, doctrines and fallacies that prevailed in India. The impact of Western learning provided a new stimulus to Indian renaissance, Indian orthodox learning and the study of European arts and sciences gave rise to an extraordinary
emergent in India. The intellectuals began to emerge from primitive society to powerful nationalism during which the Indian struggled to articulate their fervent thoughts and feelings through whatever means were accessible to them. A new genre Anglo-Indian literature which was studied and used for the revival of regional patriotism by the writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Swami Vivekananda, Dinabandhu Mitra and Saratchandra Chatterjee.

The most difficult task in India at that time was to educate women, because only a few women belonging to the families of zamindars were able to receive basic education. Many social reformers considered that it was necessary to start many educational institutions for women. In 1850s Ishwarchand Vidyasagar started many primary schools in the villages of Bengal. Swami Dayanand Saraswathi founded Arya Samaj broadcasted women’s education. The first women’s college was established by John Drinkwater Bethune in Calcutta in 1849. In 1851 Jotiba Phule came forward to educate the scheduled caste girls in Poona. These efforts provided the much needed motivation to Indian woman for their growth. Many Indian women writers performed on the sight.

Some of the noticeable women writers are Toru Dutt, Comelia Sorabji, Shevantibai Nikambe, Krupabai Santhianathan and Smt. Swarnkumari Ghosal. Homen Borgchain , Narayan Sanyal , Bimal Mitra, N. Mitra , Prem Chand, Yashpal, Nagar, Ashoka, also wrote about this under-privileged class, critically reflecting the dominant cold-hearted practices and outrages in their work. Though the English prose writing in India was started by Raja Rammohan Roy, the novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Lal Behari Dey are recognized as the first true examples of fictional writing in English.
The books like *The Rig Veda and the Upanishads*, *The Thirty Two Stories of the Throne*, Somadeva’s *Kathasaritsagara*, and Arthasatra were translated into English. The first English novel in India is written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Raj Mohan’s Wife* (1864). Additional followed Lal Bahari Dey’s *Govind Samant* (1876), Raj Lakshmi Devi’s *The Hindu Wife* (1876), Toru Dutt’s *Bianca* (1878), and many others. Later, the concept of Indian English novel became relatively the concept of Indian Writing in English. After entering of R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao, the journey of Indian English Novel began.

In Indian Writing in English novels, the Indian names rarely come up in the list of feminist writers. The concept of feminist writing was started by men in India. It is later caught on by women writers. As a result the first Indian feminist writers were actually men. Feminism is a set of movements which is intended to express, launch, and preserve equal political, economic, and communal. Many Indian women novelists have discovered female partiality in order to establish an identity that is not enacted by a patriarchal society.

The term “Feminism” originated from the French word “feminisme” which was coined by the Utopian socialist, Charles Fourier, and was first used in English in the 1890s, in association with the movement for equal political and legal rights for women. Modern feminist historians differentiate the first-wave that refers to the feminist movement of the nineteenth through early twentieth century which dealt mainly with the suffrage movement. The first-wave feminism really focused on equal legal rights of contract and property and resistance to chattel marriage and possession of married women by husbands.

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft protests against the stereotyping of women in familial roles, considering women as individuals in their
own right, she also protests at the failure to educate girls and women to use their mental power. The term was coined retrospectively after the second-wave feminism and it came to be used to describe a newer feminist movement that focused as much on fighting social and cultural inequalities as political inequalities. The second-wave feminism dealt with the dissimilarity of laws, as well as cultural inequalities. The feminist activists saw political inequalities as intricately connected and encouraged women to realize aspects of their personal lives as deeply as reflecting sexist power structures.

The third-wave of feminism is seen as both a continuation of and a response to the alleged failures of the second-wave. In *Literary Polyrhythems*, Robert utters, thus:

Like most of the second-wave feminists, Manju Kapur thinks that woman’s oppression has cultural rather than biological roots, and women’s cultural production like the novel in reference is central to ‘consciousness raising’ and thus to social change. What she aims at in her fiction is to centre the straight, male, cultural authority. (101)

Third-wave feminism seeks to challenge or avoid what it deems the second wave’s essentialist classification of femininity, which overstates the experiences of upper middle-class white women. The third wave feminism contains internal debates between different feminists who believe that there are no inherent differences between the sexes and contends that gender roles are due to social conditioning. The thesis has been commenced because of the need for a close scrutiny of Manju Kapur’s novels as products of Liberal feminism, Radical feminism, Individualist feminism, Socialist and Marxist feminism, Lesbian Feminism, Postcolonial feminism and Psychoanalytic Feminism.
The researcher examines how these feministic theories have been used in the novels of Manju Kapur. Liberal feminism asserts the equality of men and women through political and legal reform. It focuses on women’s ability to maintain their equality through their own actions and choices. Liberal feminists discuss the issues of reproduction and abortion rights, sexual harassment, childcare, reasonable health care, and make known the frequency of sexual and familial violence against women.

Radical feminism considers the male-controlled capitalist hierarchy as the important feature of women’s oppression. Radical feminists feel that there is a male-based authority and it is responsible for oppression and inequality. Gender is not determined by sex but by the principle of equality of opportunity and freedom. Individual feminists attempt to change legal systems to get rid of class privileges and gender privileges and to make sure that individuals have equal rights, including an equal claim under the law to their own persons and property. Individualist feminism encourages women to speak for their own lives. It also opposes any government interference into the choices adults make with their own bodies because, it contends, such intervention creates a coercive hierarchy.

Socialist feminists believe that the major cause of female oppression is owing to the capitalist economic system. Therefore the inferior position of women is connected to class-based capitalistic system and patriarchal structure within this system. Marxists feel women must have equal participation in production process in the economic sphere.

Postcolonial feminists argue that racial, class, and ethnic oppression relating to the colonial experience have marginalized women in postcolonial societies. They challenge the statement that gender oppression is the primary power of patriarchy. Postcolonial feminists object to the portrayal of women of non-Western societies as
passive and voiceless victims as opposed to the portrayal of Western women as modern, educated and empowered. Lesbian Feminism is a compartment of feminism. Lesbian feminists consider same sex relationship genuine and use their identity as a basis for community building and cooperative action. Lesbian feminism challenges the perception of heterosexuality and male domination as normal and present alternative ways of thinking about gender and power.

Psychoanalytic Feminism is a theory of oppression which asserts that men have a natural psychological need to subjugate women. Therefore the psyche’s structure and its relation are connected to the body. The root of men’s compulsion to dominate women and women’s tedious struggle to end suppression lies deep within the human psyche. It is closely associated with gender, sex, and familial relations. Sangeeta Mehta quotes, thus:

Like Anita Desai, Manju Kapur’s main foothold is the exploration of the deep recesses of human psyche, going beyond the skin into the constant struggles raging in the soul of human beings at the conscience level and describing the atmosphere of the mind. She is the painter of moods and wills of desires and dreams of conflicting choices and inner experiences.

(12-13)

The Feminist Movement began in the mid-nineteenth century. There is a vast difference between Western and Indian feminism.

The emerging feminist activities were influenced by Western principles. The issue is related to equal rights, education, and dowry system and restricted economic condition. Feminist writers argue the issues of women are not only confined to Indian women but a wide-ranging area of male-controlled subjugation. Chaman Nahal says:
I define feminism as a mode of existence in which women are free of the dependence syndrome. There is a dependence syndrome; the husband or the father or the community or whether it is religious group or ethnic group, when women free themselves of the dependence syndrome and lead a normal life, my idea of feminism materializes. (30)

Women were treated as the weaker gender, they have been denied of justice in the following spheres like socio-cultural, political, economic and education. Women’s liberation Movement motivated people to remove inequalities with the support of feminist ideals propagated by Simon de Beauvoir as studied in her *The Second Sex*.

The expedition of Indian English novels originated with the three giants Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. They produced momentous pieces of Indian English fiction. Mulk Raj Anand has been the most prolific of the threesome. His contribution to Indian English fiction of social realism is re-controversially great. His *Untouchable* portrays the story of the low caste boy and his *Coolie* depicts the penniless protagonist. Mulk Raj Anand novels portray the wretched condition of Indian rural society. He says that poverty, class, caste system and other widespread evils of society are like venom that inflicts society and makes it disgusting and cold-hearted. His *The Old Woman and the Cow* stressed the emancipation of women. R.K. Narayan’s is another famous novelist. His female characters are meant to be rivalled and they desired for a vocation and their need for physical fulfilment. He remained indifferent from contemporary socio-political issues and sight seen the South Indian middle class environment in his fiction. He created an imaginary town and it is depicted in the most of his works.

Though Raja Rao is not so famous like the formers, he also has a special place in Indian English novels. His *Kanthapura* portrayed a whole India which depicts the
atmosphere of Gandhism. It presents the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence and eradication of untouchability. In *The Serpent and the Rope*, Rao indicates the Indian and Non-Indian characters. The theme of east-west encounter depicted in this novel and it is considered a land mark in Indian-English fiction. His *The Cat and the Shakespeare* is treated as a Metaphysical comedy and a philosophical novel. Raja Rao dominated the entire literary scene and their contribution led to the growth of novel as a social photography. While Raja Rao's novels specially *The Serpent and the Rope* and *The Cat and Shakespeare* depicts the ideal womanhood as enshrined in our scriptures, Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan have dealt with the predicament of women.

In Indian English Literature, the last two decades have been extra ordinarily eventful, specifically, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* involved the Indian intellectuals with his understanding of Indian history and the language which was praised by *The New York Review of Books* as "One of the most important novels to come out of the English - speaking world in this generation". (M.K.Naik, 11) The older generation of women writers had produced significant works in the nineteen - eighties. Women also have written novels of Magic Realism, social realism and regional fiction Anitha Desai's and Nayantara Sahgal's best works appeared in this period.

Kamala Markandaya is an eminent Indo-Anglian novelist. Her first novel *Nectar in a Sieve* (1955) is a miserable life style of peasant couple of South Indian village. Her later novels *A Handful of Rice* and *Two Virgins* (1973) show how modernism brought in by the Western impact stirs the protagonists to revolt against their traditional milieu and looking for their fulfilment by shaping their carriers freely. In *The Coffer Dams*, Markandaya pacts with the theme of East-West encounter from a
different viewpoint by presenting the conflict between technological power and the forces of nature represented by a tempestuous South Indian River. In Markandaya’s *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), even the miner character Ranji, the young army officer proud of independent India. In all her novel, Markandaya has treated the theme of cultural confrontation more widely than any other famous Indian English Novelist. She has published *Pleasure City* (1982) after 1980 which results a new direction in her works. The cultural conflict here is not usual East verses West, it is tradition and modernity.

Many Indian novelists have discovered female partisanship in order to establish an identity that is not forced by a patriarchal society. Thus, that is, the theme of developing up from youthful to adulthood which is a periodic strategy. Santha Rama Rau’s *Remember the House*, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s *To Whom She Will*, and her later *Heat and Dust* (1975) which was awarded the Booker Prize and Kamala Markandaya’s *Two Virgins* are good examples. Sex is implied in these novels, but Shobha De depicted more in *Socialite Evenings*, in which she describes the unusual sex lives of the high society in Mumbai.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala has produced novels, short stories and the many film scripts in the last two decades. Ruth Prawer Jhabvalla’s *To Whom She Will*, *The Nature of Passion* and *Get Ready for Better* extensively deal with urban middle class life and its problems. Her *In Search of Love and Beauty* (1983) focuses on a group of German and Austrian migrants in New York and she explores the background of the western characters and examines the roots of their fascination with India. In all her novels she detects intensely the strangeness of human activities and presents it with gentle mockery and good-humoured parody. In her *Three Continent* (1987) the narrator is Harriet, a young American about to inherit a fortune. She goes to London,
where she meets an Indian holy man and later marries his son Crishi. Asia is distinct among the three continents. Harriet is totally subservient to Crishi though she knows that he has married her for her money: her degradation is complete when she allows the murder of her twin Michael to be happened as suicide. She forges Michael’s signature so that Crishi can acquire his wealth.

*Poet and Dancer* (1993) is Jhabvala’s first novel to be set entirely in New York. It is the story of Angelica Manarr, intelligent and hardworking, but good looking and her fatal infatuation for her mentally disturbed cousin Lara, who has driven her mother to suicide. The mother is not a stable character. Another Indian connection comes in the form of Mrs. Arora, Angel’s mother, Helena's business partner in an expert-import business. Mrs. Arora’s obsession for her elder son, a trivial criminal who kills to get money for his fast cars and girls, parallels Helena’s love for her daughter Angel.

*Shards of Memory* (1995), is set in America, England and Europe. It centres on a movement led by mysterious Master who has great own charisma. The only loveable character in this complex story of greed and love, crossing four generations, is Baby, born of a Jewish American mother and a Parsi father. Elsa, her mother, is drawn to the master, and has an established lesbian connection with Cynthia, another rich devotee: her father who calls himself Kavi (Poet) is quite happy to stay on in New York with his parent-in-law and baby daughter. One never knows whether the master is a complete impostor: there are conflicting stories about his origins, only the poor Russian refugee Mme Richter in New York knows that he was originally a carpet-seller who took refuge in the Richter’s stately home in St. Petersburg. There is no lessening in Jhabvala’s wit and verbal pleasure, but the last two novels are not as well organized as her earlier novels like *Heat and Dust*. 
Anita Desai is one of the literary celebrities of contemporary Indian fiction writing in English who have tried to reveal the catastrophe of human soul trapped in the situations of life. She shows her attention in the interior backdrop of the mind than in social realities. Desai has published six of her eleven novels in the last two decades. Anita Desai beautifully presents the complex web of childhood love and guilt in her novel *Clear Light of Day* (1980). The only novel of Desai is with an unequivocally happy ending.

The *Village by the Sea: An Indian Family Story* (1982) won the 1982 Guardian award for children’s fiction. Not only for the children but also for adults can read this novel. It is a story based entirely on fact, dealing with the construction of the Thul-Vaishet fertilizer complex in a village on India’s west coast near Bombay. No other novel of Anita Desai’s presents external reality with such clarity. She moves the story from a woman-central to a male-central narrative in *In Custody* (1984) Mirpore’s character becomes alive in Anita Desai’s description. All of Anita Desai’s earlier novels had Indians as central characters. This novel is a serious study of a lone human being at the mercy of impersonal forces too large for him to comprehend. Yet the picture is not completely sombre, it is lit by flashes of humanity. The theme of novels of Desai is alienation, absurd and fruitless.

Anita Desai’s ninth novel *Baumgartner’s Bombay* (1988), has a German Jew as the protagonist. In her other novels Indians are as central characters. *Baumgartner’s Bombay* is a thoughtful study of a line human being at the mercy of detached forces too large for him to understand. The depiction is not completely serious but it is lit by sparkles of kindness. Desai’s next novel is *Journey of Ithaca* (1995) has a magnetic old woman as a Guru. The novel looks at India through a stranger’s eyes and sees...
only exaggerated horror. Desai’s *Fasting, Feasting* (1999), takes up a stock theme of post-colonial fiction: the encounter with the west.

The depiction of the discrimination against daughters loses much of its force because the parents are shown as absolute monsters. Desai’s language is hyperbolic and the expressions sound forced. Arun Joshi, like Anita Desai, has noted modern man’s ordeals and agonies in his novels with ability. His emphasis is on the individual psyche of the protagonist in all his novels. His style of self-examination strengthened by sarcasm opens a new dimension in the art Indian English fiction. Joshi recognises a reality beyond the mere sensational world. His works show the psychological understanding of the internal conflict of human beings.


Women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self-denying women toward disputed female characters searching for uniqueness, no longer characterized and defined just in terms of their victim position. In contrast to earlier novels, female characters from the 1980s onwards assert themselves and defy marriage and motherhood. Recent novelists depict both the multiplicity within each woman, rather than limiting the lives of women to one model.
Many Indian women novelists made their entrance in the 1990s producing novels which revealed the exact state of Indian society and its dealing of women. They mostly write about the life of urban middle class people, the level of society they recognise well. There are a few other women novelists who use public events as a backdrop. Sikh history especially the political ferment of the nineteen-twenties in Punjab is an important aspect of Yatra by Nina Sibal. Another novel Yatra in which political events are important is Una Vasudev's Shreya of Sonagarh, Vasudev's first novel The Song of Anasuya involved a lot of attention for its frank dealing of sex.

Few women novelists have written about the partition of 1947. It is mentioned in Nina Sibal's Yatra, Shams Singh Baldwin's What the Body Remembers (1999) and Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters (1998). Meera Arora Nayak’s second novel About Daddy, presents the concept in an exact way. She expresses her concept in a vibrant image of Hindu-Muslim relationship in modern India.

Shashi Deshpande has written eight novels, six collections of short stories and four children's books. Her writing is clearly part of Indian literature and emerges from her rootedness in middleclass Indian society. In her novels Despande deals with the identity crisis of the modern women in her works. She reveals her characters who blame their own complacency for their apologetic condition. The novelist with the most nonstop accomplishment is Shashi Despande. Her writing is clearly a part of Indian literature and arises from her rootedness in middle class Indian society.

In Shashi Deshpande's first novel The Dark Holds No Terrors (1980) is a Hindu traditional play. The protagonist Sarita is portrayed as the innocent victim by the end of the novel. Despande’s second novel If I Die Today (1982) is about the hospital, disease, patience and placid life of doctors. In her Come Up and Be Dead (1983) is a problematical plot deals with many secretive deaths. Same year Despande wrote the
novel, *Roots and Shadows* (1983) the protagonist has protested against her authoritarian and traditional joint family.

Her fifth novel *That Long Silence* (1988) marks her as a major novelist. Deshpande shows up the hollowness of much of modern Indian life - the convenient, arranged marriage. She shows how the silence imposed on women in partly of their own making, though society and tradition have a hand. Deshpande’s *The Binding Vine* (1993) is a story of a young girl who fights for life in hospital. *A Matter of Time* (1996), attempts to depict the complex web of human relationships in an extended family over three generation. Despande’s latest novel, *Small Remedies* (2000) is the most successful novel and generally it employs a kind of stream-of-consciousness technique. Almost all her novels deal with a crisis in the heroine's life. Her work is woman-oriented and the simply portrays the women in modern India.

In modern India, most of the novels point out the discrimination against women, their silence without opposing it and the lack of communication between two genders. These themes are treated in depth in Anjana Appachana's first novel *Listening Now* (1998). It is entirely based on Indian life and discrimination against the female child. She gives realistic effect of the lives of middle class women in an Indian city and their painful negotiation between personal ambitions and societal expectations. The novelist presents a clear picture of the exploitation the daughter-in-law who suffers in a traditional Indian family with a carping mother-in-law. Anjana Appachana’s first book, *Incantations and Other Stories* (1991) was renowned by sarcasm.

Mirnal Pande’s first English novel is *Daughter’s Daughter* (1993) which focuses on gender bias. Mirnal Pande”s English elegance reminds one of R. K. Narayan’s: it is well-spoken and frank and never calls attention to itself. As a study of Indian childhood, *Daughter’s Daughter* deserves to stand beside R. K. Narayan’s
Swami and Friends. Her second work, My Own Witness (2000) is based on her own experiences in television and journalism. The novel exposes the way women journalists are expected to deal only with “women’s issues”, leaving thoughtful questions to their male colleagues.

Rama Mehta’s Inside the Haveli look towards issues of traditional Indian culture predominantly the argument on female education. Likewise, in Githa Hariharan’s The Thousand Faces of Night of the western educated female protagonist’s quest for her cultural roots is revealed. In The Thousand Faces of Night (1992) she presents three women belonging to different generations with nothing to relieve the drabness of their lives. Her second novel The Ghosts of Vasu Master (1994) which is more important and fascinated in her successful novels is entirely different from her women-centred first novel or her short stories The Art of Dying (1993). Her third novel When Dreams Travel is a kind of feminist retelling of the Arabian Nights but it is not an interesting one, social “sati” a widow is exposed to in modern India.

Zai Whitaker’s Snakeman is a biography of her husband, the naturalist Romulus Whitaker. Her first novel Up the Gate (1992) was shortlist for the Commonwealth Writers Prize in the Best First Book category of the Eurasian region in 1993. Zai Whitaker sees the comic side of the frustrations of the Indian woman and it takes awareness of public events which impose on the life of the protagonist, such as the exile of Tamils. But the focus is always on the isolated, not public, sphere. The first novel of Whitaker’s sister Shama Futehally is Tara Lane (1993). The protagonist Tahera has a sheltered, upper-class childhood but after her marriage she faces the world of insensitive money-making and compromise.
Nina Sibal's first novel, *Yatra* is reminiscent of Rushdie's work in its use of Magic Realism. The protagonist Krishna Chahal endowed with a magical skin that changes colour in response to India. She is born very fair skinned, but grows darker with great confusion. Suniti Namjoshi novels are based on imaginary and surrealism. She worked an officer in the Indian Administrative Service and she went to Canada in 1972 where she taught English in the University of Toronto. She has written seven volumes of poetry. Namjoshi’s works proves her talent. As she is a feminist, her feminism concepts are communicated through allegory and fables. *The Conversations of Cow* (1985) is the first novel of Joshi in which the protagonist Suniti (like the novelist) who is a lecturer of Indian origin. In this novel her Guru seems in the form of a cow and the tale slips into the realm of fantasy with the cow and Sunita moving around Canada.

Maya Diip’s *St. Suniti and The Dragon* (1994) is a fable about love and Sainthood. Her novel consists of Mockery, fictional and imagery. Her latest novel *Building Babel* (1997) is about the culture under the guidance of Crone Kronos (Time) and the characters are taken from fairy tales and myth, such as Snow White, Kronos and Queen Alice. Like Maya Diip, Anuradha Marwah Roy is also expressed the ultramodern society in Indian English fiction. Marwah Roy gifts a picture of an Indian dystopia in the twenty first century in *Idol Love* (1999). The Hindu religious rules have been used to the novels’ rational end.

Another novel which effectively pays Magic Realism is *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni which was set in the United States and employed Magic Realism. Her second novel *Sister of My Heart* (1999) is in the realistic mode, describing the complicated relationships in a family in Bengal. The wealthy Anju and the beautiful Sudha are distant cousins, but very close to each other.
because they were born on the same day and they brought up together. The Chatterjee family prosperities are subsided, as there are only widows at home - the girls mothers and their aunt. Slowly the dark secrets of the past are implied. The Indian discrimination against women stands exposed the girls consider themselves inferior beings because they are female.

Campus novel is not a preferred method with Indian novelists. Many novels include some chapters dealing with campus life, though it is not the main theme. Prema Nandhakumar is well known as a literary critic and translator. Her *Atom and the Serpent* (1982) is about an Indian university. As in Ranga Rao’s *The Drunk Tantra*, promotion depends on contacts, not merit. Rita Joshi’s *The Awakening: A Novella in Rhyme* (1992) is written in rhymed couplets, inspired by Vikram Seth’s *The Golden Gate*. Kavery Bhatt presents a vivid picture of the life of a young medical college student in *The Truth (Almost) about Bharat* (1991). Rani Dharker’s *The Virgin Syndrome* covers the pleasant irony on college life and the seminar circuit.

Meena Alexander’s first novel *Nampally House* (1991) was set in Hyderabad. Her second novel, *Manhattan Music* (1997) deals with the lives and problems of Indian immigrants living in America. The two protagonists are women: Sandhya, a Syrian Christian, and Draupadi, a Hindu. She uses a complex narrative technique: Sandhya’s doings are stated by the sagacious narrator, while Draupati speaks for herself. Alexander uses a variety of epigraphs for chapters: sources from Kafka to Kalidas (the Sanskrit poet) and Akkamahadevi (a medieval Kannada mystic woman poet). Anuradha Marwah-Roy’s first novel is *The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta* (1993). The protagonist Geetika, the narrator, moves to Jana University in Lutyenabad for higher education where the satirical sketches of research exposed.
Regional fiction becomes very popular with women writers. Specifically Arundhati Roy, Anita Nair, Susan Viswanathan. *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy received even more publicity than Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*. Most of the characters are entirely imaginary, with no factual correspondence to real life characters. *The God of Small Things* describes atrocities against the powerless, children, women and untouchables. It is a tale of surprise and fear with theme of death and decline which has put it in the universal limelight.

Anita Nair’s first novel, *The Better Man*, is a welcome change from unimaginative East-West encounter theme. The novel is written by a woman neither about an Indian woman nor same sex relationship. It is a tale set in a village in Kerala. Kavery Nambisan’s first novel, *The Truth (Almost) about Bharat* (1991) was published under the name Kavery Bhatt. The book is distinguished by its comedy. Her second novel is *The Scent of Pepper* (1996). She belongs to Coorg, a hilly district of Mysore. The distinctive culture and religion of the people of Coorg is presented in this novel vividly. In *Mango-Coloured Fish* (1998) the value system of contemporary India is revealed: Krishna and his wife are considered fools to work in rural India.

Dina Mehta's only novel *And Some Take a Lover* (1992) gives us insight into Parsi mores and westernized circle. The novel is a sensitive study of a young woman's growing up, in the politically conscious of Bombay in the early 1940's. Manorama Mathai’s first novel is *Lilies that Fester* (1989) which is a collection of feminist fervour. Her second novel *Mulligatawny Soup* (1993) is the story of an Anglo-Indian. Sohaila Abdulali’s *The Madwoman of Jogare* (1998) is not about the family and its relationship but ecology. The protagonist, Ifrat is something different. She is privileged to lead a free life. She moves wherever she likes. The mistreatment of the tribals and the rapid deforestation by the materialistic property makers are shown in
this novel. Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters* (1998) has a cultured plot. The third generation girl Ida understands her mother and grandmother’s life style. Ida recollects the memories of her mother and grandmother in her journey. The protagonist avoids her arranged marriage and loved the married professor. Even after legally married him, she could not reliable with him. Mahindra’s *The Club* (1984) is about the upper class society in early sixties. Her second novel *The End Play* (1994) with a young woman is a narrator, is more enthralling like Mahesh Dattani’s drama. It exposes modern India and revealing the power struggle in and Indian joint family. Gita Mehta’s *Raj* (1989) paints a reminiscent picture of life in an Indian royal family but too much of unchanged history finds its way into this autobiography of a young girl whose marriage is arranged with a prince. The novel deals with the coming of Indian independence as well as the emancipation of the protagonist. Her second novel *A River Sutra* (1993), presents a kaleidoscopic view of Indian life, with an emphasis on the exotic aspects. Her narrative technique is very popular in Indian storytelling, that of a frame story containing many tales.

Nirmala Aranind’s narrative style makes the readers to recap R. K. Narayan in *A Video, a Fridge and a Bride* (1995). Her technique is direct, lucid and embarrassed which presents the middle class life in Kerala. Neelam Sharma Gour’s first novel *Speaking of ’62* (1995) narrates the unrealities of children whose viewpoint was changed by the Indo-Chinese war of 1962. Deepa Shah’s first novel *The Solitude of Surabhi* (1997) presents a young and vulnerable character of a Surabhi, inhabiting a small Himalayan hill station. She was misused by all including her own father after her mother’s death. Deepa Shah’s language is so beautiful and it shows powerful for its merciless pessimism.

Bulbul Sharma has written three volumes of short stories. Her first novel *Banana Flower Dreams* (1999) concentrates on the victimization of women of seven generations. In it the unborn foetus’ narrative voice is a stimulating twist. Esther David’s *The Walled City* (1997) is about three generation of women in a Jewish family in the walled city of Ahmedabad. The usual pressures and anxieties of a young girl’s growing up in the India are shunning the culture around them. Very few fictions have been written about Indian Jews like Rushdie’s *The Moor’s Last Sigh*. Nirmala Moorthy’s *Maya* (1997) deals with life in an extreme orthodox South Indian Brahmin household. The novel has traditional concepts of marriage and the place of women spoils the lives of the first two daughters but the protagonist is magnificently break away. Her second novel, *The Coiled Serpent* (2000) explores the psyche of the protagonist in greater depth. The coiled serpent refers to the anoque armlet she loves to wear, a symbol of the kundalini shakthi, psyche power.

Lakshmi Kannan has published poetry and literary criticism in English and writes novels and short stories in Tamil under the pen name Kaaveri. She is a bilingual writer who has translated some of them in English. *Going Home* (1999) is
her first novel (created on her Tamil novel Aathukku Poganam, first published in 1986). The novel is the tradition which rejects women to climb their inherited property. Lakshmi Kannan exposes the several tricks employed by society to retain woman in her habitation. The book positively grips a reflection to life in present India. Bharathi Mukherjee represents in her novels the contemporary woman's struggle to define herself and attain an autonomous selfhood especially in cross - culture crisis, a subject which has assumed a great significance in the present world of globalization.

Bharathi Mukherjee's first novel, The Tiger's Daughter (1972) and second novel is Wife (1975). Her third novel Jasmine (1989) is about illegal immigrant. It may express Mukherjee's concept of the archetypal American Pioneer, but it fails to convince as a picture of a young country Indian girls. Mukherjee’s fifth novel, Leave it to Me, is completely American. The Indian touch is prologue, which retells the mythological story of Mahishasuramartini, the Devi who killed the Buffalo Demon.

Shona Ramaya’s first novel, Flute (1989) is set in the days of the Raj. India is an exotic, mysterious place, which upsets the psyche of her hero, Julian, sixth Earl of Ravinspur. Julian plays the Indian bamboo flute so well that villagers identify him with God Krishna who could enchant all with this flute. Reports of India go wrong in small details, and we never know whether Julian has mystic insight or is simply suffering from some kind of mental abnormality.

Sunetra Guptas first novel Memories of Rain (1992) won Sahitya Akademi Award in 1996. The novel has some memorable scene of Calcutta. The protagonist, a young girl, is suddenly loved by an Englishman visiting Calcutta. After marriage she realised her mistake. Her second novel The Glassblower’s Breath (1993) is set in the cities of London, New York and Calcutta. The narrative technique is original. She never uses direct speech for dialogues in any of her novels. The protagonist is a young
Indian woman in search of ideal love and companionship. Her third novel *Moonlight Marzipan* (1995) has large portion written in the present tense, in addition many passages using the second person. It is difficult to follow the cord of narrative. The protagonist, Promothesh makes an important scientific discovery in Calcutta. Her fourth novel is *A Sin of Colour* (1999). The hero, Debendranath Roy, falls in love with the very talented wife of his elder brother. Then he marries Jennifer but simply he disappears from a punt in Cambridge. He surfaces twenty years later in Calcutta because he loses his eyesight. His wife comes to look after him. She appears to be showed on the unselfish Indian woman. This book has the same peculiar tempered style as her previous novels.

Atima Srivastava’s first novel *Transmission* (1992) is about young people who have adopted a new land. The theme continued in *Looking for Maya* (1999) where it is investigated in terms of a young, brilliant student falling in love with an older man, an Indian professor. And, Meera Syal is also a playwright as Atima Srivastava. Her screenplays *Bhaji on the Beach* and *My Sister Wife* were positively received. Her first novel *Anita and Me* (1996) is narrated by a child in an Indian family in Britain. Syal’s second work *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (1999) reveals the plight of British-Asian men and women, caught between the traditions of their families and the social customs around them.

Kiran Desai’s style and sensibility have little in common with her mother Anita Desai’s. Her *Hullabaloo in the Guava Garden* (1998) is artificial treatment of a common theme of Indian fiction, the holy man and the trustfulness of the public. The theme has been handled in a more deep way by two novels published forty years ago: Bhabani Bhattacharya’s *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954) and R. K. Narayan’s *The Guide* (1958). Shauna Singh Baldwin’s *What the Body Remembers* (1999) was adjudged the
best book in the Canada and Caribbean region of the Commonwealth Writers Prize. Shreelata Rao-Seshadri has written fast paced detective story set entirely in the USA: *Matrimonials are Deadly* (1995). Her heroine investigates crime in the intervals of her postgraduate literature courses at a Mid-west University there is little crime fiction by women: the only other book is *The Turning* by Amin Wandrewala (1996). Indian English children’s literature contained mainly the restating of mythological stories from the epics.

The English version of Mahabharata, Ramayana, Puranas, Punchatantra and the Jatakamala are primarily used by the children. But now there is variety of books for children. Many well-known women novelists and poets have written children’s books. Neelima Sinha’s *The Chandipur Jewels* (1981), and *The Yellow Butterfly* (1986); Geeta Dharmarajan’s *Super Brat and Other Stories* (1989) and *Tegu and Stolen Crackers* (1990); and Deepa Agarwal’s *Adventure in the Hills* (1996) and *Traveller’s Ghost* (1997). Some women writers have written only one novel in the last decade but the themes are inspiring.

and the language of the story is notable.

In Indian Writing in English, the writings of women writers are focused on the issues of women. They portray women with emphasis. The main perception of their works is about women and their empowerment in Indian society. Among the famous English writers Manju Kapur also a famous literary persona. Kapur was born on January 1, 1948 in Amritsar. She is married to Nidhi Dalmia. They have three daughters and three grandchildren and live in New Delhi. Unexpectedly she becomes a novelist at the age of forty one. Her famous works are Difficult Daughters (1998), A Married Woman (2002), Home (2006), The Immigrant (2008) and Custody (2011).

In 1999 she received Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Difficult Daughters, the best first book award in Europe and South Asia. In 2002, she received Encore Award for her A Married Woman. In 2006, her third novel Home was shortlisted for the Hutch-Crossword prize. In 2011, she received DSC Prize for South Asian Literature and Indian Golden Quill Award for her book, The Immigrant. Her most recent novel, Custody (2011) has been bought as a media presented by Balaji Telefilms. In Women, Culture and Development, Roop Rekha Varma says: ‘The three qualities as essential for an entity to be categorized as a person autonomy, self-respect and sense of achievement and fulfilment’ (440) It is true that the expectation of human life is self - respect and to upsurge their confident level to achieve their goal and finally fulfil their desires.

The society anticipates more from women than men. The psyche of women makes them feel inferior and thus biased all through their lives. Betty Friedan justifies this concept in the words as follow:

It is easy to see the concrete details that trap the suburban housewife, the continuous demand on her time. But the chains that bind her in a trap are
chains in her own mind and spirit. They are chains made up of mistaken ideas and misinterpreted facts, of incomplete truths and unreal choices. They are not easily seen and not easily shaken off. (Feminine Mystique 31)

Women Empowerment is a path to develop self-confidence in social, cultural, educational, economic, political and legal scenarios. But it is well known that women, particularly in India is still backward and they are not aware of their rights that the Constitution has endowed them with. Mary Wollstonecraft observes:

It is time to affect a revolution in female manners, time to restore to them their lost dignity, and make them, as a part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the world. (A Vindication of the Rights of Woman 158)

As a novelist, Kapur’s strong ability lies in her truthful presentation of the life of women as illiterate or literate. Her writings are women-centered. She positively makes clear picture to discover the inner mind of these modern women the intersection between tradition and modernity. Their problem is that the inability to reject these traditional ethics and agree these newly ideals. Her novels reflect dilemmas and fights of her women characters finally empower themselves from the struggles.

In Difficult Daughters women of three cohorts (Kasturi, Virmati and Ida) and their life style exposed. The first generation character Kasturi is ignorant and submissive. Virmati the next generation is trapped between ancient restrictions and modernity but the third generation character Ida is self-reliant and independent. She does not follow the practices without practicality she takes her own decision. Harish’s proficiency in English language attracts her, whether or not to marry a person who is
already married and a father of two children. Though she knows it is a social offence without any legal rights she is ready to marry him. She becomes the cause of injustice to the same gender (Ganga).

Kapur’s women characters belong to different generations like ancient, medieval and modern. For instance in Difficult Daughters, the first wife Ganga (first generation) does not choose if her husband dislikes. The second wife Virmati (second generation) is unable to take decision but Ida (third generation) character who depicts the modern world, where herself confidence allows her to neglect practices which hurt her self-respect. Though the writers are creative, she does not create anything extraordinarily and hyperbolically. She presents them as they are, in day today life at present. Their women protagonists are revolutionary and ground-breaking. She has expressed her mother’s experience in her first novel.

Kapur’s mother resembled as the character of Virmati in Difficult Daughters. Finally they start their life with full confident without fear of others and not depending on society. Finally they feel secure and independent. Doctor Geeta says the behaviour of Ashta in a review:

There’s no doubt that many woman who have sought to be independent through their work will recognize this situation very clearly. Certainly, the despair that Kapur described is also real. What is depressing is the way in which her heroin wallows in it. It’s not even that she is obsessed with herself or that she’s an object of such positivity that she actually enjoys being trampled over..... Kapur might even be trying to suggest that the failure of the Individual is a reflection of a greater betrayal.(9) The characters in Kapur’s novels are aware of their problems and oppose the oppression against them.
In *Home*, the biased treatment is pictured from the beginning of Nisha’s childhood. She is not allowed to play like her brother and in her life she cannot decide to marry a person she feels suitable for her and names her having immoral affairs. The family and the society accept whatever a man does but it condemns the same while this done by woman. A family supports a man in getting married to a bride who is wealthy as they think they become economical supported by the bride. In this novel the protagonist is left uncared by her parents. So, she decides to empower herself by overcoming her emotional stress.

Myth is an important literary device in Kapur novels. Savitri, the mythical character is compared with Sona in *Home*. Kapur compares the sufferings of Sona for her family with the sufferings of Savitri for her husband’s revival. In *A Married Woman*, from Rishikesh Astha’s mother writes letters to her daughter advising her with suitable examples of Bhagavatgita also shows mythical touch. She exposes the societal sensitive issues like child abuse, child marriage, love failure, dowry system, childlessness, abortion, pre-marital affair and extra-marital affair (polygamy), widowhood, divorce, lesbianism in her novels.

In all her novels, Kapur focuses on the difficulties faced by women from their childhood to their old age. Kapur interprets the problems of women from the child abuse of Nisha (in *Home*) to old age sufferings of Mrs Trivedi (in *A Married Woman*). In *Home*, Kapur exposes the problem of child abuse. She exposes society’s unresponsive treatment to abuse a child by looking them down as culprits. The victim suffers but the culprits escape being punished. The fear of scandal, avoids the family to make things a big issue. Kapur exposes women being biased by their own gender. The child’s mother hides the abuse to avoid scandal and dishonour that would bring dishonour to her family. In her first novel, *Difficult Daughters* the society blames only
the immorality of Virmati but never blames a man for his deeds.

Kapur focuses on the subject of child marriage also in her novels. Without knowing or understanding the value of marriage and its divinity, the protagonists of all the novels (Kasturi, Ganga, Trivedi, Sona, Shagun) get married. Another delicate issue in her novel is dowry death. In *Home*, Sunitha, protagonist’s sister-in-law is subjected to harassment by her husband. His demand for dowry induces suicidal attempts harasses herself to death. In *Difficult Daughters*, Ganga is sent to her bridegroom’s house to learn household duties. Though joint family teaches a woman to be loving, caring, it also exploits her individuality and compels her to live and adjust likes and dislikes for other members in the family. Indira Bhatt quotes in Marriage-The Summum Bonum of Women’s Life;

> Manju Kapur does not effectively perceive the realities of the protagonist’s existence from the inside, her dependence, her own created captivity. Once married she dissolves like a salt doll. Whatever identity she has in her father’s family, she loses it and is unable to make space for herself on her own. She remains on the fringe, marginalized, so called companion as a boasted by the husband. (*Indian Women Novelists in English* 130)

Kapur pictures the frustration of her protagonists when they are disappointed in life. Without fear Virmati hurts herself by aborting her foetus. She is firm in her decision that the birth of her child should not be treated as an immoral one, as she carrying without getting married. Virmati aborts her first baby. Though it is her forbidding act, without anybody’s help she aborts her child. In her interview Kapur talks about her characters, thus:
I obviously write about the things I know well – I wouldn’t be able to write about them otherwise. But my novels are imaginative reconstructions. I feel uncomfortable writing about recognisable situations. The one exception was my first novel where I used some of the details from my mother’s life, but this was with her permission. (*An Interview.* Random House. 29 March 2011)

Ritu quotes the mentality of Kapur’s characters:

Kapur understands the importance of adjustments and compromises in a family. Her heroines are found to be negotiating here and there to carve a niche for themselves in the society, deviating from the accepted normative principles ideology, with vigour and zest only to bounce back to the same fold with almost a whimper. (*605-611*)

Kapur’s protagonists have awareness about sexuality. Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* is aware of the practical problems in her love affair with the professor and its subsequent difficulties. Though it is illegal, she decides to live with him. In *A Married Woman*, Astha could understand the change in Rogan’s attitude when he encounters a good opportunity for his higher education abroad.

In *Home*, Suresh tries to seduce Nisha before marriage. But Nisha understands the difference between a sexual affair before and after marriage and avoids being seduced. The protagonists like Nina in *The Immigrant*, neglects the age-old customs. She proves her rights by having sex with Anton. Protagonists of Kapur search their identification and originality after a long journey. The migration of Nina is a journey. S.P. Swain says in *Self Identity in English Fiction*: ‘Her journey is a journey from self-alienation to self-identification, from negation to assertion, from diffidence to confidence’. (*Swain: 39*) In *Custody*, Kapur portrays her protagonist Shagun as a bold
lady and she has no guilty feeling of her extra-marital affair with her husband’s boss and her only motive is to empower herself in business. Kavitha utters, “Manju Kapur novels offer a fascinating glimpse into the working of woman’s mind as she struggle to come to terms with her identity in a patriarchal world”. (Kavitha 179)

Kapur expresses her view on pre-marital affair of women and its struggles in her novels. Women of Kapur have pre-marital relationships. Virmati, Astha, Nisha were infatuated towards men before their marriage. After their failure in love, they realize their mistakes. In *Difficult Daughters*, women of three generation have different opinions about love and marriage. Kasturi had no idea about love in her adolescence; Virmati has a dilemma in choosing her lover in spite of her familial objections. It is a struggle between the heart and mind but Ida is away from those thoughts and proceeds with her affair. On the other hand, according to Ganga, marriage is a social commitment which does not happen on the grounds of love. Kapur depicts lesbianism in *A Married Woman*. Satendra Kumar states:

> A Married Woman, is a well- balance depiction of a country’s inner development-its strengths and its failures- and the anguish of a woman’s unrest, which is as complicated as the social and political upheaval going on around her’ (88)

Kapur reveals the political interest of women in her first two novels. She brings forth lively picture of the partition of 1947 India in front of the readers in her first novel *Difficult Daughters*. Kapur uses political backdrop parallel picturing. One is for her hatred towards the massacre, violence, and death on one side of her novel the same situations in her family.

In *A Married Woman*, Astha debates over Babri Masjid- Ram Janambhoomi along with her friend Pipeelika. Astha dislikes people who fought in the name of god.
Though Pipeelika is a Hindu Brahmin woman, she marriages Aijaz Akhtar Khan after a love affair with him who is a Muslim by birth. Astha participates in a painting competition and specifies her aversion of thought through her paintings on Ramjinana bhoomi controversy. Nilam H. Gajjar says in his journal:

Manju Kapur’s fictions are apprehensive, not only with social and psychological dilemmas affecting middle class Indian women but also about the obscurity of their status and their changing approaches to and their capabilities in tackling those circumstances. (5)

Women in Kapur’s novels are of revolutionary nature. Kapur does not hide her characters’ originality. Though Astha and Pipeelika are of different backgrounds, they are portrayed as true activists who come forward together to resolve the contradictory ideas between the two communal groups.

Ashok Kumar asserts in Novels of Manju Kapur: A Feministic Study:

Asth a likes to have a break from dependence on others and proceeds on the path of full human status that poses threat to Hemant and his male superiority. Although she finds herself trapped between the pressures of the modern developing society and shackles of ancient biases she sets out on her quest for a more meaningful life in her lesbian relationship (134)

In all the novels of Kapur, female protagonists employ themselves in a work to overcome their loneliness, emotions and exploitation with the help of their education and employment. For women’s empowerment, they have to prove their talents. The patriarchal society suppresses their innovativeness. In a Journal Arpita Ghosh opines:

This is also bears testimony to the fact that patriarchy not only controls and curbs female progress but also exploits them in innumerable ways. As a child, they stunt her intellectual growth by denying proper
education; and as a woman they exploit her body and try to trap her jeopardising her flight. They even ensure that no female camaraderie is allowed to flourish thus uprooting every mode leading to female freedom, aspiration and assertion. (125-130)

The protagonists’ inner conflicts, personal problems, their strength and limitations have been revealed by the novelist. Their submissiveness transforms into full-fledged empowerment.

Through her novels, Kapur brings the victims from bondages of age-old rules and projects them as modern women. Women in her novels not only question their identity and inequality, but also move themselves towards justice and empowerment. All the mother characters worry about their daughters’ marriage. Kapur pictures her stories with the motherly concern. But, the protagonists fight to continue their higher education. Virmati attempts suicide to continue her studies, Astha works amidst her familial problems, Nina continues her studies after marriage. The other women characters Shakuntala and Swarnalata in Difficult Daughters motivate Virmati to progress both in her education and work. Kasturi, Virmati’s mother is the first generation woman. She is portrayed as an educated woman in the Arya Samaj family.

Women in Kapur’s novels are economically well settled. All the protagonists engage them in job or business. The protagonists get progress with the support of an individual, a family, and or a community. Women’s economic empowerment is only possible when they are educated. Economic independence of the protagonists enables them to take decision actively and equal participation in all activities with opposite gender. Kapur exposes the problems of widowhood in her novels through the characters like Sita and Pipeelika. Sita engages herself in getting religious identity and Pipeelika seeks to obtain her desire to do Ph.D. abroad.
Kapur expresses the ground-breaking thoughts of women in her novels. The protagonists of Kapur are against the socio-cultural milieu of Indian society. In her novels, the struggle of protagonists is in contrast to man-made concepts. Another important issue pointed out by the novelist is lesbianism. Homosexuality is against the socio-cultural norms of the Indian society. Kapur has an experience as an immigrant while she stays abroad. Kapur says in her interview to Elly magazine: “In my work, I aim to show rather than tell”. (Interview with Manju Kapur, Elly Magazine, August 9, 2008)

It is true that Kapur shows the real picture of the family and not merely telling a story. The orthodox rules never allow women characters to live freely like men. First and last novels of Kapur represent the problems of divorce. In Difficult Daughters, Ida seeks divorce from her husband for not allowing her enjoys maternal bliss. Jaya Benerji says the empowerment of women in the novels of Kapur in her review:

The world wars encouraged women to step out of their homes and work in ammunition factories while their men fought and died at the war front. Hordes of men and women participated of India, that bloody event. Once the wars were over and their services not required, women were expected to return to hearth and home and light candles in the windows to illuminate the paths of their menfolk. But that didn’t happen. Once out of the bottle, they refused to go back in again, to experience life vicariously, through glass walls. Should we then be thankful for wars? (6-7)

In Custody, Shagun seeks divorce from her husband due to her extra-marital affair and Sandra Khanda seeks divorce from Ishita as she is unable to bear children. In olden days women had not received full-fledged education with employment. So, they were controlled by men in all ways. But now women empowered in education and
employed. So they no need to depend upon their husbands or family members. Kapur considers that seeking divorce cannot be a wrong decision as it is better to be a divorced rather than living a painful married life.

Kapur belongs to the tradition of those Indian women writers who are keen to explore the contradictory ideas in the mind of young girls caught in the opposing forces of tradition and modernity. Losini utters in her journal:

Kapur’s narrative in *Custody* deals with the marriage that collapses. Social hypocrisies and battles for children that intertwine with anguish and conflict in order to depict a worldwide reality of politics of possessiveness and unequal power relations in normative patriarchal families which is a site for constraint, oppression, violence, possessiveness and disintegration. (201-203)

Women in Manju Kapur’s novels are trapped by economic and political restrictions. In her journal Dr. Manjeet Rathee proves:

The issues that various women are shown to grapple with are the ones that lie at the core of challenging all kinds of hierarchies, subjugations and oppressions- patriarchal or colonial and which pave the way for establishing a noble, independent, dignified and meaningful relationship of women with their personal as well as social lives-be it the desire for pursuit of higher education and employment opportunities, the right to choose one’s own life partner, the issue of dowry and right to property, the fight for a life beyond kitchens, husbands and children or social and political participation of women. (1-12)

Women in Kapur novels are always trapped in social, cultural, political and legal, educational, economic and sexual oppressions. As a woman, Kapur recognises the
challenging life of women. While they come out from a trap safely, they are trapped in another either knowingly or unknowingly.

Kapur explores the women’s physical and psychological complications, and their frustration, isolation, limitations that suppress them. Though they are economically and educationally empowered, they are not able to take decision on their own. They are strongly knotted with the society. The first chapter deals with the general introduction to the whole thesis and its core content. It is the outer layer of the complete study. The second chapter deals with the oppression of women where the novelist portrays the lively picture of Indian middle class women’s predicaments in all her five novels.

The third chapter discovers the discrimination of weaker gender. The women characters in all the five novels challenge the society and family for their basic rights. Being a woman, many opportunities are forbidden for them. The protagonists and other women in the novels are treated as a physical property by their opposite gender and the society they live. The protagonists in the first three novels are not allowed to marry whom they love. The protagonists’ parents or brother decide whom their daughter or sister should marry. Many subsidies are rejected just because they are assumed as weaker gender like love, restricted societal rights, expelled cultural freedom, discrimination, political inefficiency, and abused by sexism.

The fourth chapter deals with individual, familial and communal support of women to get empowerment in the society. With these help women mould themselves to fit in the society. Women-headed families are adventurous. Women in Kapur novels create self-opportunities to acquire the necessary capabilities. The novelist acknowledges the truth that women receive to reach the desired success with their self-motivation.
The fifth chapter depicts the full-fledged empowerment of women. Kapur stresses that self-motivation of her protagonists” lead to success. Her women characters adopt optimistic goals without deviating from their family value and religious conviction. Women of Kapur have given more attention towards equipping themselves both physically and psychologically to face any kind of situations. The protagonists develop their attitude to fight against day-to-day difficulties both inside the house and in the society. In the sixth chapter, the researcher sums up the summing up the thesis and attempts to analyse the role and importance of emancipation to attain women’s liberation. Women’s empowerment is possible in social, cultural, economic, educational, political fields among Indian societies which are deeply rooted with ancient culture and tradition. According to Kapur women in her novels prove their significance in all arenas. They have proved themselves that they are not at par with the other gender.

The earlier researches have analysed the issues over women’s identity related to traditional and modern life. Women are not just into a problem by the society or their own family but also the boundary framed around themselves which leads to a painful life. They have to overcome this barrier and attain empowerment. A major idea in recent Indian women’s writings expresses the position of women in the patriarchal society and their empowerment. The early researchers have explained in their researches about women sufferings, oppression, quest for identity, man-woman relationship, gender inequality, dowry, individual’s desire, lesbian, the problem of immigrant, interpersonal violence, social issues, freedom movement, partition, etc. in Kapur novels.

In this attempt, the researcher has undertaken the empowerment of women which is caused not only by family and communal support but by themselves. As they
are self-motivated, self-confident women in Kapur novels uplift themselves and their society. Women’s victory and defeat is based on their own activities.

The titles of the stories prove the concept very evidently. The first novel *Difficult Daughters* proves the sufferings and difficulties of two daughters Virmati and Ida. In *A Married Woman*, the experience in marriage life of three women is revealed through the characters Astha, her mother Sita and her friend Pipeelika. In *Home*, Kapur brings the real life situation of her student in Miranda College. In her fourth novel *The Immigrant*, Kapur expresses the problems of immigrant. In her fifth novel *Custody* discusses the complications and struggles for custody of the two children due to the second marriage of the protagonist.

Women in Kapur’s novels break the barriers; oppose undesirable rules of the society, overcome the impediments against superstitious norms which have been followed for decades. Women face challenges courageously in their life. Women slowly move from their traditional depiction and self-sacrificing character to a self-reliant position. It is that education provides empowerment spontaneously to reach their goals in life and in subsequent decades to come ahead. Though women sustain in their family and society with the help of others but their full-fledged empowerment is only possible by their self-assured. With their self-confident, they move from oppression to empowerment.