Chapter-2
Emergence of New Woman in The Novels of Manju Kapur
Women’s lives at the end of the previous century started changing dramatically on various fronts, more visibly so for daughters of middle and upper classes. Female education and secondary school system grew rapidly. Going to college was a badge of class privilege and for some women it was also a badge of aspiration signifying goals beyond the ordinary horizons of most women. Acquisition of higher education signified that a woman was indulged in worldly affairs rather than household chores. Women secured their formidable place in the previously male possessed domains of business and professions. These ‘new women’ represented to self and to society a kind of vanguard of social usefulness and personal autonomy—an independent womanhood. Now they are highly conscious creatures who feel obliged to plumb their own resources to the very depths, despite the fact that they are under no delusions as to the present inferior status of their sex in most fields of endeavor. In brief, the safer side is that if she is economically independent, and if she has, to boot, a vital interest in some work of her own, she will be exposed to fewer vagaries of fate. Love may die, and children may grow up, but one's work goes on forever. She will not, however, live for her job alone for she considers that a woman who talks and thinks only of shop has just as narrow a horizon as the housewife who talks and thinks only of husband and children, perhaps more so, for the latter may have a deeper understanding of human nature. She will therefore refuse to give up all of her personal interests, year in and year out, for the sake of her work. She will proceed on the principle that a person of intelligence and energy can attain a fair amount of success, by the very virtue of living a well-balanced life as well as by working with concentration. Nor has she become hostile to the other sex in the course of her struggle to orient herself. On the contrary, she frankly likes men and is grateful for encouragement and help she has been given.

The ‘new woman’ of our study is not the contemporary woman or even the modern woman. The concept of modernity keeps changing from
time to time and from one social milieu to another. The roles of women and men undergo a change. In this sense every age will have its modern woman, who might not necessarily be the ‘new woman’. In the works selected for this study there are women characters who in every sense are modern yet they can’t be viewed as representatives of the ‘new woman’. The study points out such characters who are modern but not ‘new’. Side by side there are characters who can’t be called modern yet they belong to the category of the ‘new woman’. Also the ‘new woman’ of the present study is not a projection of the modern feminist movement into literary characters. However, the feminist theories which, though originated in the West, are valid for all societies. These are the socialist theories, especially those of Marx and Engels. Even the most emancipated and modern characters of the study do not give evidence of the consciousness of the feminist movement. If the characters sometimes display an awareness of the feminist movement, it may be a case of the author’s projecting herself into them.

A woman is ‘new’ if her basic concerns which are deeper than merely seeking equality with men, asserting her own personality, and insisting upon her own rights as a woman. Seen from this angle, even a rebel or a revolutionary woman cannot be called a ‘new woman’ on this account alone. The woman is ‘new’ when she analyses and reflects upon her position essentially as a woman in the scheme of things which includes the social, moral and spiritual fields. However, it is not only the ‘new woman’ who reflects along these lines. Every woman, at some time or other, does the same but such reflections are conditioned by the thought-patterns handed down to her by moral, intellectual and social order which has been formed by man. The ‘new woman’ not only reflects on her position as a woman in the scheme of things but at the same time she does not use the thought-patterns given to her by this male-made order. She attempts to evolve her own thinking process, her own
intellectual pattern in such a reflection. This she generally does through the use of metaphors.

The characters of Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and of many more novelists use such metaphors in reflecting on the scheme of things. The metaphors reveal the moral and spiritual urge of the ‘new woman’. These metaphors deal with the themes of suffering, dominance, urge for companionship etc. It is through these that the moral and spiritual needs of the ‘new woman’ are projected. These women also explore the entire domain of their family life, their social and inter-personal relationships, their roles as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers in a new frame of reference which they have evolved for themselves. They also evolve their own ‘moral code’ in the light of which they evaluate the social norms set by the society. Therefore, the entire gamut of the social norms of man-made social order which are the bases of evaluating the various roles imposed upon woman is also covered. But this evaluation in the ‘new woman’ is secondary to the examination of her moral and spiritual needs.

However, the modern woman having remained suppressed for thousands of years might be tempted to level her score with man in the present social order and so she might even demonstrate that she can not only have her way in all matters but she can also beat man at his own game of gender dominance, which may be characterised as the ‘Moll Flanders syndrome’. But at the very roots this has only a negative significance. It is a sort of reaction which ignores the moral and spiritual quest the study seeks to investigate as the important trait of the ‘new woman’. However, the temptation to label such characters as the ‘new woman’ is there. This study considers such characters as ‘aberrations’, which do not bring out the essential positive traits of the ‘new woman’. But even in such modern women there is evidence of the awareness of moral and spiritual needs, though they might be hidden beneath the glamour of the emancipated modern woman. So in some respects, all these women can be considered as representatives of the ‘new woman’
because a deeper analysis of these characters reveals the existence of these needs at the core while the life of glamour and modernity is only at the periphery of their psyche.

In the literature of the modern age the first example of the ‘new woman’ is Nora of Ibsen’s play *A Doll’s House*. But even Nora is not a ‘new woman’ until the last part of the play. Before that she is a conventional housewife accepting the moral codes laid down for nineteenth century women. She also accepts her role which the man-made social system has set for her. She becomes a ‘new woman’ when she tells her husband Helmer, “Let us sit down and discuss” (1). This is the moment when she has suddenly developed a new insight into the man-made social order and the position of a woman in it. She suddenly sees her role as a woman, a wife, a mother in a new perspective which is condensed in a single phrase ‘a doll’s house’ and she leaves this ‘doll’s house’ to discover herself. Yet this insight only covers the domain of the social order while the ‘new woman’ of our study goes beyond the consideration of the social order and their position in it.

It is not in modern literature only that we come across a woman analysing her role as a woman and reflecting on the position in the light of such an analysis. Homer’s *Iliad* is perhaps the first example in Western literature when we meet such a situation. And it is Helen of Troy who perceives her position in this light. Whenever she refers to herself in *The Iliad*, she never does so without using such expressions as (1) ‘my abhorred and miserable self,’ (2) ‘my unhappy self’ (3). Although she muses on her own lot yet it is significant that the woman, who to male eyes, symbolized nothing but attraction and physical charm, sees herself in a totally different light. Even the elders of Troy, who were too old to fight, were struck by her beauty. In the similar manner Dr. Faustus is enraptured at the vision of her face:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

O Helen! make me immortal with a kiss. (4)

This shows how man is incapable of fathoming a woman’s psyche, much less of appreciating it. The Iliad gives further insight into women bewailing their own lot while appearing to weep for someone else. The Greeks, during the course of their ten-year siege of Troy, had sacked many other towns in the neighbourhood and had brought their women to their camp and divided them up among themselves. When the Greek hero, Patrocles is slain (Book XIX) these ‘bonds women’ lament over his dead body ‘making as though their tears weep for Patrocles, but in truth each was weeping for her own sorrows.’ (5) This shows how in the male-dominated society a woman has to evolve the indirect technique of expressing her sorrow through projecting it as the grief for some other person. Thus, women are forced to evolve their own pattern of exteriorizing their feelings. In this sense Homer can be said to be the first male to develop an insight into women’s psyche which the women novelists of our study, too, attempt to provide.

It would be worthwhile exploring how the aforesaid traits of the ‘new woman’ feature in each of the four authors under study. The women characters of Kamala Markandaya’s novels, though not conscious, though not fully aware, yet are concerned with the fundamental question--the lot of women. This they analyse through the metaphor of dominance or through the metaphor of suffering. In this sense, it gives evidence of a new kind of thinking which finds full flowering in later writers. Also, when subjected to stress and strain, both internal and external, the women characters evolve a set of responses to protect their psyche from being bruised, thus giving credence to the fact that every woman needs to evolve her own defense mechanism in the world of male dominance.

In the novels of Anita Desai taken up for the study, nearly all women figure in the first person narrative, yet they don’t assume the
form of a narrator. The woman who tells the story is not concerned about incidents or facts as happens in a narrative but is more concerned about her reaction – moral, spiritual and emotional. This going deeper into her own personality or exploring her own self is the trait of the ‘new woman’. The attempt at self-realization may or may not lead to self-fulfillment, yet it does not invalidate her quest. Like the traditional woman, the ‘new woman’, too, tolerates, makes adjustments for the family, and the husband, understands him, and even forgives him but nowhere do we find her changing or moulding her basic personality. In this sense, the ‘new woman’ of Anita Desai is very much like her male counterpart who may be tolerating, may be indifferent, may even revolt but never changing his basic personality for the sake of his wife or the family. Basically, the woman protagonists of Desai’s fiction aim at spiritual fulfillment which may be analyzed through various metaphors such as that of barrenness, and violence etc. Also, her heroines enter the domain of speculative philosophy thereby exploding the myth that it is only the preserve of the male. An insight into the consciousness of Desai’s women characters reveals that they seem to be toying with the idea as to whether it is possible to reconstruct the social order based on the psyche of woman. In this regard, her novels are in themselves a metaphor of deconstruction, for in deconstruction reconstruction is inherent.

Similarly the women characters of Namita Gokhale and Shobha De can in all likelihood pass for ‘new women’ since most of them are economically independent and socially emancipated. Judged in terms of feminist school of thought, they deserve the epithet, for in every walk of life right from earning a living to most blatant issues of sexuality, they are on a level of parity with their male counterparts. However, when compared with the manner in which the women characters of Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai are ‘new’, the women characters of Namita Gokhale and Shobha De appears to be an ‘aberration’. The woman protagonists of these novelists consider men as the source of enjoyment.
But this metaphor i.e. the opposite sex as the source of enjoyment, is essentially a metaphor which is a part of male dominance. Hence, by borrowing a metaphor from the male world and treating men’s value-systems as theirs, they are actually doing nothing ‘new’. This is reflected in their not feeling guilty or remorseful after having an illicit relationship outside marriage, they may even boast about it or just forget about it or might even publicize it, parade their sexuality and become ready again to begin their life anew--so far all these were part of male prerogatives, but these women have challenged the value-systems of male dominance and adopted them as theirs. This they consider as self-fulfilling or a source of self-fulfillment. But even in these novelists, the women characters do throw a glimpse here and there that this kind of life cannot become a source of spiritual fulfillment or even provide lasting peace or comfort. Even they realize that this does nothing to the enrichment of their personality. So, they are not the kind of women we are looking for. If it were not so, after Anita Desai, we should have found women, who would attain spiritual realization but the study of Namita Gokhale and Shobha De, who appear later than Anita Desai on the fiction scene in the chronological order, does not proceed in that direction. Hence, we are justified in calling their women characters an ‘aberration’ so far as the concept of the ‘new woman’ is concerned.

However, globally feminism was part of a free-ranging spirit of rebellion at the turn of the century. It was a part of the broader revolt against formalism; a refusal to heed the abstraction of womanhood, and to the calcified definitions of female character. The feminists were determined to realize personality, to achieve self-determination through life, growth, and experience. As Charlotte Perkins Gilman describes the new woman:

Here she comes, running, out of prison and off the pedestal; chains off, crown off, halo off, just a live woman. (6)
Feminism sought to change human consciousness about male dominance. To do so, the feminists had to create a community of women in struggle against patriarchy. They found such a community in the suffrage movement. Feminists’ presence in the suffrage movement broadened the margins of the movement, gave them a platform by bringing in working women, leftists, and pacifists. Yet feminists differed from suffragists in terms of style and attitude. They reacted against the emphasis in the woman movement on female nurturance, selfless service, and moral uplift. The woman movement stressed woman's duties while feminists reinvigorated demands for woman’s rights. It demanded the removal of social, political and economic discrimination based on sex and sought rights and duties on the basis of individual capacity alone.

Pre-colonial social structures and women’s role reveal that feminism was theorized differently in India than in the west. Historical circumstances and values in India make women’s issues different from the western feminist rhetoric. The idea of women as ‘powerful and new’ is accommodated into patriarchal culture through religion. This has retained visibility in all sections of society by providing women with traditional and cultural spaces. India is usually considered to be just one part of the larger social collective, dependent for its survival upon cooperation and self-denial for the greater good. Indian women negotiate with survival through an array of oppressive patriarchal family structures: age, ordinal status, relationship with men, marriage, procreation, kinship, caste, community and patriarchal attributes such as dowry, siring sons etc. The heterogeneity of Indian experience reveals that there are multiple patriarchies and so also are there multiple feminisms. Hence feminism in India is not a singular theoretical orientation; it has changed over time in relation to historical and cultural realities, levels of consciousness, perceptions and actions of individual woman and women as a group. The male and female dichotomy of polar opposites with the former oppressing the latter at all times is refuted in the Indian context because it was man
who initiated social reform movements against various social evils. Patriarchy is just one of the hierarchies. Relational hierarchies between women within the same family are more adverse. Here women are pitted against one another. The colonial venture into modernity brought concepts of democracy, equality and individual rights. The rise of the concept of nationalism andintrospection of discriminatory practices brought about social reform movements related to caste and gender relations. This phase of feminism in India was initiated by men to uproot the social evils of sati (widow immolation), to allow widow remarriage, to forbid child marriage, to reduce illiteracy, to regulate the age of consent and to ensure property rights through legal intervention. Women were categorized along with lower castes as subjects of social reforms and welfare instead of being recognized as autonomous agents of change. The emphasis was on recreating new space in pre-existing feminine roles of caring. The women involved were those related to male activists, elite, western educated and upper caste Hindus.

In post-independence period the struggle against colonial rule intensified. Nationalism became the pre-eminent cause. Claiming Indian superiority became the tool of cultural revivalism resulting in an essentializing model of Indian womanhood similar to that of Victorian womanhood, special yet separated from public space. Mahatma Gandhi legitimized and expanded Indian women’s public activities by initiating them into the non-violent civil disobedience movement against the British Raj. He exalted their feminine roles of caring, self-abnegating, sacrificing and tolerant, and carved a niche for those in public space. Woman-centered organizations like All India Women’s Conference (AIWC) and the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) emerged. Women grappled with the issues relating to the scope of women’s political participation, women’s franchise, communal awards, and leadership roles in political parties.
Women’s participation in the freedom struggle developed their critical consciousness about their role and rights in independent India. This resulted in the introduction of the franchise and civic rights of women in the Indian constitution. There was provision for women’s upliftment through affirmative action, maternal health and child care provision, and equal pay for equal work etc. The state adopted a patronizing role towards women. The utopia ended soon when the social and cultural ideologies and structures failed to honour the newly acquired concepts of fundamental rights and democracy. In India, the concept of ‘equality’ was completely alien until liberally exposed Western-educated Indians introduced it in the early nineteenth century. However, the term did not gain meaning or became an operational principle in Indian life until the country gained independence in 1947 and adopted a democratic government. The Indian Constitution then granted equality and freedom from discrimination based on gender or religion, and guaranteed religious freedom. Seventh Five-Year Plan provided health, education, employment, and welfare to women. The sixth Five-Year Plan declared women partners in development. Gandhiji came up with the term stree shakti for the concept of womanhood. In the Hindu religion, Gods are not exclusively male. Hinduism sheds a positive light on femininity; females are considered to compliment and as such complete their male counterparts. It is important to note that the deities of both knowledge and wealth are female. Keeping in consideration the women at work it is worth noticing that though the uneducated and rural section of the Indian society, which forms a large percentage of the total population, women are seen as economic burdens. Their contributions to productivity are mostly invisible and their familial and domestic contributions are unfairly overlooked. Today Indian women have excelled in each and every field from social work to visiting space station. There is no arena, which remained unconquered by Indian women. Whether it is politics, sports, entertainment, literature, or technology everywhere we hear appreciation for women. Sarojini Naidu, Vijaylakshami Pandit, Sucheta Kriplani were
the torchbearer for the women of India. Vijay Lakshami Pandit was the first Indian woman to hold a post in the cabinet thus paving the path for other women. The most important name in the category of women politicians of recent times is Indira Gandhi. She was the one who made world stop and notice the talent and potential of Indian women. She was the first woman Prime Minister of Independent India. Today her daughter-in-law Sonia Gandhi is following her footsteps and is leading the Indian National Congress. Other women who have imprinted their names in politics of India are Shiela Dixit, Uma Bharti, Jayalalita, Vasundra Raje Sindhia, Sushma Swaraj and Mamta Banerjee et al. Indian women have achieved great laurels for the nation in every sport. Whether it is cricket or hockey India has national women team. Indian women cricket team has won Asia Cup of 2004 and 2005 and made country proud. Art and entertainment area is full of Indian women. We have many names to boast of like M.S. Subbulakshmi, Indian Nightingale Lata Mangeshker and Asha Bhosle as famous singers. Madhu Bala, Rekha, Aishwarya Rai as Bollywood queens. Today Indian woman is a painter, actor, singer, and beauty queen. Most importantly the first woman IPS Kiran Bedi is an exemplary figure. Kiran Majumdar Shaw is an undisputed corporate queen of India. She is an MD of Biocon India, and the richest Indian woman. Other names who deserve mention in this list include Vidya Mohan Chhabaria, Chairperson of Jumbo Group, Naina Lal Kidwai, Vice Chairperson and Managing Director of HSBC Securities and Capital Market, Sullaijja Firodia Motwani, Chanda Kochar, M.D. of I.C.I.C.I. and Mallika Srinivasan. Mother Teresa is a name which every Indian whether rich or poor is well familiar with. She was the person who used to consider the smile of her countrymen as her wealth. She worked for those whom even their own families deserted. She did not care whether she was in the company of a person suffering from communicable disease or a leper. Whenever or wherever one needed her she was present. She opened various Homes for these people most famous of which is ‘Nirmal Hriday’. It is open to everyone irrespective of their caste, colour, creed or religion.
Another important name working for the cause of people is Medha Patekar who is associated with Narmada Bachao Andolan. Indian women have not just made their mark on the earth but they have engraved their names in the whole universe by soaring to the space as well. Kalpana Chawla, the member of Colombia Space Shuttle which exploded on its way back, is the first Indian woman astronaut visiting space station. And now following on her footsteps another woman of Indian origin Sunita Williams has become the second one to be the member of International Space Station Crew. Indian women have mastered anything and everything which a woman can dream of.

Modern influences have affected the younger generations in parts of India, where girls are beginning to forgo the more traditional ways of Indian life and break gender stereotypes. In more flourishing parts of the country, the idea of ‘dating,’ or more specifically openly dating, has come into play, and the terms ‘girlfriend’ and ‘boyfriend’ are being used. Some women have landed highly respectable careers, and can be seen across Bollywood billboards and advertisements.

However, this is not the norm throughout the country; such modernization and the women behind it face serious resistance from anti-liberalists. Taking women into literature and their portrayal in fiction, it can be easily observed that in pre-independent India the picture of Indian womanhood was stale and perverted. It was either exaggerated or neglected. In a word it was unrealistic and imitative. Woman did not occupy an important place in most novels. The novelists of the period treated woman’s life, experiences and values as marginal. The women of early Indian novels had no identity and suffered mostly owing to the infidelity of their husbands. The emergence of ‘new woman’ is a global phenomenon. However, with the advent of new millennium, the globalized world has become small and compact. The woman of today is growing in status and leadership. She enjoys freedom in social, economic, judicial and
personal strides crossing the threshold of the house. She is readily progressing in every walk of life with the emergence of feminist movement in the West. The emancipated women started freely discussing such experiences even in autobiographies. In India also women authors have boldly come out with intimate details of life in their autobiographies. When women could talk so freely about themselves, it was natural that they would be more inhibited in writing especially in their novels. Kamla Das narrates in her autobiography *My Story* how, when she got engaged, her fiancé pushed her into a dark corner behind a door and kissed her sloppily near mouth and crushed her breasts with his thick fingers. Amrita Pritam, a well-known writer and a champion of the cause of women, freely talks about her intimate relationship with different men at different times in her autobiography *Rasidi Ticket*. These examples show the courage with which the Indian women authors reveal what a woman has to face in male dominated society. The woman of today has the courage to express her essentially feminine sensibility, sincerely and honestly. The woman’s experience, horizon and space are expanding. The women writers are voicing the pangs, problems and fears of the weaker sex. The inner psyche, the gloomy depression, the social boycott, the bruised and broken heart breaking the melancholic loneliness and isolation, the angry agitation, and the struggle—all have been loudly propounded. The modern Indian woman has protested against patriarchal dominion and emerges out of her trauma. She is free, liberated and assertive. The new woman demands attention and equality not on compromising terms but on terms at par with man. Indian fiction in English has been enriched by many talented women novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Attia Hosain, Santha Rama Rai, Rama Mehta, and Shashi Despande, Kiran Desai, Vaidehi, C.S.Lakshami, Mahashweta Devi, Indira Goswami, B.M.Suhara, Bharati Mukherjee, Nergis Dalal, Krishna Sobti, Dina Mehta Malati Chendur, Gauri
Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Ruth Jhabvala, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Suniti Namjoshi and Anuradha Marwah Roy et al. The erudite studies of these authors include lucid exposition of the varied nuances of feminism, interspersed in preceding detailed consideration of texts under study. Also there is a wide ranging study of the treatment of the neurotic phenomenon in Indian English fiction with special reference to the portrayal of the emerging self of women characters. They have described the background of contemporary India. All of them have written about socio-cultural modes and values. The changing contexts have placed these women writers in an unenviable position. Their chief concern was to explore the moral and psychic dilemma and repercussion of their women characters along with their efforts to cope with the challenges and achieve a new harmony with their surroundings. The movements of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Mahatma Gandhi proved a great relief to women as they were brought out of the tyranny of social evils. Still the number of women enjoying considerable freedom was very meagre. For the majority of women, subordination to men and misery was synonymous. The battle for emancipation was taken over by a few educated women writers. The motive was to voice their own better experiences as women with a view to influencing the society and effacing social reforms. The ideal image of woman like the traditional Sita or Savitri was gradually replaced by the realistic one i.e. the frustrated and alienated one. The introduction of liberal English education not only brought significant changes in the middle class lifestyle but also raised a consciousness of freedom in the minds of women. This only led to a romantic desire for a freedom that wasn’t easy to come by. The women writers thus, used this conflict between tradition and modernity. It was a portrayal of women facing the conflicts and problems issuing from the fusion of the traditional and modern values. Indian women novelists in English try their best to deal with the pathetic plight of women who are fated to suffer from birth to death. The emergence of women writers in the last quarter of the 19th century carried with it a double significance. It
bore testimony to the birth of a new era of emancipation for the Indian woman, an era of increased opportunities and a more dynamic participation in the social and intellectual life of the country ushered in by the great social reorientation which came at the turn of the century. Secondly, it was also a commentary on the rise of individualism in the life of men of letters of the age, an individualism which is closely associated with the rise of the novel in India in the same way in which it was associated with the rise of the English novel. It is not the appearance alone of the women writers in the realm of Indian fiction in English during the earliest phase of its growth that is of interest but what makes these novelists particularly interesting to a student of Indo-Anglian fiction is the fact that they were writers of promise, showed in their writings, traits, tendencies and predilections which continue to manifest themselves in the writings of the women novelists. The emergence of women novelists in Indian English literature took place as early as the last quarter of the 19th century.

The task of this research would not be accomplished without the mention of some of the prominent figures of Indian English Literature. The era of Indo-Anglian women novelists begins with Toru Dutt. She was the youngest girl of Govind Chunder Dutt, a retired Indian Officer. She went to a school in France, for the first time of her life, and had an intimacy with French during that period. Her novels; *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d’Arvers* and *Bianca, or the Young Spanish Maiden* (considered to be the first novel in English by an Indian woman writer) is a romantic love story dealing with the autobiographical projections of her sweet and sour experience of her very short life. These novels were published posthumously by her father. Though the characters are Spanish and French yet the delineation is entirely Indian, full of love and affection, sincerity and purity which characterize the care of an ideal Indian woman.

Cornelia Sorabji, a Parsi-Christian, is another great figure in the real novels. She is mainly famous for her three important works, *Love and Life*
Behind the Purdah, Sun Babies and Between the Twilight. She reveals in her novels the various moods and gestures going in under the ‘purdah’ - the ecstasy, tragedy, joy and many more things which are unnoticed even by a feminist philosopher. In short ‘purdah’ plays a very important role in the life of an average Indian woman. Her life in both Muslim and Hindu culture, more conservatively observed in the Muslim, is the core theme of Sorabji’s novels. She proved to be the first woman writer to appear with first Indian English short story in the beginning of the twentieth century having a considerable literary output. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century we find the emergence of women writers of great significance. On the one hand we find the birth of a new era of emancipation for the Indian women; on the other it was a commentary on the rise of individualism. Great social reorientation allowed them ample opportunities to participate in the social and intellectual life and with the rise of individualism rise of novel is also to be traced.

Krupabai Satthianadhan is yet another prominent novelist in English from India of this period. She authored a semi-autobiographical novel Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life and Shevantibai M. Nikambe: a sketch of a Bombay high caste Hindu Young wife.

In the 20th century, women’s writing was considered as a powerful medium of modernism and feminist statement. But it was only after the achievement of Independence that women novelists could make solid contributions to Indian English fiction. After the Second World War a notable development is the emergence of an entirely new school of women novelists. The history of Indian women novelists got a new track, and a new vision. In this period the above mentioned women novelists are unquestionably the most outstanding personalities in the field of social and artistic novels. They have provided a new insight into the status and attitude of woman in society.
During the 1990s India became a popular literary nation as a number of women authors made their debut in this era. Today’s is a generation of those women writers who have money and are mostly western educated. Their novels deal with the latest burning issues related to women as well as the ones existing in the society since long. The novelists describe the whole world of women with simple stunning frankness. They give a glimpse of the unexplored female psyche, which has no accessibility. The majority of their novels depict the psychological suffering of the frustrated housewives. These novels reflect that the present age woman has realized that she is not helpless and dependent, rather she is equally competent just like a man, a direct money earner and not merely confined to household chores. The women of modern era think on different lines and this is what has been depicted in the novels of the Indian women authors. They explore the feminine subjectivity and apply the themes that range from childhood to complete womanhood such as the problems and issues faced by them in male dominated world. Through their novels they spread the message of what actually feminism is i.e. putting an end to all the sufferings of a woman in silence. The women novelists try to create awareness and proclaim with definite precision that they too have their lives and as such they ought to be let live it in their own way. Most of these female novelists are known for their bold views. Basically, theirs are the novels of protest and of outburst of reservations and of contamination. Unlike the past, where the works of women novelists were given less priority and were actually undervalued, classification of feministic or male writings hardly makes any sense today.

Therefore, a brief history of these novelists is quite desirable to know how magnificent they have been in their lives. Starting with Kamala Markandaya, her works reveal a realistic delineation of the double pulls that the Indian woman is subjected to, between her desire to assert herself as an individual and her duty in the capacity of a daughter, wife and mother. She is famous for presenting hunger, human damnation,
social recalcitrance and cultural chaos, assault of modernity or traditional faith in her novels. The most striking feature of her writing is the characterisation of women placed against historical, cultural, political and sociological environment of a changing India. Women consciousness dominates in the familial relationship of her novels. All her novels—Nectar in a Sieve, Some Inner Fury, A Silence of Desire, Possession, A Handful of Rice, Coffer Dams, Nowhere Man, Two Virgins and The Honey Comb deal with the themes of woman’s position in Indian society and the inner turmoil of a woman’s heart. Her Nectar in a Sieve presents the impact of the industrial revolution in an Indian village. It portrays how the mind of an industrialist blows across rural India and causes the dislocation of tradition. In A Silence of Desire the protagonist Sarojini overcomes her problems in her own way. The Nowhere Man takes up a hot and searing subject, the problems of Indian immigrants in racially conscious Britain. The lure and dangers of big cities are detailed in Two Virgins. Kamala Markandaya’s themes have, therefore, universal appeal. One of her most striking features as a woman novelist is her portrayal of women in relation to the historical, cultural, political and sociological environment of changing India. The woman consciousness being central to her fiction, it is but natural that women characters should loom large in novel after novel. Her fiction is important from many angles. She has tried to articulate the philosophical and the sociological strains in her novels.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala also left an indelible imprint in the history of women novelists in English. The novel which matters most in the literary career of R.P. Jhabwala is Heat and Dust which won the prestigious Booker Prize in 1975. It deals with the sad and moving story of two English women who paid their visit to India and in return they became the victims of this country. Her other famous novels are The Nature of Passion, Get Ready for Battle, and The Householder. Her first novel To Whom She Will presents a very beautiful picture of Indian society—its rites and customs, taste and temperament and above all marriage and love with an element
of illicit relationship. It also deals with a truthful portrayal of the fatal consequences arising out of partition which uprooted millions of people. The novelist gives a fine picture of the piteous conditions of a large number of refugees in New Delhi who came to settle there after partition. *The Nature of Passion* deals with a modern young girl, Nimmi, who wants to discard the age-old customs and rites, myths and traditions. She fights for the cause of woman’s emancipation. She attends club regularly, plays tennis, keeps boy-cut hair, and attends lectures on English Romantic Poets. Through Nimmi, the novelist wants to satirize these silly youngsters who have false pretensions of modernism and independence. Both *Esmond in India* and *A Backward Place* ring the note of east-west encounter. In *A Backward Place*, Judy, an English girl marries an Indian actor, Bal. But this marriage also does not succeed because of their different mentality. *The Householder* is a domestic comedy which shows Jhabvala’s acute perception of remote village life—the conflicts between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law, the one with domineering accusations and the other with taciturn enmity.

Nayantara Sahgal, the niece of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and the daughter of Vijyalaxmi Pandit, is a political novelist. Her famous novels are *A Time to be Happy*, *This Time of Morning*, *Storm in Chandigarh*, *A Day in Shadow*, *A Situation in New Delhi* and *Rich Like Us*. She presents in her novels the unsatisfied woman in high class society and her concern of Indian political scene. Her writing is generally characterized by simplicity and boldness. Her novels truthfully mirror the contemporary Indian political theme. All the major characters of her novels are centripetally drawn towards the vortex of politics. Besides politics, her fiction also focuses attention on Indian woman's search for sexual freedom and self realization. Her feminine sensibility appears to be unconventional and her primary concern is to articulate the voice of women. Nayantara Sahagal’s first novel *A Time to be Happy* presents conflict between eastern and the western cultures. In this novel the
protagonist’s main worry is that he can not belong entirely to India. His rootlessness is the cause of his discontentment. The solution of this feeling of alienation comes through marriage. Her second novel *This Time of Morning* has most of its action taking place in Delhi and its corridors of power namely the houses of ministers, politicians and other. Her third novel *Storm in Chandigarh* has silence in stronger than all rhetoric and whose seeming capacity for resignations is the true measure of her measureless strength. *The Day in Shadow* has its subject on the plight of a divorced woman. This well told and interesting story is an achievement in story-telling. *A Situation in New Delhi* points out the Naxalite movement and students’ unrest and, above all, the aftermath of Nehru’s death.

Anita Desai has been writing some of the best English language fiction in India for almost four decades. She’s been shortlisted for the Man Booker prize thrice and won the Sahitya Akademi Award, one of India’s most prestigious literary prizes, in 1978 for her second novel, *Fire on the Mountain*. Familial relationships and their evolution have been the main themes of Desai’s fiction. She has taught at various colleges in the US, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her latest book is *The Zigzag Way*. She delves deep into the inner working of her protagonists and penetrates the hidden depths of human psyche. Her *Cry, the Peacock* is the tragic story of Maya who is haunted by the astrological prediction of the death of either wife or husband. In other words she is the victim of Hardian fate and providence i.e. an uncannily oppressive sense of fatality. In *The Voices in the City* the tragedy of Maya is re-enacted in Monisha who has to undergo so many unbearable tyranny and injustice, insult and abuse, in her husband’s dwelling. *Bye-bye Blackbird* is a symbolic novel in which Anita Desai presents the east-west encounter. It is a great irony that the British characters in the novel seem to be more convincing than the Indian protagonists. *In Fire on the Mountain*, Anita Desai presents the psychology of two different women.
characters—Nanda, an unsentimental old widow leading a segregated life like a recluse in a segregated hill hut and Raka, a shy, gentle and lovely school girl by nature and instincts. Thus, Anita Desai has heralded a new era in the realms of psychological portrayal of her characters.

Rama Mehta was born in Nainital. She is one of the first women to be appointed to India’s Foreign Service. She became a top sociologist, lecturer and novelist. Rama Mehta’s first novel *Inside the Haveli* has the credit of winning the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award (1979). It deals with the confrontation between culture and civilization, and city and village. It shows how Geeta, a modern Mumbai girl has to lead a secluded life under the ‘purdah’ in the Haveli. Rama Mehta’s other notable works are *The Western Educated Hindu Woman*, *The Hindu Divorced Woman* and *From Purdah to Modernity*.

Shashi Deshpande is well known writer among the gems of Indian English literature. The intricate web of human relationships, instrumental in the development of the self, is also a dominant concern of her novels. Each of these novels deals with a different issue like loneliness, clash with male ego, and the degree of freedom within marriage and the extent to which one can approximate independence. Her first novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* deals with an unusual character Sarita who dares to challenge the age-old tradition by marrying a man outside her caste. The other one *The Bending Vine* is a feminine novel which represents a woman as a spineless, wooden creature subjected to male domination. In *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande makes an aesthetic plea to free the female psyche from the conventional male control. In short, almost all her literary ventures revolve round the pathetic and heart-rending condition of women in a male dominated society.

Shobha De is a modern novelist who is famous for portraying the sex mania of the commercial world. A prolific column and blogger, she is India’s best selling woman writer. She has authored books filled with
privileged protagonists from Bombay’s high society. Known as the Indian Jackie Collins and The Maharani of Muck, Shobha De shows no signs of slowing down after two decades of scaling commercial heights. She is among the good translators and publishers of quality fiction. She has translated the fictions such as *Katha* and *Zubaan* which has propelled the success of regional language literature in India. This boom has also helped a wider audience gain access to the work of many acclaimed women authors. She has a gift of exploring the subdued depths of woman’s psychology. Her first novel *Socialite Evening* is Lawrencian in expression. Her other works are *Starry Nights, Sisters, Second Thoughts, Shooting from the Hills, Small Betrayals, Surviving Men, Sweet Sixteenth and Speed Post*. She believes that a man’s personality can be judged in a true perspective only when one goes into his interior more than his exterior behaviour. It is also worth noticing that Shobha De like D.H. Lawrence, has openly discussed sex in most of her works. A thorough study of her De's novels shows the novelist’s perceptive portrayal of the secret depths of the human psyche. In short, Shobha De has tried her best to expose the moral and spiritual breakdown of the society in which a hapless and forsaken woman longs for pleasure and wants to fly freely in the sky of freedom. She depicts the breaking up of the institution of marriage. The new concept of marriage envisages complete sexual freedom with no notion of fidelity.

Arundhati Roy, the next in the line of Indo-Anglian litterateurs, was born in Shillong, Meghalaya, India, to Ranjit Roy, a Bengali Hindu tea planter and Mary Roy, a Malayali Syrian Christian and an activist of women's rights. Roy is a cousin of prominent media personality Prannoy Roy, the head of the leading Indian TV media group NDTV. Arundhati Roy created history by winning Booker Prize for the first time for her first novel *The God of Small Things* in 1997. She has also written two screenplays and several collections of essays. Her writings on various social, environmental and political issues have been a subject of major
controversy in India. The plot of *The God of Small Things* is complex and it moves both ways backward and forward—and thereby makes the narration difficult. Thematically it centres round Ammu, her two children Raphal and Esthappen, her parents, brother, Chacko and his wife Margaret and daughter, Sophie Mol and above all, Ammu’s low caste lover, Velutha.

Mahasweta Devi, the winner of the prestigious Gyanpith and Magasasy Awards for her novel, *Mother of 1084* contends that women shouldn’t be submissive and passive and should realize the inner strength of which they are known. It portrays the psychological and emotional crisis of a mother whose son is lying dead in the police morgue.

Anita Nair is a popular Indian-English writer and a bestselling author of fiction and poetry. Her novels are passionately woven on the thread of human nature and values with a female oriented component. *Better Man, Mistress, The Puffin Book of Magical Indian Myths, Where The Rain is Born-Writing about Kerela, Ladis Coupe, Lessons in forgetting Pb,* and *Malabar Mind* are her notable works. She was working as the creative director of an advertising agency in Bangalore when she wrote her first book, a collection of short stories called *Satyr of the Subway*. The book won her a fellowship from the Virginia Center for Creative Arts. Her second book was published by Penguin India, and was the first book by an Indian author to be published by Picador USA. *Mistress* was included in the list for the Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction. Her *Ladies Coupe* was elected as one of the five best in India in 2002. The novel is about women’s conditions in a male dominated society, told with great insight, solidarity and humour and was rated as one of the year 2002's top five books. It was translated into more than twenty-five languages around the world. Anita’s writings about Kerala and her poetry have been included in ‘The Poetry India Collection and a British Council Poetry Workshop Anthology’.
Jhumpa Lahiri is an Indo-American author. She is a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities appointed by the U.S. President Barack Obama. Her debut short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies* won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and her first novel *The Namesake* was adapted to a popular film. Lahiri's writing is characterized by her plain language and her characters, often Indian immigrants to America who must navigate between the cultural values of their homeland and their adopted home. Lahiri's fiction is autobiographical and frequently draws upon her own experiences as well as those of her parents, friends, acquaintances. Lahiri examines her characters' struggles, anxieties and biases to chronicle the nuances and details of immigrant psychology and behavior. Her *Interpreter of Maladies* and *Unaccustomed Earth* scrutinize the fate of the second and third generations. As succeeding generations become increasingly assimilated into American culture and are comfortable in constructing perspectives outside of their country of origin, Lahiri's fiction shifts to the needs of the individual. She shows how later generations depart from the constraints of their immigrant parents who are often devoted to their community and their responsibility to other immigrants. A social activist and acclaimed Bengali writer, Mahasweta Devi hails from a family of literary luminaries. Devi has worked as a college lecturer and journalist. The main themes of her fictional work have been the brutalities inflicted upon the tribal minorities by the authorities and upper classes. Devi won the Jnanapith award in 1996 and the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1997 for her contribution to literature. A number of her works have been made into acclaimed films, including *Rudaali* and *Hazaar Chaurasi ki Maa*.

Indira Goswami is one of the leading lights of Assamese and contemporary Indian literature. She won the Jnanapith Award, India's highest literary honour given for a lifetime’s work, in 2000. Besides her writing Goswami is a well-respected professor and social activist. Goswami’s work focuses on women and various aspects of Assamese
society. Her most famous works are *Pages Stained with Blood* and *The Moth-Eaten Howdah of a Tusker*.

Janaki Srinivasa Murthy, who writes under the pseudonym Vaidehi, is one of Kannada literature’s most talented contemporary writers and poets. Her work has a strong social focus, especially the condition of women in modern society. She won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2009 for her collection of short stories. Girish Kasaravalli’s award winning 2008 film, *Gulabi Talkies*, is based on one of Vaidehi’s short stories.

C.S. Lakshmi, one of modern Tamil literature’s most acclaimed women writers, has written numerous stories under the pseudonym Ambai. The English translation of her collected stories was published under the title, *The Purple Sea*. C.S. Lakshmi is also one of India’s most respected experts in women’s studies and was the founder-trustee of Sound and Picture Archives for Research on Women (SPARROW), of which she is the current Director.

B.M. Suhara has emerged as one of Malayalam literature’s leading women authors. Her work focuses on the social problems of the Malabar Muslim community in Kerala. Her most famous works are *Nizhal (Shadow)* and *Venal (Summer)*. She won the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award in 2008 for her contribution to Malayalam literature.

Sudha Kulkarni Murthy is renowned for her writing and active role in social services. She is known for her philanthropic work through the Infosys Foundation. She was the first female computer engineer employed at *Tata motors*. Her flair for writing is evident in her books like *Dollar Sose (Dollar daughter-in-law)*, originally written in Kannada and later translated into English as *Dollar Bahu* was adopted as a television serial in 2001. Sudha Murthy is a writer and has written many stories, mostly published by Penguin dealing with common lives and her views on donations, hospitality and realization. Her other notable works include *Wise and Otherwise, Mahasweta, How I Taught My Grandmother To Read,*
The Bird with Golden Wings, Gently Falls the Bakula, Old Man And His God, A wedding in Russia and Sweet Hospitality.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, a novelist, poet, professor and short story author, is indeed a gifted writer. She was awarded the American Book Award for her short story collection Arranged Marriage and two of her novels The Mistress of Spices and Sister of My Heart were adapted into films. Divakaruni's works are largely set in India and the United States, and often focus on the experiences of South Asian immigrants. She writes for children as well as adults and has published novels in multiple genres, including realistic fiction, historical fiction, magical realism and fantasy.

Kiran Desai, the daughter of the noted author Anita Desai and the partner of Orhan Pamuk, was born in India and educated in England and the US. Her work appeared in The New Yorker and Salman Rushdie's anthology Mirrorwork: Fifty Years of Indian Writing. Her The Inheritance of Loss won the coveted 2006 Man Booker Prize and National Book Critics Circle award for fiction. Kiran Desai has literary talent in her very DNA. She won rave reviews for her debut novel Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard (1998). Though Desai lives in the US, her works focus the tumult of 21st century India, migration, globalization and the effect of the country’s rapid progress on all social classes.

Bharati Mukherjee is an award-winning Indo-American writer. Presently she is a professor in the department of English at the University of California, Berkeley. She won a National Book Critic Circles Award. Mukherjee and her husband Clarke Blaise co-authored Days and Nights in Calcutta. They also wrote The Sorrow and the Terror: The Haunting Legacy of the Air India Tragedy (Air India Flight 182).

Attia Hosain is a writer, feminist and broadcaster. She was born in Lucknow in a Taluqdar background. She moved to Britain in 1947 and became a broadcaster for the BBC, hosting a popular women’s radio

Gita Mehta is another emerging Indian writer. She has produced and directed fourteen television documentaries for the UK, European and the US networks. Her film compilation of the Bangladesh revolution *Dateline Bangladesh* was shown in cinema theatres both in India and abroad. Her books have been translated into 21 languages and have been in the bestseller lists in Europe, the US and India. The subject of both her fiction and non-fiction is exclusively focused on India: her culture and history, and the Western perception of it. Her works reflect the insight gained through her journalistic and political background. *Snakes and Ladders*, *Glimpses of Modern India*, *Karma Cola*, *Raj*, *A River Sutra*, and *Eternal Ganesha* are some of her important works.

Meenakshi Mukherjee is also one of the precious gems of Indo-English literature and Sahitya Akademi award winner for her *The Perishable Empire: Essays on Indian Writing in English*. She was chairperson of the Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies from 2001 to 2004 and chairperson of its Indian Chapter from 1993 to 2005. She is also known for her other important works like *The Twice Born Fiction*, *Realism and Reality*, *Novel and Society in India*, *Re-reading Jane Austen*, and *The Perishable Empire*.

Suniti Namjoshi is another Indian writer and poet many of whose works explore the issues of gender and sexual orientation. She has written several collections of fables, poetry and fantasy fiction. She has worked as an officer in the IAS. She is an openly lesbian feminist. Her remarkable works include *Feminist Fables*, *Saint Suniti and the Dragon Mothers of Maya Diip*, *Conversations with Cow*, and *Blue Donkey Fables*.

Gauri Deshpande is yet another stalwart in the world of Indo-Anglian fiction. Her literary output includes poetry, essays and short stories. They have been published extensively in both Marathi and English.
languages. She is also known as a translator and one of her most outstanding works is the translation into Marathi of the 16-volume of *The Arabian Nights* by Sir Richard Burton. *Nirgathi*, her novella in Marathi was first published in 1987 and is translated as *Ties that Bind* (*Women Unlimited*) by Shashi Deshpande.

Namita Gokhale is also another glowing and versatile name in the field of Indo-Anglian literature. Her first novel *Paro: Dreams of Passion* is a satire upon the Mumbai and Delhi elite class. The novel caused uproar due to its candid sexual humour. Her *Mountain Echoes* deals with the Kumaoni way of life through the eyes of four highly talented and individualistic women. She has retold the Indian epic *The Mahabharata* in an illustrated version for young and first time readers. Her most recent publication *In Search of Sita– Revisiting Mythology* presents fresh interpretations of this enigmatic goddess and her indelible impact on the lives of Indian women. Gokhale is passionately committed to showcasing and translating the best of Indian writing and engaging the vibrant Bhasha languages of the Indian sub-continent in a creative dialogue with each other and the rest of the world. She is a founder-director of the *Jaipur Literature Festival* (2006) along with the author William Dalrymple.

Dina Mehta is a prominent Indian writers belonging to the Parsi community. There are several short stories to her credit alongwith plays and a novel entitled *And Some Take a Lover which* centers on a proposed inter-caste marriage between a sophisticated Parsi girl and the simple Gandhian boy for whom public duty is of greater importance than any other thing in life. Political events in India like the Quit India Movement and the Naval Ratings Mutiny constitute the background of all human relationships in the novels of Dina Mehta. It is regarding the conflicting loyalties of a Parsi family which is meshed up in the political agitation of the Quit India Movement.
Lastly Santha Rama Rau is an Indian American travel writer. Rau is the author of *Home to India*, *East of Home*, *This is India*, *Remember the House* (a novel), *My Russian Journey*, *Gifts of Passage*, *The Adventuress*, (a novel), *View to the Southeast*, and *An Inheritance*, as well as co-author (with Gayatri Devi) of *A Princess Remembers: the memoirs of the Maharani of Jaipur*. She adapted the novel *A Passage to India*, with author E. M. Forster’s approval, for the theatre.

Thus the brief survey of Indian women novelists in English clearly shows that women have made their permanent mark in the field of English fiction. This long journey of Indian women English writers has experienced upheavals of different sorts, categorisation of various scholars, and assault of numerous critics. They started with accepting the male superiority (male pseudonyms) followed by raising voice of protest and then a search for identity. They started with the description of historical and political climate, and then crept into social periphery, culminating in exploring personal and woman life. They initiated with traditional looks and influenced by the global climate, at present dwell upon the inner world of the individual both men and women. They dislike to be segregated as a different class of writers i.e. women writers. No doubt women had to encounter the world that revolved round men only, the feminist phase provoked them to protest and finally the quest of freedom culminated into self discovery. And so we have stories of encounters, dissatisfaction, restlessness, anxiety and embarrassment. This is a desire to establish one’s own world but not completely divorced from the world of man; but as a complimentary body, a counterpart. For their achievements only they are being conferred on not only national but also international awards. In their writings they have tried their best to free the female mentality from the age long control of male domination. The protagonists in their novels are mostly women, desolated and isolated by an entirely sapless, hypocritical and insensitive male domination. Today whatever political, social, cultural and individual awareness we see
in women, are the result of these fiction writers who heralded a new consciousness in the realm of traditional thinking. If this tireless efforts on the part of women for women’s sake go on, the days are not far when they will be equated with men in all respects, in each and every field. They have registered their names not only in the native sphere but also in the alien sphere. A large number of Indians use English language as a medium of creative expression. Salman Rushdie rightly observes:

One important dimension of literature is that it is a means of holding a conversation with the world. These writers are ensuing that India or rather Indian voices (for they are too good to fall into the trap of writing nationally) will henceforth be confident indispensable, participants in that literary conversation. (7)

Manju Kapur alongwith her contemporary writers as cited earlier captures the Indian ethos very successfully and skillfully and shows the deep insight into human nature and an understanding of day to day problems. Though Indian women writers wax eloquence on all aspects of the flaws and felicity of characters both male and female, their main thrust is on female characters. Her novels present the changing image of women moving away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self sacrificing women towards self assured assertive and ambitious ones making society aware of their demands and in this way providing a medium for self expression. An element of feminism especially in the realm of biological, sexual, cultural, and racial aspects has been probed in her novels. The concept of new woman in Indian society varies from the one in the west and therefore Manju Kapur has tried to evolve her own stream of emergence of new woman grounded in reality. She has her own concerns, priorities as well as her own ways of dealing with the predicament of her protagonists. The women in her novels have been delineated to be trying to establish their own identity. The author has depicted very intelligently the Indian scenario with the help of her characters.
Starting with *Difficult Daughters*, it is a tale of struggle, traditional repression and independence. This is a book for those who are sensitive and romantic enough to feel and understand India. Struggle against superstition and social imagination has come with transparent discussion. The pain and horrible experience of partition is the key word of this novel. The novel is beautifully written, with a story that is fascinating in so many ways spanning three generations. The story centers on a woman’s illicit affair with a professor and its wider political and social implications and a much bothered issue, for Indian women, of marriage versus education. In her quest of identity, Virmati, the central character of the novel, rebels against tradition. She is impelled by the inner need to feel loved as an individual rather than as a responsible daughter. The title *Difficult Daughters* is itself an indication to the message that a woman, who is in search of an identity, is branded as a difficult daughter by the family and the society as well. The daughters who are labelled difficult include two daughters; Virmati, the protagonist who is difficult for her parents (Kasturi and Suraj Prakash) and Ida is difficult for her parents (Professor Harish and Virmati). In this connection Anita Nair says, “Daughters are difficult only when life becomes difficult for them.”(8) The novel is set around the turbulent years of the Partition of India. Manju Kapur realistically depicts women of three generations, focusing on Virmati, the difficult daughter of the second generation. The opening line of the novel gives a jolt to the reader when Ida, Virmati’s daughter and the narrator, outright declares: “The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother.” (9) Ida fails to develop an understanding with her mother during her lifetime and after her mother’s death this realization engulfs her (Ida) with guilt. She sets out on a journey into her mother’s past by piecing together the fragments of memory in search of a woman she could know and understand. Virmati had been evasive about her past with Ida who now hopes to fill the critical gap. Virmati, being the eldest, is burdened with family duties because of her mother’s incessant pregnancies. Belonging to an austere and high minded Punjabi family, she grows up
with the conditioning that the duty of every girl is to get married and a woman’s real dignity is in her home and not in doing a job. She is already engaged to a canal engineer, Inderjeet. However, seeds of aspiration are planted in Virmati when she sees Shakuntala, her cousin, tasting the wine of freedom. She secretly nurtures the desire of being independent and leading a life of her own. She wants to shoulder responsibilities that go beyond a husband and children. As the language of feeling had never flown between Virmati and Kasturi, her mother, she realizes that--

It was useless looking for answers inside the home. One had to look outside. To education, freedom, and the bright lights of Lahore colleges. (10)

She has to take a chance and her chance is to get to Lahore, “even if she had to fight her mother who was so sure that her education was practically over.” (11) Asserting herself, she not only clears her FA but joins AS College, “the bastion of male learning.” (12) It is here that the Oxford-returned professor, her neighbour, notices her particularly and forces himself into her mind and heart by spreading, “his anguish at her feet, and demanded that she do with him as she pleased,” (13) Caught in the whirl of misplaced passion towards the already married Professor, she has the temerity to spurn marriage, attempts suicide and bears confinement. However, she does realize the hopelessness of her illicit love when she learns about the pregnancy of the professor’s wife. She hardly comes to terms with the truth that a man professing his loves for her on the one hand and making his wife pregnant on the other. As such decisively and brusquely she cuts him making him realize that he cannot do what he likes. Then she goes to Lahore for further studies. Thus we see the budding of a ‘New Woman’ in Virmati who does not want “to be a rubber doll for others to move as they willed” (14) Defying patriarchal notions that enforce a woman towards domesticity, she asserts her individuality and aspires for self-reliance through education. She is not a silent rebel but a bold, outspoken, determined and action-oriented. She
knows she cannot depend upon the professor to sort out the domestic situation and proceeds to tackle it on her own. Later, she very decisively shuns the professor, ignoring his plea and keeps the reins in her hand. She displays marvellous strength of mind in overcoming her dejection. “She is strong to bear the pain, silently, without anyone knowing.” (15) The determined and unperturbed manner in which she burns professor’s letters, shows her resolution to close the chapter and look forward to a meaningful life in Lahore. But in spite of her initial revolt against the family and firm stand against the Professor, she succumbs to his implorations and passions in Lahore. Loss of virginity pricks her conscience. However, she overcomes the guilt by rationalizing it as “outmoded morality” (16) She comes to Lahore for a new beginning and to broaden her horizons but instead she gets involved in a useless love, doubtful marriage and unwed pregnancy. The initial tenacious and assertive self gradually wanes away into a pawn whom the professor tells “just what to look for, what to admire, what to criticize” (17) She wants to spread her wings like Swarnalata, her room-mate, who is committed to meaningful activities regarding the freedom movement and women’s emancipation. But her emotional dependence on the professor, who constantly evades the question of marriage, stops her from doing anything that he disapproves. In vain only she longs: “may be I could be like Swarna from the inside, secretly” (18) At the Punjab Women’s Student Conference, she is amazed at “how large an area of life women wanted to appropriate for themselves” (19) But these larger spaces are not for her. She wastes her time awaiting the furtive meetings with the Professor in spite of the awareness that there were “myriad instances of where she felt she had been weak or wronged” (20) She is used by the professor who wants to have the cake and eat it too. He enjoys the best of the two worlds and is not there even at the most crucial time when she undergoes the termination of the pregnancy. Even afterwards when the professor eventually marries her very reluctantly, she is given a pariah status and faces exclusion from hearth etc. which is the sole domain of
the professor’s first wife, Ganga. Virmati lives in a cramped space and is forced into submission though in a very subtle manner. Professor Harish’s attitude towards her is patronizing and demeaning. Undergoing a gradual process of self-effacement, her energies are directed towards pleasing him while she herself remains parched. She finds MA in Philosophy dull, abstract and meaningless but studying it was her only means of escape. She wished--

    Harish had thought another subject suitable for her. She also wished it was not such an uphill task, being worthy of him. (21)

In fact, she remains ‘difficult’ only as a daughter to her grandfather who always championed her cause, to her father who was very understanding and allowed her to study further and to her mother who always thought of her welfare along with the family’s prestige. It is ironical that Virmati has to face rejection first at the hands of her mother and later at her own daughter’s. Both deny her their trust and affection, feel betrayed, live with a deep resentment towards her, and treat her as an outlaw. In Virmati, Ida finds a woman she would never like to be.

    Harish replaces his longing for beauty and perfection by shifting his gaze on ‘the model daughter’. Conscious of her history Virmati ‘tightens her reins’ on Ida. As we examine the ‘socially produced’ nature of ‘subjectivity’ (of the conflicting women) it becomes apparent that it is a ‘constant site of struggle over power’. (22)

The whole novel shows the feminism of Virmati who opposes her all family and continues her study against the wishes of her family. Here the professor Harish, though loves Virmati, feels unable to marry her due to the social obligation. However eventually he marries her, installs her in his home (alongside his first furious wife) and helps her towards further studies in Lahore. He is a small consolation to her and her scandalized family as Virmati finds that the battle for her own independence has created irrevocable lines of partition and pain around her.
In her second novel *A Married Woman* Manju Kapur has taken writing as a protest, a way of mapping from the point of a women’s experience. She deals with the socially critical and women oriented themes. Kapur’s stress has been on the complex portrayal of the social and communal unrest. The focus here shifts from a woman, rebellion against society, shackle in tradition, torn between duty and desire, to an exploration of the positioning of women in sexual orientation. In India's homophobic socio-cultural context, where any overt expression of sexuality by women is considered as promiscuity, the novel explores the twin explosive subjects of sexual intimacy between women and Hindu Muslim confrontations, against the backdrop of respectable middle class Delhi life. With woman as its central theme once again, Kapur raises the question of identity which has been representation of lesbians in literature and culture. Even Shobha De in *Starry Nights* and *Strange Obsession* has extensively dealt with the theme of lesbianism. Set at a time of sociopolitical upheaval, *A Married Woman* is well balanced depiction of a country’s inner development-its strengths, its failure and anguish of a woman’s unrest, which are as complicated as the social and political upheaval around her. About the controversial issue and theme Kapur says in an interview with Ira Pandey:

I have used the Babri Masjid episode in this novel partly because it gives story a body that I felt it otherwise lacked. So while at one level it became a way of articulating my concern at the growing communalization of the country, it also provided with a device which pushed the life of Astha, my heroine, towards awareness of political matters and to world outside the confines of an unhappy marriage. (23)

Kapur has beautifully combined love, family values, communal riots, a married woman’s life and the way she finds love in a person of the same sex. The novel beautifully chronicles the socialist generation of India’s post independence, dealing with self imposed limitations, socio-economic
privations and yearning for much more. Cast in the rising independence of urban women from the shackles of feminist rhetoric, the novel expects the acknowledgement of oppression and the inability of an individual, to effect change in circumstance, despite the antagonistic forces and expectations of the family and society. Kapur has beautifully entwined the major historical event with the lives of her characters and depicts the political situation with the same fervor and graphic details as she describes the protagonist’s turmoil. Anita Nair’s remarks beautifully sum up the essence of the novel:

If once looking for a metaphor, here it is. A nation falling apart because of religious differences and the dynamics of power Politics: a marriage falling apart because of difference that somehow cannot be bridged. (24)

As Kapur’s female characters are educated, and aspiring individuals cased within the confines of a conservative society, they struggle between tradition and modernity and develop the awareness of the new woman. Thus Astha and Pipeelika are her new women. Kapur expresses her concern for women:

With a missionary zeal, she seems to suggest that a married woman’s job is not complete wifing, child-bearing and housekeeping but to do something more. Her Astha appears to be an Ibsenite who raises her voice against the ages old customs and trends. (25)

With zeal to change Indian male perception, she describes the traumas of her female protagonists from which they suffer, and perish for their triumph. The novel is a sincere confession of a woman about her personality cult in the personal allegory of a bad marriage. Astha, a sensitive daughter of an enlightened father and orthodox mother, has grown in a middle-class educated family in South Delhi and becomes a housewife, teacher, painter, and a lesbian in her status of a married woman and fights for her self-assertions. Unlike many unmarried girls she
had her infatuations of adolescent love for Bunty, a boy of another colony and for Rohan who left for overseas for a better career. But her real story of love and marriage starts with Hemant, the son of a successful government official in Delhi. Soon after marriage Astha gets disillusioned about human nature in general and politics of the country in particular. She is fed up with the politicians who, in the guise of democrats and socialists, attempt to organize different yatras for their vote banks under the pseudo-secular banner of national unity. On the other hand, these yatras have become inauspicious for the nation. She shares her feelings:

We should struggle with her, agonize together with her about her choices, and weep with her once she’s made them. (26)

Asth’a family affairs are not good and nothing is right with her. Hemant turns out to be an unsuitable husband and she becomes an undesirable daughter-in-law. As a married woman she becomes an enduring wife and sacrificing mother. Her temperamentally incompatible with her corporate thinking husband compels her to play the role of “mother and father” for her children. This denies her self-fulfillment leading to the collapse of the institution of marriage. Discontentment leads her to defiance and restlessness. Her anxiety, discomfort, loneliness and isolation do not encourage her to give voice to her unhappiness over her troubled relationship, rather it prompts her to develop the feelings of guilt, negativity and lack of self-esteem in facing the challenges of her life. Restlessness drives her to enjoy absolute loneliness, a sort of entrapment by the family, its commitments and its subtle oppression. Consequently, she yearns for freedom. In the midst of a family and its vast minefield of income, expenditure, rights, responsibilities, knowledge, discontentment, restlessness and dependency, Astha justifies the fate of the poorest. She is suffocated with adjusting to the growing everybody’s needs. Astha understands a married woman’s place in the family to be that of an unpaid servant or a slave and the thought of divorce brings social and economic death in her Indian status. She feels for herself that “A willingly
body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day and an obedient mouth” (27) are the necessary prerequisites of a married woman. She contemplates marriage a terrible decision as it puts her in a lot to face bouts of rage, pain and indecision. Judging the male impression of woman she thinks that a married woman is an object of “mind fucking.” (28) She does not think “marriage is just sex” (29) rather it provides interest, togetherness and respect. Torn between her duty and responsibility, faith and fact, history and contemporaneity, public ethos and personal ethics, she thinks that a tired woman cannot make turn into a good wife and struggles for an emotional freedom from the scourge of the nation. She develops psychosomatic symptoms of stress and depression balancing between existing and living. Astha’s slow discovery of her differences with her husband, her change from a tender and hopeful bride to a battered wife, and her meeting with Pipeelika Trivedi lead her to realize the other state of woman in their “familiar distress.” (30) This leads her to an immoral, rather amoral, guilt consciousness of lesbian love rationalizing her outmoded morality. Being marginalized by the affluence of her family, vicious social atmosphere, sheer hysteria of communalism and quarrel of two communities for God over a small thing, she is disillusioned in the empirical study of man’s nature and his framing of social values. There is the evolution of a romantic fantasy in her lesbophobic imagination for her definition and self reliance. Astha’s marriage to a Pan-American and Pan-Indian husband in her parents’ choice is a miscalculation. Hemant’s foreign education, banking profession and money minting addiction do not make Astha happy for a long time. Hemant’s resignation from the banking job and joining in TV manufacturing business, Astha’s joining as a teacher, her giving birth to Anuradha and Himanshu bring enough change in her life. Her impression that good job brings independence is proved wrong and she “seemed very pedestrian.” (31) By giving birth to a son on the one hand, she proves herself no socially inferior and enjoys the gratitude of her family members for whom “The family is complete at last” (32) and on the other hand she expresses commitment to her profession.
Like every married woman, no doubt she has a liking for motherhood but she does not like the sex-subjugation of her in-laws. She is surprised at the reaction of the family and society when they remain cyphoric of Anuradha’s birth but gets an overwhelming approval of motherhood after the birth of Himanshu. In her feminist assertion Astha does not appreciate superstition, sex-subjugation and pride and prejudices of having children just for their discriminated sex in the Indian perception. Being ”caught up in the web of daily life’ (33) she develops restlessness, anxiety and tension, “the disease of modern life” (34) She remembers her mother’s words “woman is earth’ (35) and that duties, responsibilities and obligations help a married woman understand the grandeur of Hinduism. She does not believe that only a woman can bring purity and peace to the family. She becomes serious for man’s ignorance at woman’s suffering and asserts her rights with the knowledge that “religion is a choice as much as other things” (36) She differs from the male perception of woman as a holy cow that must be a secular food. The inhospitable family and hostile social milieu due to Babri Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi issue have made her realize the other state of a woman’s life.

Another character of note in the novel is Pipeelika, a Hindu Brahmin Girl, married a Muslim Aijaz Akhtar Khan, a sensitive, socially committed history lecturer, painter, theatre activist and founder of Street Theatre Troupe. In the life of Astha these two characters play an important role. Astha appreciates them for the ideals of their conjugal life and their secular vision. Like a modern feminist she appreciates Aijaz’s aesthetic and creative genius and for his working for slum life and sufferings of underage girls. She admires Pipeelika’s asserting her rights to marry against her mother’s desire and against society’s recommendation. Astha, like Virmati in Difficult Daughters, desires to have a break from dependence syndrome and proceeds on the path of full human status that poses a threat to Hemant and his male superiority. She is not a lesser
mortal of her sex and like her male counterpart takes interest in political activism and fundamental issues of human life.

Manju Kapur’s next novel *Home* beautifully weaves “conflicting loyalties, intrigues, triumphs, the small rebellious and intense power struggles which constitute the universal human experience.” (37) Here, too, the canvas is the familiar one i.e. the ordinary middle class joint family. Subject is the exploration of the lives of ordinary women, and the ways in which they connect to and resist other women. It is a novel about the pressure and rewards of living in a traditional and extended but close knit Indian family of shopkeepers where family members live under the same roof. The story presents the women characters as mistresses of a joint kitchen in the day time and their husband's bed at night. Destined to be married off at a marriageable age they accept every brunt easily as something controlled totally by fate. It describes submissiveness of women to their mother-in-law when they show resentment, the pressure on wives to produce children--boys for preference--and disgrace if they fail to do so. The women in the novel have been shown spending their energies left over from cooking and house work, in being jealous of each other and being particularly status conscious in nagging their husbands who are softer than their wives. The shifts in relationships, the power struggles within a family, the suppressing individuality, have been all very minutely captured by the novelist. It is an engrossing story of family life across three generations of Delhi shopkeepers. When their traditional business, selling saris, is increasingly sidelined by the new fashion for jeans and stitched *salwar kameez*, the sons, instead of branching out, remain apprenticed to the struggling shop, while the daughters are confined to the family home. As envy and suspicion grip parents and children alike, the need for escape - whether through illicit love or the search for education - becomes ever stronger. Even the title indicates an ironic nod to some long-running soap. Alongwith the protagonist Nisha’s dilemma, her story - a failed affair, her struggle for emancipation, family
of migrants from Lahore to Delhi, the timeless atmosphere of arranged marriages, preoccupation with childbirth and heirs, the wrangles over property, the intrusion of a daughter-in-law and a possessive mother's ensuing envy, are all cut from the stuff that envelops popular audiences.

The story is of a middle class family’s life in Delhi. The patriarch of this family is Banwari Lal, a cloth businessman who lives with his family in New Delhi neighborhood of Karol Bagh. He has two sons and a daughter. Elder is Yashpal, younger is Pyare Lal and the daughter’s name is Sunita, already married to Murli, a person beyond the status of Banwari Lal in views as well as in money. The Banwari Lal family belongs to a class whose skills have been honed over generations to ensure prosperity in the market place. From an early age children are trained to maintain the foundation on which these Homes rested. The education they received, the values they imbibed, and the alliances they made, have everything to do with protecting the steady stream of gold and silver that burnished their lives. Banwari Lal is a believer in the old ways i.e. men work out of the home, women within; men carry forward the family line, women enable their mission. His two sons unquestioningly follow their father in business and in life but their wives do not. Both brothers carry their lives as well as business according to the wish of their father. As the time passes Banwarilal dies and the whole burden of the family comes to Yashpal, being the elder one. Yashpal has one sister who dies in a kitchen accident leaving a child named Vicky who is looked after by Sona. At the beginning of the story Yashpal’s wife Sona and her sister Rupa are childless. They are not able to conceive for a long time. Sona keeps fasting but it is of no use. After a long time she gives birth to Nisha and then to Raju. With Nisha there is some clash in the family, a little protest, a slight wound to the old family belief and, of course, an emergence of new woman. She grows up as a beautiful girl. By this time Vicky starts going to shop and there is some relax for Sona who does not like Vicky’s activities. Infatuated by Nisha’s beauty Vicky begins to take interest in
her and harasses her sexually. In the outset Nisha fails to understand his intention but when she does, she gets mentally vanquished and none is able to understand why she is not eating or sleeping. So she is sent to Rupa’s home for a change. Here she has no problem at all. Rupa and her husband Premnath understand that it is because of Vicky that she was miserable. Nisha now finds herself in an atmosphere very different from the one she lived in. As the only child she is the centre of interest, concern and attention here. The pattern of Nisha’s next ten years is not set. She passes all weeks with her aunt and uncle. Premnath teaches her and brings a lot of things for her. Here Nisha grooms into a very sensible and beautiful girl. After the demise of Banwari Lal, Nisha returns her home to accompany her grandmother. She enters Durga Bai College for doing English Honours. Here she meets Suresh, a student of Khalsa College of Engineering. She decides to marry him ignoring his caste and creed but fails to do. Later on she has to wait for a long time in spite of all her physical and mental attainments due to astrological reasons. She is declared mangli and is, therefore, destined to marry a similar mangli with a similar fate and horoscope. To find this type of boy would take time. Thus the novel depicts how family norms are ignored by the new generation. They become friendly within two or three meetings. Both fall in love and wander here and there in each other’s company. She now changes totally but at the same time faces the brunt of her mother who interrogates-

Who gave you permission to cut your hair, suddenly you have become so independent, you decide things on your own, where did you find the money, the time, the beauty parlour, where did you find all these things? (38)

Nevertheless, she defends herself thinking of the girls in her class, girls with swishing, open hair, wavy, curly, blow dried, or hanging straight, framing faves with fringes, flicks or stray tendrils. The academic session is coming to close. Nisha has had a difficult year and now she feels nervous.
She outright declares to Suresh: “I can’t meet you, I have to study, I have to get a second division at least.” (39) Suresh purchases St. Stephen’s tutorials from Daryaganj at Sunday bazaar and gives to Nisha with the help of which she gets first division. Nisha and Suresh continue their routine affair up to the next year also. As for Nisha, her uncle’s training has stood her in good stead. With family wedding, she still secures seventy per cents in Humanities. The uncle is thanked profusely for the care he has taken of his niece. Nisha, in her third year, still enjoys the company of Suresh. He takes her to the room in Vijay Nagar where he tries to make sexual relation with her but fails to do in his intention. On the way back Nisha remarks that if he is so keen to do all this, he should make his parents talk to her parents and let the whole thing be clear. Towards the end of Nisha’s third year her parents receive a letter from the college authorities. Their daughter is short of attendance, and will not be allowed to sit in exams. Her parents enquire the reason but Nisha does not tell directly and sends Suresh to meet at the shop. Now all things become clear and Yashpal enquires at them. Finally he declares Suresh unfit for the girl. All day she remains in the house, a prisoner of her deed, a prisoner of their words. Once she gets a chance to go with her aunt Rupa and manages to meet him. Here Suresh finally makes it very clear that he cannot marry her and this way Suresh leaves her. Nisha’s nights are now ones of restlessness. After three years of thinking that Suresh is her future, Nisha will have to adjust to the idea of another man in his place. Later on she badly suffers from eczema. This disease affects her a lot. This period had to be very important for Nisha’s coming future but it passed in this fatal eczema. This condition of Nisha remains same for a long period. Parents have been worrying; daughter getting older by the minute, son’s future blocks because of this, and good matches will pass over because of this. Parents think that it is very bad for Nisha to remain at home all the time. She should join a school so that she feels better. And Nisha starts going to school to teach. Soon Nisha is fed up with
teaching job and plans to start a business. She consults her father. Yashpal says-

   Beti, business is not an easy thing. . . . I will help you in the beginning, but the responsibility, profit and loss all are yours. In teaching no matter what you do, you get your salary. This is different. (40)

Nevertheless she is able to persuade her father who gives his consent which is equally justified by Nisha. At the same time she is very cautious.

   But softly, softly, cautioned her spirit, she had to go softly. She looked down, demurely said, yes, Papaji, and that night was the first to put the TV on. (41)

Her business flourishes day by day. Demand of suits increases in the Market. Though she faces some challenges but every time she rises a new business woman motivated by her father’s confidence in her.

   Sometimes she marveled over the nature of business, so demanding of care, attention, and thought . . . her spirit rose and fell with the levels of her profit. (42)

During this period Yeshpal finds a mangali boy named Arvind for Nisha. Soon the boy and his mother come to see Nisha and pass her. Other setback for Nisha is that the family members force her to stop her business:

   Nisha had begun to respond the issue of her marriage as a woman of a world she was not prepared to leave. She would only consent to a match who let her work. (43)

Both the marriage with a widower and the abandoning the business make Nisha disappointed. Even the alteration in her business and the unusual way of solemnizing the marriage makes her rebel. Arvind lives in
Daryaganj and has a business there. He accepts that Nisha need not stop her business and he will hire a room near Karol Bagh so she will not feel any problem to continue it:

‘I cannot give it up,’ she confided. This was the only thing she could visualise in any marriage that she had to come to the basement everyday.’ (44)

Only one thing Arvind wants is a registry marriage. All agree and the preparation of marriage begins after a long period. Here Arvind and Nisha sign their names at several places. Their marriage is solemnized happily in the court and they drive straight to the Sartaj Hotel in Karol Bagh. On the wedding night she finds no enthusiasm in her husband. She thinks-

Why did he have to marry if he was to treat his wife to indifferent looks, she thought, sweeping aside the tenderness he showed at night . . . if he felt so little for her, she should go home to tailors, why enact this farce here? (45)

Nisha continues her business and comes regularly to see the work of tailors. This routine does not continue for long due to her pregnancy. Like a modern woman craving to spread her horizon beyond traditional limits of a woman she also wishes for larger space in her husband’s heart and mind. Her mother-in-law advises her not to go daily otherwise it will create big problem so Nisha has to stop it. When after ten months she gives birth to twins - one girl and one boy, she looks satisfied with her role as a mother and daughter-in-law. Ultimately she realizes the satiety of family and says, “Surrounding her were friends, relatives, husband and babies. All mine, she thought, all mine.” (46) Nisha feels that God has shown mercy on her and now her duty is over. Thus novel ends with the naming ceremony of twins and everybody looks happy and satisfied.

Kapur’s fourth novel The Immigrant is a story of Nina, a thirty-year-old English lecturer who is also struggling to make herself settled
somewhere but like Virmati, Astha and Nisha finds her place nowhere. The theme of the novel is the revolt and rehabilitation of woman in an alien setup. The novel begins with the unmarried state of Nina, living with her widowed mother in a cramped Delhi apartment. Like other female protagonists Nina also falls in love with or rather falls a victim before a teacher in the English Department at the Arts Faculty who, “wanted to have his cake and eat it too. Like all cakes this one was chewed, mashed into pulp and swallowed.” (47) Though he turned to be infidel yet she offered him her heart and body thinking that the combined forces of youth and devotion would persuade him into commitment. Although she was defiled in her love but she did not tell it to anyone:

She kept this relationship secret from her mother. She was looking for love on her own terms, untainted by convention and respectability. (48)

Under maternal pressure, she accepts a semi arranged marriage with Ananda, an NRI dentist in Halifax, abandons her teaching career and moves to Canada. The double process of adaptation, to her husband and to Canada, is long and painful.

There was no one to shout, get up, get up, its getting late, no task that would suffer by her staying in bed, no person whose loneliness she had to assuage. (49)

When she lamented about her isolation to her friend Zenobia, it was a romantic companionate loneliness not the soul destroying absence of human beings from her life.

Alone her thoughts grew darker. The hollowness of the landscape reverberated inside her, with no people, no conversation to even glaze the surfaces. Hour after hour, day after day could pass without a single word uttered. (50)
Nina joins a feminist support group and reads Simone de Beauvoir and Germaine Greer. Nina finds herself inculcating the freedom in everything: her thinking, with clothing, feeling unable to wear her saris (unsuited to the climate anyway) and eventually graduating from shalwar kameez to Western dress. Nina shares her frustration with the group where she gets to know that:

Every person in his first trip to a foreign country, where he knows neither the people nor the language, experiences childhood. (51)

As a metaphor Nina was a child, learning to walk in a different country. Encouraged by the group she thinks of applying for PhD, repeating MA course, then bolstering her CV with academic publication. Meanwhile, Ananda, who suffers from medical problems related to intimate functions, seeks alternative therapy in California. The therapy succeeds, but the outcome is not to strengthen the marriage but to undermine it. Finally both partners, each beknown to the other, find themselves sucked into extramarital liaisons. She finds herself totally dissatisfied with her life and cherishes post-marital sex with her lover keeping aside the Indian woman sensibility even at the cost of her familial life. Nina emerges out to be lady of no sexual inhibition rather it is a fulfillment for her, though it is done in extramarital relationship. Anton fascinates her from the beginning:

He had been wanting to make love to her from the first day, of the first term. She had such a remote, princes like air. He liked everything about her, she was pretty, intelligent, perceptive. (52)

Even after having experienced this romantic sexual relationship she feels her own and a sense of completeness in her life.

For the first time she had a sense of her own self, entirely separate from other people, autonomous, independent. So strange that the sex did not make her feel guilty, not beyond the initial shock. (53)
But here too she is fed up by the utilitarian lover who rapes her and finally deserts her lonely and vanquished. Nina ends disastrously but nonetheless coincides with her finding a new professional identity as a student of library science. The novel’s conclusion is open-ended, with Nina seemingly in process of change, having been traumatised by her own affair and now finally aware, journeying away on a Greyhound bus towards what may prove a completely new life.

Thus the end of *The Immigrant* finds Nina heading out for a job interview at the University of New Brunswick, uncertain if she will return to her Halifax life or not. It feels, though, as if she is now ready to take control of her own destiny—

> Heading towards fresh territories, a different set of circumstances, a floating resident of the western world. When one was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home. (54)

This way Kapur explores the special challenges facing immigrant wives; the way a young woman’s life, already so pressured in professional and reproductive terms, becomes an even more impossible balancing act inside a foreign culture.

Thus Manju Kapur’s novels present the changing image of women moving away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self sacrificing women towards self assured, assertive and ambitious women making society aware of their demands and in this way providing a medium for self expression. The novels of Manju Kapur voice well the sentiments of women and their introspections. Their voice of protest (which is one of the signs of modernity), against their families are the rejection of an arranged marriage, the incomprehensible ambition to study and the unfortunate display of an independent will. Virmati, Astha, Nisha, and Nina all are searching for their grounds interestingly from a wrong threshold. All of them fall in love first, and the search of self identity becomes the second thought. Among all the female characters Nisha, (exception) Shakuntla
and Rupa really win in the end and are content to a great extent. The facts raised by Manju Kapur are worth researching. She presents an ideal image of women who amid all thicks and thins maintain their chastity and humanity and do not leave anything destitute.

Kapur highlighted the female protagonist as *prayagya rupa* (aware woman) as opposed to the just *matri-rupa* and *priya-rupa* (mother and lover). (55)
**Works Cited**

3. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 17.
11. Ibid., p. 19.
12. Ibid., p. 45.
13. Ibid., p. 54.
15. Ibid., p. 109.
16. Ibid., p. 125.
17. Ibid., p. 130.
18. Ibid., p. 135.
19. Ibid., p. 144.
20. Ibid., p. 141.
21. Ibid., p. 257.
27. Ibid., p. 231.
28. Ibid., p. 218.
29. Ibid., p. 275.
30. Ibid., p. 188.
31. Ibid., p. 47.
32. Ibid., p. 68.
33. Ibid., p. 84.
34. Ibid., p. 76.
35. Ibid., p. 69.
36. Ibid., p. 89.
39. Ibid., p. 151.
40. Ibid., p. 290.
41. Ibid., p. 291.
42. Ibid., p. 293.
43. Ibid., p. 296.
44. Ibid., p. 302.
45. Ibid., p. 328.
46. Ibid., p. 336.
48. Ibid., p. 6.
49. Ibid., p. 115.
50. Ibid., p. 189.
51. Ibid., p. 232.
52. Ibid., p. 262.
53. Ibid., p. 264.
54. Ibid., p. 334.