Chapter III

Discrimination of Weaker Gender: Familial and Societal

I do not wish them women to have power over men but over themselves.

(Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 152)

It is highly accepted truth that women who need to overcome men but by them. As the women, the gender discrimination controls women to go higher position in society. Women recognise the injustice treatment of others. Though, Indian society has high cultural reputation and vigorous familial relationship, women are being suppressed. Women are unable to reach their target easily like men. Kapur states in her novels the clear picture of discriminated women in her family and society. All her novels revolve around women and their familial depression. The protagonists in her novels face full of stress and despair. Difference in gender is quite common physically and psychologically. Even in the World war period, women were misused. Jaya Banerji utters in a 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 in the partition of India, that bloody event. Once the wars were over and their service not required, women were expected return to hearth and home and light candles in the windows to illuminate the paths of their menfolk.(6-7)

Men and women are reared up differently at home. The boys are encouraged to continue their education not compelled by household duties. In *Difficult Daughters*, Virmati is not allowed to study. While compared with boy’s education, less important has been given to the education of girls. By these, the boys become brave and possess manly qualities while girls follow easygoing and obedience.
Kapur shapes the discrimination of women in all her novels. It is the first two reasons for women’s oppression are their human biology and mentality of men. From their childhood being women, they are fixed as subordinate to men. The common mentality of humane is that men are ruling party and women are supporting category.

The third chapter deals with the familial and societal discrimination of weaker gender. They are ill-treated by their family and society. At home women expect to be an obedient, dutiful and caring. Patriarchy is not easy to exterminate because its root the belief that women are different and low-grade, is deeply fixed in most men’s perception. Women in Kapur’s novels are equipped to face the difficulty to empower in their family as well as society. Radical feminists motivate women to come out of daily lives- housework, serving men’s emotional and sexual needs, menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause.

As a woman, she is not provided a place to develop their knowledge equally with men but they are suppressed by all like father, mother, brother, husband and her son. It is not created by others but by themselves. With or without knowing the prediction, women construct a trap and live in it. It is an attempt to study the treatment of women through the novels of Kapur. In Difficult Daughters, the first generation woman Kasturi belongs to the traditional type of woman. Though she owns secretive miseries and sufferings, she firmly upholds the orthodox values. In spite of coming from different family backgrounds, women adopt themselves with their husbands’ family circumstances and situations. They unknowingly follow the patriarchal principles and also restricted norms of the Indian community. Kasturi gives more importance to the codes of the conventional family. Kasturi’s has no awareness about childbearing and its control. As she follows the outmoded customs, Kasturi surprises Shakuntala’s boldness and independent behaviour. After finishing
her M.Sc in chemistry Shakundala enjoys her independent life. She decides not to get married but continue her job. Shakuntala joins in socio-cultural activities. According to Kasturi women should be at home and not to participate involving any political activities.

Kasturi restricts her daughter Virmati to take decision freely. Virmati grows with fear. While her roommate Swarnalata motivates her to participate in the activities, Virmati dislikes the political path: ‘I can’t be like you, knowing what to say. I do not know how to convince people. I’m not clever’. Swarnalata frowned at her: ‘It is people like you who create trouble by letting others do your thinking’. *(Difficult Daughters* 132-133) Virmati is not able to take decision on her own. So she says:

Am I free, thought Virmati. I came here to be free, but I am not like these women. They are using their minds, organizing, participating in conferences being politically active, while my time is spent being in love. Wasting it. Well, not wasting time, no, of course not but then how come I never have a moment for anything else? *(Difficult Daughters* 142)

Virmati thinks her as a loser who has no respectable place. She is completely alienated from her family. Virmati becomes unhappy in love and she fights for recognition of her love and marriage. Her marriage produces disastrous war in her family and it is full of sadness with disapproval. Women characters of Kapur are always longing for love. Their expectation may be with their parents, husbands and children. Virmati’s mother doesn’t permit her to learn more, Harish Chandra lives with Virmati without married and she cannot show her child legally to the world. Though Ida tosses away her husband while she is not permitted childbearing, she feels
separation. Women of three generation (Kasturi, Virmati and Ida) have been portrayed as pathetic figures in *Difficult Daughters*.

Without knowing her oppression, Kasturi existed as the first generation woman. While Kasturi went to her husband’s home, she cried and the relatives with the sober-faced. As she was a bride, she could not lean out of the window to wave a last goodbye to her father and brothers. All think it is quite normal among newly married women: “Don’t cry, soon you will forget, wait and see, I was like this too, poor things”. The tradition of weeping brides and her sorrow is not taken seriously. (*Difficult Daughters* 203)

According to Kapur women hide their expression but they expect others to understand them. Even their sufferings have to be naked by others but they do not come forward to report them voluntarily. For instance Kasturi had been spinning cotton, in order to make a quilt for her to be given as dowry for her impending marriage. So she tensed at Virmati while she refused to marry. Demand of Virmati’s further studies created Kasturi became violent with rage and frustration. Her mother also said that she would consume poison if she rejected Indrajit whom they close as her partner.

Virmati was obedient and tranquil from her childhood but after her relationship with the professor Harish Chandra she changes. Kasturi recalls how she was in the age of her daughter. The differences of generation gap changes and transform the life style of women and say: “In her time, going to school had been a privilege, not to be abused by going against one’s parents. How had girls changed so much in just generation?” (*Difficult Daughters* 60) Manju Kapur points out that first woman is trapped by themselves and then by others. Manju Kapur’s is completely different
from Western Radical Feminism considers man as the root cause of women’s sufferings, hopelessness, subservience, repression and domination.

Kasturi’s daughter Virmati lost her happy childhood days. Virmati’s siblings treated her as mother due to her continuous pregnancy. Kasturi scolds her while she often refuses to do household duties. For that she says: “You are the eldest. If you don’t see to things, who will?” (Difficult Daughters 7) Virmati’s mother Kasturi most of the time bore children without the awareness about safer sex. The series of unwanted pregnancies created physical illness. Often conflict arises between daughter and mother in their family. It is inevitable in every house the conflict continues through generation because mothers expect their daughters to be safe and secure without troubles: “I studied too, but my mother would have killed me if I had dared even to want to dress in anything other than was bought for me” (Difficult Daughters 17)

Kapur states about the familial oppression of three generation women. The first generation woman Virmati’s mother Kasturi compared her parents with hers. According to Kasturi, Kasturi is too liberal than her mother. They followed the rigid rules. As a second generation woman, Virmati likes to study but her mother opposed and she asks her mother permission to continue her higher studies: “Mati please I want to study…” Virmati faltered. Her mother questions: “But you have studied what else is left? Virmati replies: ‘In Lahore… I want to go to Lahore…” (Difficult Daughters 59)

Kasturi is unable to bear her daughter’s foolishness further. She grabs her by the hair and banged her head against the wall. In her home she faces injustice. As she was the first daughter, she has to take responsibility of the younger ones in her family. Her mother’s harsh behaviour makes her irritation. Virmati oppressed from her childhood.
Even after her love marriage, Virmati suffers a lot. Ganga’s hatred and mother-in-law’s hardness make her to stay in the corner of the house. Harish opines Virmati to avoid her mundane work and amuse him without concentrating other household duties.

Harish expectation is fulfilled by his intellectual needs from one wife (Virmati) and household needs from other (Ganga) lead a happy life. Ganga became a servant and thanked him to get an opportunity to wash her husband’s clothes. By washing his clothes she wants to prove her rights at home as a wife. Indian women take care of everybody in the family except themselves. Kapur expresses her ideas about a woman: “… a husband stands as a ‘sheltering tree’ under which a woman proves her strength through her suffering.” (Difficult Daughters 103) Ganga has no shelter to stay if she moves from Harish.

Kapur novels show the importance of marriage in all her five novels. Marriage divides woman from the mainstream of life and prevents from achieving her goals easily. A success of marriage is supposed to be one where the woman restricts herself to the household affairs. Virmati also tries to dodge illegal relationship of Harish Chandra. Though she knows her desire is illegal, she loves him the Professor. Virmati tries to get rid of her affair but her true love never allows her to be separated from Harish. Harish’s habits of westernization make her to attract. John E Abraham states:

The influence of progressive assimilation of western standards, of culture on the ethos of the urban community, especially at the higher levels of society has given a possible thrust to the liberation of women from the shackles of tradition as reflected contemporary Indian English fiction. But a mere imitation of the west in this regard is bound to lack vitality and power, if it does draw its force from the main
Harish uses decorated words to draw interest of Virmati. She tore between her love affair and traditional customs. Professor nearly begged to get her as a second wife. He says:

Here, in Moti Cottage, my heart stretches far in your direction to pull you towards me to this place you haven’t seen. I will describe it, and then, when you imagine me in it, imagine amid the noises and hubbub of a large house-hold, a solitary, isolated man, yearning for you, always, always. (*Difficult Daughters* 94)

Virmati tries to oppose sexual contact with Harish but she could not be strong in her decision confidently because she also deeply adores him very much and decides that she is his. Issac quotes Vandita Mishra’s suggestion of the female characters of Kapur, as:

Kapur never permits Virmati any assertion of power of freedom. Because even as she breaks free from old prisons, she is locked into new ones. Her relationship with the professor, for instance, while it does provide an escape from lovers arranged marriage, it is itself future and claustrophobics, offering only a stolen togetherness behind curtained windows. Even years of studying and working alone do not give her the confidence to strike independent roots and grow. She loves uncertainly at the edge of each new world, never entering; last the professor should call and not find her near. Eventually, marriage to the man of her choice is no triumph either. As second wife she must fight social ostracism outside the house, and complete for the kitchen and conjugal bed with Ganga, the first wife, inside it. (60-73)
Virmati really loves him but she hides it like an old fashioned woman. She lost her job and freedom, after their relationship is found by others. Unconditionally she surrenders under him. Virmati decides him as husband whole heartedly and she expects him to marry as early but his postponement has disappointed her. Kapur asserts the traditional norms of woman which restrict Virmati. Her love failure exposes her feelings. Virmati’s depression is burst out, while she is cheated by him. She is not allowed to wait a long period. Her family members will arrange her marriage. It is possible to marry anybody else. So she says to Swarnalata. “In my family there is only marriage for girls” (Difficult Daughters 151)

Kapur points out the cultural norms have been followed strictly on women than men by their parents in India. Even though women dislike the marriage proposal, they are compelled to agree. The parents believe the responsibility of them would be fulfilled through their daughters’ marriage. The family members follow the societal customs in marrying the daughter as early as possible. They fear about the individual in the society and they would hurt women who are not getting married in an actual age. Lajwanti gets annoyance while Shakuntala delays marriage. Virmati has choosen this kind of life and so she cannot blame anybody for her activity. Even Virmati blames herself for her life style: “This is the life I should be involved in. Not useless love and a doubtful marriage. What happened then?”(Difficult Daughters 134) In spite of her critical position, she says:

I’m not though I wish I were. But when Harish is here, I stop thinking of other things. And when he is not here, all I do is wait for him to come. How long do we have to be secret man and wife, hidden from the eyes of the world. I hate it, but what can I do? (Difficult Daughters 140)
As she wishes to live with Harish, she gets mental trauma. She could understand the subsequent problems of love with the married man. Virmati’s married life becomes bitter as she is a second wife. As Ganga, the first wife is an uneducated woman; she easily has been cheated by her husband. She treats her husband as her god. During her childhood, Ganga was married to Harish. Without sending her to school, she was trained her in good housekeeping. When Ganga was twelve year old, she entered into her in-law’s house. Her family members trained Ganga to prove her as a good housewife. But her husband needs a well-educated companion. To escape from loneliness and to share his knowledgeable discussion, Harish is drawn his attention towards Virmati.

In order to satisfy his intellectual appetite Harish selects Virmati as a second wife. Ganga’s illiteracy is a reason for him to seek Virmati’s relationship. Ganga continues with domestic role like a wife, a good mother, and a dutiful daughter-in-law. Ganga’s aversion is quite natural towards Virmati. Not only Ganga, no other wife would allow interference of another woman in her married life. Ganga could identify her position at home subsequently.

Virmati is just opposite to her cousin Shakuntala. She dislikes marrying someone though she has crossed her marriageable age. Her marriage refusal makes her mother saddened. Her mother Lajwanti worries about her marriage. It is a duty of parents to marry their children in a correct time and to the correct person. For Shakuntala, marriage is not an important thing in her life but for Lajwanti it is an inconsolable pain. While seeing her daughter without married, she becomes depressed. Shakuntala instructs Virmati to choose better position than marriage. In Indian society, without marriage a woman cannot be lived peacefully.

In *Difficult Daughters*, Ida dislikes her mother’s life style. She wants to be a
free modern woman and so she hates unconventional path of her mother. Ida expects to lead independent way of living but later she realizes her mistake and feels about her loneliness and difficulties of being an isolated woman. It is natural that the neighbours of the family and the relatives never permit a woman to lead without a male’s company. Ida regrets her isolation. The unmarried life of Indian woman is not welcomed. Shakuntala is a good example.

Shakuntala insists Virmati to know the responsibility of woman beyond the circle of a family, husband and children. According to Shakuntala, Virmati searches her happiness inside home but the real pleasure is in outside. First, Shakuntala is the first pole of attraction for Virmati. The members of the family want to follow the societal custom in marrying the daughter as early as possible. The people in the society interrogate or sometime even hurt woman who is not getting married in a particular age. It creates the troubles to the unmarried woman. Virmati is inspired by both Shakuntala and Swarnalata.

As Virmati experienced bitterly in her married life, she is strict on Ida. So her fright makes her daughter away from troubles. Ida expresses her mother: ‘My mother tightened her reins on me as I grew older; she said it was for my own good’ (Difficult Daughters 279) Kishori Devi is a conventional mother-in-law of Ganga and Virmati. As she is unable to control her son’s second marriage, she consoles her daughter-in-law, thus:

In this life we can do nothing but our duty. Serve our elders, look after our children, walk along the path that has been marked for us, and not pine and yearn for those things we cannot have. Since our destiny is predetermined, that is the only way we can know any peace. Duty is our guide and our strength. How can we control the things outside us?
We can only control ourselves. (*Difficult Daughters* 211)

As a conservative woman, Kishori Devi instructs her daughter-in-law to be a dutiful wife in a family. Virmati likes her way with her family and not interest in politics at last. Even though Virmati is educated, she is not able to come out of the problems simply. Although Virmati’s daughter Ida is strong and stubborn, she feels while she breaks up her marriage bond. Her husband Prabakar forces her to do abortion and it makes Ida to divorce him. Ida opposes the superstitious social structure of the society. In Indian society, most of the women accept their marriage whoever their parents choose without opposing. Their brought up make them to obey their parents’ order.

Kapur portrays the familial repression of woman obviously in her second novel *A Married Woman* also. Astha, the protagonist is dissatisfied by their parents. She is not allowed to have friendship with Bunty who gets away from her. Astha gets insulted while her mother cuts her friendship with Bunty. Her parents control all her little happiness. Unsatisfied desire of parents makes them to be filled by their children. In *A Married Woman*, Astha shows her interests in painting. Her parents do not show interest on their daughter’s interest on painting. While Astha’s mother reads her personal diary, she could know her love affair with Rohan. Astha becomes irritated and says: “You have no right to read my diary. These are notes for a story I am writing” (*A Married Woman* 27)

Astha hides her love affair with Rohan from her mother. It is quite natural that the lovers hide their love on occasion. Astha loves Rohan but he is not so truthful to her. Rohan is cunningly gets rid of her, while he gets chance to study in abroad. Astha raises many questions herself and finally asks him: ‘What about us?’ Rohan answers ‘We will see.’ (*A Married Woman* 30) The indolent answer of Rohan elucidates his
fake love.

Kapur declares the untruthful love at present days. Astha comes to know the truth that Rohan does not love her deeply. Astha is decriminated by her lover and their love becomes failure without understanding each other. Astha hides her shedding tears while Rohan rejects her love. The thought of Rohan disturbs her with pain. She slowly recovers from this pathetic experience. It is difficult to her to forget him and his thoughts.

After Astha gets married, she engages her in household duties and forgets about her past love. Sometimes she compares Rohan with Hermant. Her unfulfilled love gives always troubles her. It is not only at the war field to fight, woman faces too many battles at home. Though Astha is happy with her marriage life, in the absence of her husband she feels deserted. So she decides to go for work. Both her husband and her dislike sending her to work. Her mother dissuades her and says: “As a teacher you will earn some money, but you will only be out half the day so the home will not suffer” (A Married Woman 47) Rita Felski describes the typical pattern of self-discovery which begins with:

A negative model, an image of female alienation. The restrictive nature of female social roles is often exemplified in the emblematic figure of the housewife whose entire horizon is circumscribed by the daily drudgery of catering to her family’s domestic and emotional needs. The sexual division of labour ensures the asymmetry of power in male-female relations. Women’s confinement to the familial circle denies them the autonomous, self-fulfilling activity while trapping them into a relationship of psychological or economic dependence upon a lover who is unable to validate women other than in relation to
his own emotional and sexual interests. (129)

Hemant does not consider his wife’s likes and dislikes. But as a conservative Indian woman, Astha is willing to do any work for her husband. Without anybody’s compulsion, she voluntarily does her conjugal duty of a married woman. Indian women are soothing her husband with their love like Astha:

He sat down on the sofa, and Astha knelt to take off his shoes. She unlaced them, and pulled off his socks, gathering the Ida’s dust in her lap. At that moment she loved Hemant so intensely, that every fetid, stale, sweaty smell that came from his foot was a further nail in the armour of her love. (A Married Woman 48-49).

Kapur depicts the adjustment of women in the family circle. Astha’s expectation is not being fulfilled. Hemant’s character is different from Rohan. Astha compares both manhood and she adjusts the familial misfortune. Women character of Kapur proves love, patience and caring nature of women characters, amidst of their obstacles throughout their life. The changes of her husband’s character threaten Astha. Her fear becomes true after the birth of her daughter Anuradha as he shows less interest in his sharing and caring towards her. Hemant has lessened his conversation with her. She worries while her husband gives shows much important to his business than affection on Astha.

Asthya likes to share her day to day experience but Hemant pays no attention. He decides she has the only responsibility to satisfy his needs and conjugal love. Astha identifies changes of Hemant’s attitude after the birth of first daughter Anuradha. She asks him straightly:

“Hemant, why is it that we never talk anymore?”

“We talk all the time’ he replies.”
“About the business, the house, or Anuradha. Not about ourselves. Like we did before”

“Grow up, Az, one can’t be courting forever”

“Is it courting to be interested in the other person? Their feeling?”

“Why are you so childish? I work hard all day, and when I come home I want to relax. If you are feeling something, tell me. I have no time for all these games”. (A Married Woman 66)

Hemant changes his mentality slowly. He wants a male baby secondly after Anuradha. Astha shocks while Hemant utters before: “In America there is no difference between boys and girls. How can this country get anywhere if we go on treating our women this way?”(A Married Woman 57) Astha never expects from him this kind of talking. She has believed her husband never seen the gender difference but her expectation has demolished by his words. She argues: “But Hem, I do not wish to go on trying until we get a son”. (A Married Woman 68) Astha really disappointed.

It is unbearable to Astha. Until she bears a male baby, her husband could compel her to bear the child. In school, she is a worthy assistant and right hand to the principal but in her home she feels nothing. Her salary is essential to spend her family obligations, entertainment expenditure, holiday cost etc. Astha acknowledges gratitude to god for getting male baby. To satisfy all at home and working place, with two children, husband, servants, job scenario and she suffer mental depression. Astha engages herself in many formal and informal responsibilities. Her husband never shares her work.

Ashta expresses her husband’s change of character while he says: “men’s work
and women’s work”. As a woman, she is discriminated by her husband. She completes the domestic works with her teaching profession individually. Many times she has dilemma to resign her job but it is her pleasure of independence. Her profession reduces her familial depression and she is also appreciated at her working place with sufficient salary. Without her family support she rears her children. Due to this work burden, she suffers with severe headache. Physical sufferings with mental depression provide her psychological trauma. Finally she is admitted in the hospital for surgery.

Kapur proves through her character Astha that the gratification in married life is a major requirement for an Indian woman. Astha is depicted as an ignorant in understanding her husband’s dawdle character. She misunderstands that Hemant always love her as the same throughout the life. Her early married life was so happy than the present. She finds difference in her husband’s intention and conduct. Her helplessness makes her to feel isolation. Above all, Hemant remarks her career as a “time pass”:

Oh-ho, what is there in teaching? Hardly a serious job, you just go, talk to some children about poems and stories, organize a few clubs, and come back. If you do feel it is important, all the more reason not to mind if Mummy does some puja. Who knows it may yield good results. (*A Married Woman* 68)

Hemant’s mother arranges a pooja to get a grandson and Hemant also blindly believes her superstitious beliefs of her mother. Kapur points out that, women have no rights to express her views freely. Astha writes poems for her relaxation which denotes full of sufferings and emotions. According to Hemant, Astha’s poems are positively neurotic. He dislikes and says: “If others read these poems, they might actually think you weren’t happy”. (*A Married Woman* 81) Her poem also not
recognised by her husband.

Hemant blames her writing without understanding her emotional feeling. He concentrates on other’s consideration alone. If third person reads her poem, they would think Astha would not be happy in her marital life. Astha is not happy at home and her husband treats her improper way. He gives priority to the society and its feeling instead of his wife and her emotion. His distaste on poetry makes her to give up drawing and sketching.

Kapur speaks in her novels about the restrictions of Indian woman in her family. After her father’s death, Astha compels her mother Mrs. Trivedi to stay with her. In Indian middle class family, a mother could live with his son but not with the daughter. She hesitates to stay with her son-in-law’s family. With the depression, Astha starts shouting: “I wish you wouldn’t be so sick-in-the-mud, Ma. Why didn’t you have a son to look after you when you were old, if you cannot talk anything from a daughter? Why did you stop with me?” (A Married Woman 85)

A Married Woman

Asta could understand her mother Sita’s unwillingness to stay with Hemant. Sita wants to be a guest not a host. Being a woman, Astha is not able to care her mother throughout her life whereas Hemant’s mother privileges to stay with her son lifelong. Without anybody’s help, Sita rears Astha after the death of her husband. Astha assumes that if her mother Sita lives with her, she would take care of her two children. Moreover Hemant underestimates her work. Hemant shows little interest in childcare. Hemant says that the child care is Astha’s work. He says: “It’s woman’s work, Hire somebody to help you, or quit your job’. Send him up to Mummy if you can’t manage’. Astha replies with irritation: ‘This is our son, the one so wanted so much. It’s nice if we look after him together’ (A Married Woman 70)

Asta gets mental stress on seeing Hemant’s less interest in child care. He
expects a male child but never shows interest on it. Astha often thinks about her resignation but she needs relaxation and gets pleasure in school with appreciation in her working place which is not given by her husband. She gets confused between job and mental repression creates psychological trauma. The protagonists of Kapur confront psychological problems in all her characters.

In *Difficult Daughters*, Kapur attempts the usage of irony in her character Virmati, she uses education as a tool, to escape her marriage and continue her love affair with Harish. In *A Married Woman*, Astha recalls her husband’s constant comparison between American father and Indian father. Kapur uses Catharsis, the strong emotional feeling. While her children are away from her company and it produces severe headache. Finally she undergoes an operation. In *Home*, Nisha faces unpleasant experiences and it causes sufferings while her lover ignored her and tossed away her love.

Astha remembers her father’s encouragement on reading and writing. Before she thought his advices as bitter but now she realizes the importance of it. She starts writing about garden, flowers, love, rejection, desire, and longing. Unknowingly she adds her own experience in her writing. It is quite natural women think about their family members always, Julien Benda says in his Rapport d’ Uriel: “Men can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man.” (Julien Benda Vol II, 600) Astha always thinks about her husband and her family. She dislikes sharing her feelings with Hemant. It would create a big argument with greater suffering. So she needs temporary relief like expressing her struggle through her poems. She has written two hundred poems. One of the poems of Astha is ‘Changes’:

The eventual release from pain

In the tearing relentless separation
From those in habit loved
Can come so slowly
It seems there will never be a day
Of final peace and tranquillity
Who promised me, that if I
Did gaze upon reality
Accept it, embrace it, befriend it
I would never suffer again
But no matter how many times
I heave the doorways of my soul
To let the chill light in the darkness grows silently
To hide me in the break of day. (A Married Woman 80-81)

While reading the poem, Hemant doubts about his wife’s happiness at home. So he asks her: “If others read these poems, they might actually think you weren’t happy’. I know that. But people are so quick to put two and two together and come up with five, quick to gossip, you know Az.” (A Married Woman 81)

In Astha’s poem she exposes her mental pain and physical suffering. She does not hide anything and it reveals her dilemma of her role as a homemaker and a teacher. She has written two hundred poems. The poems have given her temporary relief from her poems. Even after reading her poem, Hemant could not change his mentality but he blames his wife. As her husband hates her poems, Astha gives up her poems and continues rather sadly to draw sketching with the pencil. Her paintings resemble her inner feelings obviously. Sita her mother writes a letter to her:

Accommodation and acceptance keep families together. What you cannot change accept gracefully, cheerfully as Prasad for the Lord.
Create a home where you are. Such a person is free from sorrow.

Every understanding requires composed mind. Worst thing in life is anger. Read the Gita especially chapter xiv. (*A Married Woman* 84)

Sita advises her daughter to live peacefully without anger. As an experienced woman, her mother suggests morality of life. Astha is not happy while her mother intended to go to Rishikash after her father’s death. Her mother gives up the lease of her flat and gets rid most of her belongings without keeping it. Astha adores keeping all her father’s book with her in the memory of him but her husband dislikes it. He says: “Come on Az, donate them to a library. We can’t clutter up our house with a lot of old books. And you know you don’t read them”. (*A Married Woman* 86)

Hemant donated the books to a library with the acceptance of Sita. Astha feels sentimentally but Astha’s mother reads the mind of her son-in-law. Her mother says: “It is Hemant’s house and he said there was no room. Astha screams: “Then who am I? The tenant?” We could have found room, we could have built bookshelves, done something, we could at least discussed it” (*A Married Woman* 87) Astha feels that she has lost her freedom.

Kapur reveals the renter position of woman in a joint family. Astha has no rights to possess even her father’s books and his property. Though it is her house, she feels subordinate and subservient position in it. While her mother supports him, Astha realizes her mother’s tolerance and forgiveness. Sita cautious in this regard no problem should arise between husband and wife. Her happiness on her daughter’s future life.

Socialist feminism shows in *A Married Woman*. Astha’s property is handed over to her husband. After the belonging is handed over to her son-in-law, Sita decided to go to Rishikesh. She requests Hemant to convince her mother to stay with
them but it is not concern for action. Normally a woman expects her husband should
treat her family member with respect. Astha loses her confidence on Hemant. If
Hemant had compelled her mother to stay here, she might have stayed. Astha knows
that he has no interest keeping her mother with them. Her mother also dislikes staying
with her daughter. Sita considers that her daughter is not her own after her marriage.

It is unbearable to Astha to leave her mother lonely and she gets jealous on her
mother-in-law happily spends throughout her life with grandchildren but her mother
Sita never gets such kind of pleasure in her life. Astha laments over her mother’s
desperation. Without husband and daughter, she plans to go Rishikesh. As Astha is a
woman, she faces much discrimination and disadvantages. Astha says herself: “After
all Hemant’s parents are staying with him, aren’t they, not with their daughters’.(A
Married Woman 94)

Asth’a’s subservient position gives stress. While she longs for love, she seeks the
relationship of Pipeelika, Aijaz’s wife. Manju Kapur remarks lesbian relationship of
Asta and Pipeelika is an antithesis link in Indian society. Foucault also emphasis in
his The History of Sexuality: “… homo sexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to
demand that its legitimacy or “naturality” be acknowledged, often in the same
vocabulary using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified.” (101)

As she dislikes her husband’s domination, Astha selects lesbian relation with
Pipeelika, as women are more loving, sharing and understanding than men. In A
Married Woman, the lesbian relationship of Asthagives pleasure and it compensate
her inner lonliness. Kapur describes in one of her interviews about lesbianism;

In A Married Woman, I was looking at how women relate to each
other. It turned out to be sexual, only because of the plot’s exigencies.
Female friendship didn’t seem to look very interesting when I was
writing it; but when I changed it into an affair, it developed its own dynamics, disappointments, expectations... So, to that extent perhaps, I wasn't true to my initial theme. Some people tried to ask if I was trying to emulate “Fire”, the movie, and that made me very angry. (An interview with Manju Kapur March 29, 2011)

Even though her mother comes as a guest, she feels embarrassing to stay in her daughter’s house. Astha needs privacy to continue her painting work without interruption. She asks her husband to arrange a separate place as a drawing room to keep her colouring materials like sketches, canvas, paint brushes etc. She suggests a room in upstairs which is not in use it, Hemant replies: “But it belongs to Sangeeta, she may feel insecure. You know how touchy she already is”. (A Married Woman 156)

Sangeetha, her sister-in-law stays there in Meerut. She would rarely come to her mother’s house. After the discussion, Hemant’s parents reject her request. They convinced Astha that Sangeetha is very sensitive. Finally, Astha decides to sum up that nobody is ready to help her. She tolerates and tries to manage it boldly without other’s help.

Kapur depicts the Hemant’s mentality. According to Hemant, a woman should not involve in social and political activities. Hemant refused to send Astha to a demonstration outside Rashtrapati Bhavan. It is anniversary of the massacre but Hemant thinks that if he permits her to go the New Year’s Eve outside, it spoils the dignity of his family in the society.

Kapur insists that women are expected to be a housewife and not to lead the politics in her novel A Married Woman. The same thing happens in the third novel Home. In Home, the female characters meets challenges like Sona, Rupa, Sunita,
Asha and Nisha are one way or other meets the different kinds of oppression. The safest place of woman is home but it gives more troubles to her. Nisha is irritated by her mother, Sona. Sona says the duty of her daughter is one who helps her every time everybody eats. Sona shows partiality and she treats her son Raju as superior to Nisha. For instance Nisha argues:

Nisha: “So what? Raju is black’ Blacker than Vicky”

Sona: “Raju is the colour of Krishna”

Nisha: “I also want to be the colour of Krishna. I am going to play cricket in the sun”.

Sona: “Krishna is God. You will look like the sweeper woman who comes to the house. You want to look like a kali blainsi?”

*(Home 52)*

Nisha meets discrimination from her childhood to adult. In *Home*, Kapur expresses the familial suppression starts at home. Before Nisha, Sona is the first victim in this story. Her childlessness is pointed out by her in-law’s family members. Sona took several kinds of modern medicine and many medical tests to bear a single child. But no positive result in her life. She laments that no one gives importance for goodness and fairness. Sona decides her physical attractiveness is useless if she is unable to bear a child.

In *Home*, the embracement of woman is visualized in a joint family. In a joint family, Sona is forced to adopt a child Vicky. After the death of Sunita, Vicky is brought to Sona. Her husband Yaspal says: “The boy is orphaned. He needs a mother’s special attention. Let him be your child”. *(Home 22)* Without Sona’s consideration, the family members decide adaptation. The family members do not get suggestion from Sona to adopt a child and she is discriminated completely. But Vicky
creates many problems in their family. After Sona’s pregnancy, her mother-in-law treats her in good manner. Her husband surprises her mother while she provides diet food to her daughter-in-law. Sona says happily: “Oh, she has completely changed. She does not even let me bend to pick up anything” (Home 34) It is unbelievable for Sona.

Kapur states the problem of Sona in delivery. Delivery is a second birth of every woman, the need of a child Sona bears pain. After the birth of the child, Sona wants to take care of new born baby and adopted child Vicky Sona suffers with Vicky as he never be controlled by anyone. With confidence, Sona face all her difficulty. Due to heavy domestic works, Sona is unable to pay attention to him. Sona’s love and caring gives no good to her in her family. Vicky needs special attention but as a step mother Sona cannot even rebuke him. By means of joint family, Sona fears to control or punish. Vicky’s violent act creates mental agony of Sona. Sometimes he runs away from the house and create confusion at home. So Sona starts shouting: “The boy is growing wild. If he turns out his father, don’t blame me. I have done all I can” (Home 44) Sona boldly delivers her suffering to her family members.

Sona’s position is subservient in the family. Her hospitality towards Vicky is monitored by the family members. For Vicky’s appetite, Sona has to be a slave in kitchen. He is equal to six children in eating. Sona regrets the birth of the second baby and it is an unwanted child to her home. While reading the book, Sona compares her sufferings to Sathyavan Savithri. Savithri suffered a lot while she tried to retain her husband from Yama after his death. After closes the book, The Vat Savithri Katha’, Sona sheds tears. She too like Savithri, has sacrificed for her family. (Home 671)

Kapur highlights the torment of mother-in-law in Home. Sona dislikes her mother-in-law Mrs. Lala Banwari Lal. She treats Sona harshly but her father-in-law
very kind hearted man. Sona thinks over when Lal Banwari Lal is in Intensive Care Unit:

He was truly noble, never gave sorrow to anybody, what a pity she hadn’t been his real daughter – being married into the family demanded restrain from her side, distance from his. ‘Why couldn’t this have happened to mother-in-law? If stroke had to befall the family, they were well able to spare that evil-tongued crone.’ (Home 117)

Mr. Banwari Lal’s death creates full of misery in Sona’s life. She lost her father-in-law’s support and caring. Her mother-in-law gets a mental agony by the act of smashing glass bangles, pulling off her toe rings, untying mangla sutra, removing colour saris. It is pathetic position of woman after the death of her husband. Mrs. Banwari Lal has become a lonely figure. She is treated as a poor widow and insignificant. In the society, a woman without her husband is not treated in a respectable way. Kapur brings forth the condition of woman after the death of her husband.

Sona’s sister Rupa is another victim in Home Rupa’s hard work makes her to start a little pickle factory. Whenever Sona gets worried for childlessness, she consoles her. While she heard of Sona’s pregnancy she is so happy and forgets her childlessness. Her mind becomes enjoy to the little baby in her sister’s arms. Rupa forgets her worries and says happily about the baby; “Lakshmi will follow her into the house” (Home 36)

Kapur expresses the ups and downs in the path way of women. While comparing with Sona, Rupa is a pitiable mortal. She doesn’t get anything like Sona. She has no children and sophistication. After seeing Sona’s new flat Rupa wonders. For the first time she feels some irritation with her husband. She worries about her
familial problem and poverty without improvement. Rupa feels self-pity and envied on her sister. She scolds herself: “Why did her sister always have all the luck? No children, along comes a daughter, no son, along he comes; dark inconvenient rooms, along comes a palace” (Home 185) Both were born in same house and same womb but Rupa is unlucky while comparing with her sister Sona.

Kapur speaks about the unpleasant familial experience of the women characters in Home, Sunita, Sona’s sister-in-law who is also a victim. Due to her husband’s torture, she often visits her parents to collect dowry. As she has no money, she pleased her parents with the lame excuses and fulfils her family needs. Lal Banwari Lal insists his sons to see her once a year. As she is not happy with her husband, the family members feel for her daughter’s bad karma.

Sunita shares her feelings with Sona while they meet. As her husband Murali demands redress instead of giving dowry in her marriage. Murali imagines that her parents cheated her without giving equal share to his wife. By his needs, Sunita is forced to collect dowry from Lal’s family. For her son Vicky, she lives in the world. As Vicky is the only son, he longs for another baby to play with him. Sunita replies with angry: “So your father has someone else to beat and I have someone else to suck my blood” (Home 41) Not only Sunita’s shares her depression and also she attempts suicide. Now she is no more and her son handed over to her brothers. After her death, he gives troubles to his uncle’s family especially Nisha, Sona’s daughter Nisha is suffered with familial oppression. After a many years Nisha returns her own home from Rupa’s house. But her mother scolds Nisha and her sister Rupa. Sona blames her sister because she never rears her properly and says: “Roop, I would never have imagined you, of all people, filling the girl’s head with rubbish. This is the life of a woman: to look after her home, her husband, her children, and give them food she has
cooked with her own hands”. *(Home 126)* Both Rupa and her husband brought up Nisha from childhood but they are getting good name. Nisha’s lover Suresh used the hypnotic words to seduce her and he examines her love:

“Don’t you love me?”… “Don’t you trust me?”

“We should wait till we are married” *(Home 189)* Nisha replies.

As Nisha is clever, she saves herself from his seduction. Nisha knows women are sensitive but flexible while men please them. While received the complained letter from her college, Nisha’s love is identified by her parents. She does not go to college regularly. She rambles with Suresh without going to college. Her parents start enquiring about Suresh:

“Have you met his family? What do they do?”

“Shop owners. Like us”.

“Where?”

“Kashmiri Gate”.

“Caste?”

“I don’t know”

“He hasn’t told you?”

“Of course he has. He tells me everything but I don’t have to remember, do I?” *(Home 196)*

In *Home*, Nisha’s love affair is restricted by her parents. Manju Kapur articulates the familial hindrance of woman. Her family members restrict her to attend college and discriminate her to marry the low creed man. Even Raju, her brother blackmails without allowing her outside and keeping her in house arrest. Liberal Feminism claims that gender differences are not based in biology. If women and men are not different they should not be treated differently under the law. Women should
have equal rights as men and the same didactic and work opportunities. Nisha opposes her younger brother’s rudeness and his control over her. She blames her caste and status which creates complications in her love marriage and she raises question: “Who cares about cast these days? What you really want is to sell me in the market”. (Home 199) No one care about her misery. Finally Suresh changes his mind and says: “We cannot get married, if your family does not approve. It will be standing in the way of your happiness”. She utters: “You are my happiness.” Suresh replies: “Your family does not think so. I cannot come between you and them” (Home 203) From her childhood, Nisha suffers. At her young age, she sexually abused. After she grew up, she faced love failure and late marriage. She could understand the real character of Suresh who feared about her brother. His poverty and unequal status discontinue her love and she says; “He is afraid of my family” (Home 205)

Kapur defines the problem weaker gender in Home. Nisha gets mental and physical problem due to her love affair. Kapur mentions the connection between mind and body. Her mental depression produces physical illness. Nisha recollects the indecent behaviour of Vicky in her childhood naively and in her teenage she is cheated by Suresh knowingly. Both Vicky as well as Suresh behaved the same in her view. Suresh promised before that he would die without Nisha but now he is neither in dying mood nor in living with her. Suresh says; “You will always be the princes of my dreams”. (Home 213)

Nisha wants to live with him in real and not in dream. Her love failure creates mental depression as well as physical problem eczema. Her consultation of both allopathic and homeopathy treatment give no successful result. Due to emotional depression she gets eczema. Even Pooja, Nisha’s sister-in-law never avoids her to touch her body, as Nisha gets infected.
Kapur articulates Nisha’s familial depression in her marriage life. Nisha is really disappointed on her wedding night as it is his second marriage; Arvind shows less interest in sharing his pleasant chatting. Nisha expects from him on enthusiastic love as it is her first marriage. She hates the meaningless mechanical sex with her husband and she likes to continue her garment business ‘Nisha’s Creations’ continuously after her marriage but her pregnancy prohibit it. Her biological problem creates nausea and giddiness while she is pregnant and unable to continue her business.

Kapur advocates the woman’s struggle while she is pregnant. Her mother-in-law restricts her to continue her garment business ‘Nisha’s Creations’. She is disturbed while she continues her business. Nisha’s mother-in-law does not permit her to go out wherever she goes. Arvind’s less intimacy makes her angry. Kapur expresses the problems of women while they undergone sexual abuse. Nisha’s first abuse is caused by Vicky and then seduction attempt of her Suresh. In Report of the Committee on Amendment to Criminal Law, the following problems are mentioned by Justice J.S Verma: “Fear, Distress, Anger, Sadness, Anxiety, Feeling Violated, Shame, Grief, Confusion, Feeling Dirty, Powerlessness, Embarrassment”. (472)

These are the psychological problems of a victim while they have undergone sexual abuse. Not only Nisha suffers in the sexual abuse but also the gender discrimination. Sona restricts her riding bicycle but she permits Raju to play. Nisha starts questioning:

“I want to go too”

“You can’t”

“Why? Why can’t I?”

“It is better for girls remain inside” (Home 51)
Even in a family a girl is restricted to play freely. Kapur focuses the fights for rights with the society. Nisha suffers physically and psychologically. She needs special care from her aunt Rupa. Leela Dube examines:

The socialization of girls in feminine takes cooking, menial, dirty household work and child care. Girls are encouraged to play with dolls and house and kitchen games emphasizing their nurturant and domestic role. Girls are also taught the notion of service or ‘sawa’ eating leftovers, withstanding pain, deprivation and developing tolerance and self-restraint. (1988)

Though home is a safety place, Nisha cannot feel comfortable. The same experience Vicky’s wife Asha gets in her husband’s house. No peaceful life in her mother’s and in – law’s home. While she feels uncomfortable in her house, she irritates herself. Asha questions her husband:

Why should we be so grateful for this hot, hot room? you don’t know what it is like running up and down with a baby. There is no place for me to rest downstairs, nor can I leave the baby sleeping and come up they will say, what kind of mother are you? If I lie there on the floor, I feel I am in the way, not that I am complaining, but you only tell me how am I to manage? (Home 104)

With the new born baby, she leads uncomfortable life. While she complains to her husband, Vicky threatens her to send her back to her mother’s home. She feels congested in barasati throughout the day. Asha works in kitchen with cutting, cleaning, preparing food and snacks. She disturbed by her crowded, uncomfortable marginal and poor life. Asha gets jealous and often compares her with Nisha. She expresses her disappointment to Vicky; he rebukes her to avoid talking about Nisha.
As Nisha is pretty, unlucky, she waits a long period for her marriage. Kapur reveals the importance of astrology in Indian society. Nisha is a mangli. Unless she married a similar mangli, her life become gets problem.

Kapur states the widowhood and it’s painfulness in *Home*. Though Mrs. Banwari Lal is a haughty woman, she weeps for her death of her husband agonizingly. Mrs. Banwari Lal laments without stopping. At twelve, she married him and he was fifteen. After the age of sixty again she is alone without her husband as a widow. It is painful for her. They marry in an ingenuous stage. Without the company of other, the couple can not live. She cries loudly: “Why? Why’? why did he have to go before me?” Why did I have this misfortune? kill me”. She begged her son: “Kill me so I may go to him”. *(Home 119)* After the death of husband woman is separated and isolated.

Asha is also one of the victims in *Home*. Asha suffers familial oppression. As she is a newly married woman, Asha comes with expectation to her husband’s house. Asha is disappointed to stay in barsati which is allotted for her. It gives strange and uncomfortable to the newly married couple. As barasati is congested, her relatives hesitate to visit her house. Even for her delivery, she is restricted to get modern treatment. She expects an elaborate ceremony while she bears a child but only a silk sari is given. While Asha fights for this, Vicky becomes angry and enquires the gift of Asha’s mother. Asha’s family is very poor to give a costly gift to the baby. So Asha is unable to talk more than that. But one thing she decides not to bear another child. Asha cannot stay in upstairs with her child in hot summer. She has no place to take rest in downstairs, while the child sleeping in upstairs. Asha moves up and down without rest. She expresses her problem to Vicky but her husband never pays attention and irritates himself.
Society expects from women self-sacrifice, tolerance and submissiveness. Indian women feel hard to achieve autonomy and self-analyse. Kapur’s fourth novel *The Immigrant* reveals how women are uncared without the lovable person of the family. In *The Immigrant*, Nina lost her father’s affection after his father’s death. As her father has passed away in a sudden cardiac disease at his forty five, her mother is isolated without her husband’s company.

Shankar’s parents blame Nina’s mother for their son’s death. Though they become rage about them, the life of Nina and her mother is depends on their patience and endurance to adjust with them. The death of his father makes them to realize the real character of human nature and they come out their home to life separately. Kapur opposes a common belief of the society that woman cannot live alone without any male’s support. Nina’s mother shows no interest in her remarriage but she has a dream on her daughter’s marriage. While Nina crosses thirty, her mother worries about her marriage. Nina fears to marry Ananda as he lives in abroad. She dislikes marrying a foreign return man. Finally she marries him by the advice of her mother and agrees to go Canada but she strictly says after she bears a child, she would come to their house.

Childlessness creates problem to women. Nina also has undergone medical check-ups and tests. But no positive results due to Ananda’s physical problem. Nina comes to the conclusion that she does not bear a child at present. Ananda is not willing in consulting and testing. The illegal relationship of Ananda with Mandy is hidden while he undergoes the therapy treatment under the guidance of Hansen. Nine shares her feeling in the counselling session. “Her husband needed a certain kind of therapy, she would not go into details - they nodded understandingly - and though it was preferable to treat couples, he had lied to her and gone alone. Now she felt used,
excluded and energy. He claimed the end justified the means. He accused her of being 
unsupportive”. (*The Immigrant* 215)

Nina shares her unbearable difficulties in the counselling session. Nina frankly 
shares her anxieties to find the solution. Ananda dislikes her counselling but he 
practises sexual therapy without her knowledge. He becomes improved slowly. 
Ananda says: ‘But baby, each time I improve I feel better. Don’t you want me to feel 
better?’ (*The Immigrant* 217)

Ananda’s special interest displays in his therapy and its power. While Nina 
shows less interest in sexual affair, he becomes ferocious. With his annoyance, he 
shouts: “Is it because you have gone to some meeting and become a women’s libber 
that you are saying all this?” (*The Immigrant* 218) She can understand her husband’s 
mentality. Kapur illustrates the importance of understanding between husband and 
wife or finally it gives divorce as a result. Nina shares her disappointments to her 
friend Beth:

> Everything is very strange. I used to be a teacher, in fact I taught for 
ten years before I came here. And now I do nothing. I have not even 
been able to conceive. Am I locked into stereotyped expectations? I 
don’t know. I don’t know what I want. At home it was much clearer…. 
I feel so lost here. (*The Immigrant* 229)

As an immigrant, she feels self- pity and no comfortable life she leads. Nisha 
understands that she never gets pregnant and no meaningful life she has granted. Nina 
blindly believes her husband as he supports for her education. But he engages him 
with Mandy in her absence. Ananda disguises as a good son to his mother, a good 
brother to his sister and act as a good husband to Nina. To lead a secret life with 
Mandy, he plays like an affectionate character.
Ananda spends his time with Mandy and get addicted in love with Mandy. While Ananda encourages her to study Library Science, Nina has confidence on him. Ananda plans that if Nina engages in some other commitment; she would not monitor his rapport with Mandy. Moreover Mandy’s cousin is also a librarian. Ananda advised Nina not to fear about her study. Nina’s mother restricts her to study further. She thinks:

As a student, would she be able to give Ananda enough attention? Might she not be a drain on his resources? And did this mean she was postponing having a child, she would soon be thirty three. Her mother was such a vehicle of a child, she would soon be thirty three,... why was her concern for her daughter always expressed through worry about Ananda’s well-being? (The Immigrant 242-243)

Nina’s mother worries about her daughter’s life. Nina’s mother wants grandchildren. He has doubt that if Nina goes to job she would not concentrate on the childbearing. As she follows her husband’s suggestions, she imagines her status would become raised.

Kapur insists most of the protagonists get suffering due to childlessness. Men are not being blamed as much as women for infertility. Nina realizes that her husband does not worry about his impotency. She needs a person who really consoles her. Nina chooses Anton, her classmate, as her friend. Anton likes Asian woman like Nina and he tries to seduce her. First she hesitates to sex with him but later she accepts him. After his sexual needs quenched, he avoids her to meet. Nina starts worrying while he continuously neglects her.

Ananda madly loves with Mandy and it makes him a mad. He engages his life with two women Mandy and Nina. As he likes both, he never leaves them. In Nina’s
absence Anton spends his time with Mandy. He compromises and compensates his lack of love with the two women. The same thing happens there in the relation of Anton and Nina. Without any relationship or love, Anton and Nina enjoy merely a meeting of two bodies. Kapur reveals the gender difference between men and women. The same love affair Ananda has with Mandy like Nina but she has no guilty consciousness for the relationship.

Kapur’s fifth novel *Custody* revolves around two different women character. Ishita’s infertility gives trouble to her family and her mental stress. Her husband and his family members force her to get divorce. After the discussion with the doctor, her mother-in-law satisfied that her son is not impotent. Although his mother is as a woman, she cannot understand her daughter-in-law’s mental state. As Ishita longs for children, she becomes a step mother of Raman’s daughter Roohi while she expects the motherly care. While Ishita lost her husband’s support, she received Raman’s support.

The misunderstanding of Raman and Shagun creates unhappiness in the family. While Kapur explains about Raman, she says that he is an ordinary looking talented though he is a hard worker. According to him, he is gifted with pretty wife. Though they are matchless couple, Raman satisfies his wife’s needs beyond his limits. As Shagun expectations become increase more, she chooses wealthy person Ashok Kanna as her pair.

The same situation occurs in Ishita’s life. Ishita survives painfully with her family members. Ishita’s childlessness produces painfulness. She feels hurt while her mother-in-law and husband speak about divorce. Ishita’s mother enquires that both husband and wife should be tested for their childlessness. But her husband never attends the test to identify the reason for infertility. Her mother asks: ‘Are they
treating you well?’ They say it is equally the boy’s fault if there is no conception. Why are they not getting him examined?’ (Custody 54) Ishita’s mother consoles her daughter to recover from her mental agony.

After testing her it is revealed that Ishita is affected with TB in her infancy which created her infertility. Ishita experiences all kinds of tests to diagnose the reason for her infertility like IVF (in vitro fertilization). Kapur illuminates the exact pain of childless woman through Ishita. Ishita writes: “Prayers, Prayers, more prayers. Please stay, please grow. You are my only chance of happiness. So many people to love you, first come into the world. I beg you”. (Custody 64)

Although Ishita prayers God, she does not get success. Her unborn embryo is no more which makes her to hate the child. With the disappointment she says, thus: “This is my Karma. Nothing will break it”. (Custody 65) Ishita’s mother-in-law starts rebuking her after she knows her infertility:

For us the girl’s qualities were everything. You know we asked for no dowry? For us money is not as important as family. But beta, it is essential that Suryakanda have a child. As the only son he has to make sure that the bloodline of his forefathers continues. And now’ – she hesitates slightly- I need to talk to your mother. (Custody 66)

Ishita stuns while hears her mother-in-law’s speech. She expects her husband’s support but completely astonishes on seeing her husband’s silent. Ishita loses her belief on Suryakanda becomes distrusted. Without her husband’s support, Ishita cannot survive in the house. Ishita’s hopelessness in her married life and her parents’ compulsion make her to stay in her mother’s home. Ishita expresses her feelings, thus: But staying was not easy. The mother began to call her slanders, the sisters refused to talk her, the father and she avoided her. She avoided
Ishita understands that she cannot expect self-respect in her husband’s house after divorce. The cash has given to Ishita’s family which is not so huge amount to them for their status. While she hears her mother-in-law offers five lakhs for her family. It shows the shameful situation of Ishita to lose her dignity. Ishita becomes depressed and says herself:

Five lakhs is the price they are willing to pay. And it is me they are paying it to. If you do not want me to come home I will live as a tenant somewhere. I am leaving this house in one week. In fact, she lied in a low controlled tone: ‘there is a family also by willing to me will die or be killed if continue to stay here, is that what you want? A corpse? You can have it today. (Custody 71)

Ishita comes out of her house. No one feels for her leaving and worrier about her absence including her husband. Shandra Kandha's ingratitude and his parent’s inhuman attitude irritate her. In Origin and Development of Islam: Life of The Holy Prophet, Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar says about Polygamy and Divorce-

There were no laws regulating marriage and divorce. A man married as many wives as he liked and divorced as he wished. A man had to say to his wife, Thou art to me as the back of my mother’ and she was divorced but could not marry another. So great was the force of this unjust custom that in the early days of the Prophet’s mission even he
Ishita sheds tears without knowing others. She lost her hope of life while the settlement of divorce has been given to Ishita. It is promised that the balance money would be given six months later to her family when the final proceeding is over. She returns with the disappointment. She seeks her parental help.

The same situation happens in a different way in Shagun comes out of her husband voluntarily. She dislikes staying with her husband. Shagun’s mother suspiciously enquires her about her husband’s complaints that she shows less interest in her children and the household duties. As Shagun has illegal affair with Ashok, she never shows much interest in her children’s care. Ashok Kanna fears that his business dealing with Raman would be spoiled as because of his affair. His fear infuriates Shagun and she shouts at him: “Don’t bother. You will finish and go I have to say for my children. How will they like it when they grow up and realize their mother is a divorcee?” (Custody 81) Shagun gets anger while Ashok Kanna hesitates to marry her. Ashok disinclines remaining inland and plans to move abroad. So he consoles her: “I just want to take you away from here. This narrow social set-up is all you know- that’s why you are afraid. But it will all be fine, Trust me, darling” (Custody 81)

Ashok made her to believe him with flattery words cool her mind. Shagun likes to stay with Ashok and escapes from her husband. Being a mother she likes to bring the children and keep them with her. Shagun’s affair hides her vision of knowledge. Shagun’s mother advises her to live with Raman and not to leave the children but Shagun confirms her future life would be there in abroad with Ashok. She believes him and comes out of her house with the support of Ashok.
Kapur insists the problem of arranged marriage. It is proved that without the consent understanding of couple, the married life would not be run properly. After the birth of two children the couple realises their mismatching. Shagun’s mother advised her daughter to recognise her decision is not good for the future of her children and compels her to change her mind. Though Ashok provides all the facilities to her, her children are not his own possession. Shagun believes Ashok very well. He also loves her very much so surely he would give shelter to her children also.

Shagun’s illicit love with Ashok and lethargic activities of her household activities create Raman’s mental depression. It leads him as a heart patient. Shagun’s carelessness gives him heart problem. Before others’ eyes, Shagun is as an offender. Without conscience she leaves her husband alone in the hospital. For Shagun it is painful, while others blame her as an unfaithful wife and Mrs. Sabharwal says; “The house rests upon us women. In your children’s happiness your husband’s happiness, lies your own. Anything else is first temporary” (Custody 99). Shagun feels about her pathetic position. It is an embarrassment to her while others find faults on her. With her children Shagun plans to go with Ashok to abroad.

In the first four novels of Kapur, the protagonists are agonised by other characters but in her fifth novel Custody, the protagonist Shagun generates the complication to other women characters. Shagun does not realize her faults which troubles would never give satisfaction throughout her life. Before seeing Ashok, Shagun was good woman and responsible mother but after she changed. Because of her love affair her husband, her mother, mother-in-law and even her children suffer. It is very difficult to a man or woman to live happily without getting a suitable husband or wife. Before seeing Ashok Kanna, Shagun was good and virtuous women but later her changes. Her mother-in-law reports her: “A husband’s life is in the wife’s hands. I
should not have to tell a wife it means to look after her husband God forbid you are ever left a window” (Custody 101-102)

Raman’s mother Mrs. Kaushik feels about her son and grandchildren’s future. Her son is a simple and straightforward man. As Raman is a generous man, he forgives his wife without taking legal action. Raman’s mother worries while her son is hospitalized. She knows that Shagun’s immoral behaviour makes him a patient. Shagun blames her mother-in-law as her carelessness produces problem in her family. The misunderstanding of Shagun is not only with her husband but also her mother-in-law. Shagun finds faults her mother-in-law while she spreads wrong information about her. Shagun says in anger:

See. You may not say anything, but you can be sure that she will. As it is, she spent so much time worming information out of the servants.

And of course she tells the children how bad I am. Why doesn’t she publish it in the newspapers and have done? (Custody 104)

Though Shagun needs to be away from her husband, she wishes to accompany the children. Shagun confused between her love of luxurious life and love of children. Even though Shagun knows her blunders, she is powerless to overcome it.

Kapur mentions the suffering of Ishita clearly. Ishita departs from her husband. Ishita suffers physically in her medical check-ups. Ishita hates her body because of incapable of bearing a child. Kapur observes the depression of childless woman: “If only she could tear out her whole reproductive system and throw it on the road. She hated her body, hated it” (Custody 121). Kapur exposes that woman is devalued due to their inability to produce children. Ishita is blamed for her natural physical deficiency. She suffers by losing her self-esteem, abandonment by the family, social isolation and impoverishment. The people talk TB as her Karma. As she is young she
fears about her future safety and security. While she was studying her parents arranged marriage. After she gets divorce, she says her frustration thus: “I wanted to work, you got me married”. (Custody 124) Parents of Ishita do not allow her to study and now she is left alone without proper education, job or domestic life. For her misery parents cannot be answered instead getting feeling. Ishita likes to live with her husband but Shagun is not. Kapur portrays two different kinds of character in this novel simultaneously.

Though Shagun is not a faithful wife, she is a kind mother to her children. Shagun feels depressed while he is in sick. She cannot bear her son’s body-pain and his suffering. Shagun says agonisingly to her son: “I do not know why you are behaving so strangely. I cannot tolerate all this unhappiness. Don’t you love me? Can’t you see I am doing everything for your own good” (Custody 166) Shagun showers her love towards her son while Arjun is ill. As a grown up boy, Arjun watches his mother’s second husband Ashok Kanna who spends his time with his mother. He drinks and smokes. Arjun compares his father with Ashok. Raman has no immoral habits but Shagun does not respect his good habits.

Shagun likes Western life style. She gets no happiness in her married life. For her fate, she gets married with Raman and bears two children without deep love. Due to his business commitment, Raman often strays place to place without staying at home. Shagun is left uncared by her husband and so she gets frustration. No help she receives from Raman in childcare. Her isolation makes her to disgust him. As they are mismatched couple, Shagun selects Ashok. According to her, Ashok is a suitable man to fulfil her all the demands and expectation. Shagun needs Ashok for compassionate and his richness. Shagun tries to escape from the maternal bondage but as a mother she dislikes to leave the children to others. Shagun fears that if she allows the children
to talk with her husband, they would forget her by supporting Raman.

Kapur expresses the change of women’s cultural life style in the present scenario. Mr. Rajora recalls her past memories with surprise while seeing modern women. Mr. Rajora’s wife hardly opens her mouth to talk. Kapur declares her consideration about ancient and modern women through Mr. Rajora in *Custody*:

Mr. Rajora thought of his first encounter with his own bride, and how he had to strain to hear the few words that had barely passed her lips. How much had India really changed, that a silent woman was still considered more desirable? (*Custody* 168)

According to Mr. Rajora, women are estimated to be calm and quite. If they are tame and soft, others would like them especially men expect women to be passive.

Kapur states through her characters, morality of women is always expected by the society. In the family the girls are discriminated to play like the boys in their childhood, abused by the boys and they have married in their childhood without knowing the importance of true love. In adolescence they are restricted to have love affair with other creed. After their marriage they cannot have the same relationship with their own family members or neighbours continuously. Even in the childcare they have no freedom to take decision. Not only the family produces oppression against women but also the societal violence disturbs women throughout the country. Wemen face continuous discrimination throughout their life. Christopher Rollason in her review utters:

The women in India have indeed achieved their success in half a century of independence; but if there is to be a true female independence too, much remains to be done. The autonomy remains an unfinished combat. (177-184)
Kapur proves that the discrimination of women in the society. Wherever women go, the complications follow with them like a shadow. By doing their mundane works always, women become powerless without refreshing their mind to empower. They are innocence or ignorance to take risk boldly and fail to understand the surrounding to tackle the further troubles whatever comes towards them.

Kapur justifies the discrimination of her women characters in all her novels. Kapur describes the different kinds of generation women in all her five novels. The first generation women never open their mouth, in the second generation they hesitates to express it but the third generation women fight for their rights. Every generation women are discriminated by the society in a different way and even they themselves lose their self-confident while their rights are prohibited. Though they try to reach development by their efforts, they face issues are created unpredictably. Women are oppressed under a system of structural hierarchies and injustices.

In her interview, Kapur says that she is not a chronicler of middle class people but she has got most of her inspiration from middle class society and she continues, saying:

I love being compared to Jane Austen, this is such a compliment – but unfortunately I don’t think it is true. First of all she was a genius and I am not. Secondly her canvas is a narrower one than mine. But yes, there is one thing in common – and probably one shared by a lot of women writers – addressing larger social, economic and gender issues through the prism of the family. (An Interview, Random House India in Authors March 29, 2011,)