CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

Indian fiction in English has been enriched by many talented women novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Attia Hosain, Santha Rama Rai and Shashi Despande. All of them have described 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 undeniable position. Their chief concern was exploring the moral and psychic dilemmas and repercussions of their women characters alongside their efforts to copy with the challenges and achieve a new harmony and 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, and they turned writers. The motive was to vice 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 clan life style 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. Kamala Markandayas works are a realistic delineation of the double pulls that the Indian women 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 also points out how the socio-economic conditions affect the women most.

"Woman must be a bridge and a synthesizer. She shouldn’t allow herself to be swept off her feet by superficial trends nor yet be chained to the familiar. She must ensure the continuity which strengthens roots and simultaneously engineer change and growth to keep society dynamic abreast of knowledge, sensitive to fast moving events. The solution lies neither in fighting for equal position nor denying it, neither in retreat into the home nor escape from it."

Indira Gandhi (Eternal India)

Indian women novelists in English and in other vernaculars try their best to deal with, apart from many other things, the pathetic plight of for open women who are fated to suffer from birth to death. The history of Indian women novelists in English begins with Torn Dutt who died at the early age of 21 lesser than John Keats of the Romantic school of poetry. Both her novels ‘Bianca and Le Journal de Mademoiselled’ Arvers deal with the autobiographical projections of the novelist the experience sweet and sour, she gathered in her very short life. Though the character were Spanish and French yet the delineation in entirely Indian, full of love and affection, sincerity and
purity which characterize the care of an ideal Indian woman.

**Cornelia Sorabje** a Parsi Christian, is the other great figure in the real novels. She is mainly famours for her three important works, *Love and Life behind the Purdah (1901), Sun Babies (1904) and Between the Twilight (1908)* she reveals in her novels the various moods and vestures going in under the purdah—the ecstasy, tragedy, comedy and many more things which are unnoticed even by a feminist philosopher.

In short, *'Purdah'* which plays a very important role in an average Indian woman’s life in both muslim and Hindu though more conservatively observed in the Muslim than in the Hindu, is the core of sorabji novels.

After the second world war, the history of Indian women novelists got a new track, a new vision. In this period, **Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Prawer Jhabhwala** and unquestionably the most outstanding personalities in the field of social and artistic novels.

**Kamala Markandaya, Ruth P. Jhabwala and Nayantara Sahgal** provided a new insight into the status and attitude of women in society. Kamala Markendaya wrote *"Nectar in Sieve, Some Inner Fury, A Silence of Desire, Possession, A Handful of Rice, Coffer Dams, Nowhere Man, Two Virgins and The Honey Comb"*. The major themes of her novels are woman's position in Indian society and the inner turmoil of a woman’s heart. Kamala Markandaya’s first novel *Nectar in a Sieve* made her a lovable writer of great fiction in both theme and technique. The novel deals with a realistic picture of the Indian villagers, their customs and cultures, rites and traditions.
The villagers or the down trodden have to work night and day in their field to earn their living. They try their best to churn nectar from the ocean of their mother earth. But the irony lies in it that the churned out nectar is found to be placed in the sieve. Rukmini, the narrator heroine has to face so many ups and downs fret and fever of life, viz her husband's infidelity, her daughter's sacrificial going to the streets to save the family from hunger and starvation, the pre-mature death of the child, Kuti the ejection from the Kiths and Kins, so on and so forth. She, like and average ideal village woman worships her husband like a God. She says, "It was my husband who woke me- my husband, whom I will call her Nathan, for what was his name although in all the years of our marriage I never called him that, for it is not meant for a woman to address her husband except as husband (NIS, p.89)"

But in spite of many unbearable and undeserved sufferings faced by their heroins, The novel does not tend to be pessimistic or fatalistic as we generally. The last portion of the novel reveals that Rukmani finds, peace at last. She brings Pulli their adopted son. He and other children, Selvam and Ira, are seen rebuilding the house of hope and patience on the ruins of despair and desolation. Her second novel. 'Sonne Inner Fury', is about Mirbai who is forced to part from her lover Richard is the heat of Quit India Movement. Besides, the novel is also about Premala who finding her husband's home and his English friends disgust. They tries to seek relief by helping Hickey, an English missionary to run a school for the village boys. In a silence of desire the protagonist Sarojini overcomes her problems in her own way. Dandekar after fifteen years of married life, begins to irritate with his
god fearing and religious wife. Kamala Markandaya is famous for presenting hunger human damnation social recalcitrance, cultural chaos, assault of modernity or traditional faith in her novels. Her Nectar In A Sieve presents the impact of the industrial revolution in a south Indian village. In some Inner Fury (1957), she presents the political theme. Kamala Markandaya’s novels carry a peculiar concern appeal. Nectar in a Sieve portrays how the mind of industrialisation blows across rural India and causes the dislocation of tradition. A Handful of Rice deals with urban poverty and squalor that leads to street violence. 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 the most striking feature of Kamala Markandaya as a woman novelist is, her portrayal of women in relation to the historical, cultural, political and sociological environment of a changing India, women characters prominently figure in her novels. 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. S.C. Harrex has rightly observed.

"Kamala Markandaya fiction is of particular interest within the context of the mode Indian novel because it crystallises various literary directions that the quest for identity has taken since the thirties. Two main directions, philosophical and sociological are clearly discernible. In the Indian novel in English the chief exponent of the philosophical novel is
Raja Rao while Mulk Raj Anand has led the field of politically committed writers. The philosophical quest involves a familiar web of dualisms from which the Indian protagonist must disentangle his complex identity, tradition virus free will etc. On the other hand, the sociological barriers to self realization caste, poverty exploitation, environmental extremas, over populations political turmoil etc have a greater every day immediacy.\(^{(16)}\) (TJCWL p.65)

The emergence of women writers in the last quarter of the 17th 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 and 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 woman writers in the realm of Indian fiction in english during the earliest phase of its growth that is of interest what makes these novelists particularly interesting to a student of Indian fiction in English is the fact the best among them Toru Dutt, Swarna Kumari, Ghosal, Krupabai Sathianathan and Sorabji Cornelia in particular even if they were only 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. But it was only after the achievement of Independence that women novelists could make solid contributions to Indian English fiction.

Ruth Prawer Jhabwala, the contemporary of Kamala Markandaya in also left an indelible imprint in the history of women novelists in English. Ruth Prawer Jhabwala’s **Heat and Dust (1975)** has won Britain’s most famous literary award, the Booker Prize. Her novel **Heat and Dust** deals with the lives of two English man who live in India. Ruth Prawer Jhabwala started her career with the publication of her first novel, **To whom she will in 1955**. The major themes of her novels are the theme of cultural conflict of the East-West. Her other famous novels are **The Nature of Passion (1956)**, **Get Ready for Battle (1962)**, and **The House Holder (1960)**.

**The Day in Shadow (1971)** is Nayantara Sahgal’s fourth novel in which she selected the usual subject on the plight of a divorced woman. This well told and interesting story is an achievement in story telling.

It is in deed, a complex task to decide whether R.P. Jhabvala belongs to India or Germany, insider or outsider. She was born of a polish parents, in Germany and got her education in England but married an Indian and lived in India more than twenty four years. Most of her writings deal with the various shades of Indianess, apart from many other things. But she is not happy to be termed herself as an Indian She said that she is not at all an Indian author but 'as one of those European writers who have written about India'. If we read her novels minutely, we come to the conclusion that in spite of
her claim as an European, her novels in comparison with E.M. Forster and Rudyard Kipling reveal much longer and greater involvement to Indian society which compels 'a reader to consider her an Indian'.

The novels of R.P. Jhabvala ring the note of two things—urban middle class Indian life tinged with domestic problems of an average Hindu family and an ironic studies of the confrontation between east and oriental attitudes. Shyam M. Asnani in his book, ..... Response to Indian English Fiction holds the view.

"R.P. Jhabvala writes about the furious social suffering in the present day India. All her novels are full of local colour and clamour, dealing with the young who are inert, romantic and non-too-wise, and the old who are ever calculating and rigid. She describes the head-on conflict between the traditional and the modern, the east and the west, and the confusion that follows in the wake of these collisions." (RIEF p.67)

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. This novel 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 refuges in New Delhi who came to settle there after partition :

"They had lost almost everything; their houses, their business, many of their valuables, All had to be left behind. It was complete disaster, absolute ruin : if it had happened to one man alone it would have been unbearable. But there is
consolation in numbers and there were hundreds of thousands of them. Their relatives, their friends, their neighbours, all were ruined with them" (TWSW p.99)

*The Nature of Passion* deals with a modern young girl, Nimmi, who wants to discard the age-old customs and rites, myths and tradition. She fights for the cause of woman’s emancipation. She attends club regularly, plays tennis, keeps bob-cut hair, and attends lectures on English Romantic Poets. But on the other hand, her community is dead against all her western activities. Through Nimmi, the novelist wants to satirize these silly youngsters who have false pretensions of modernism and independence. They should always bear in their mind that their sentiments, emancipations, individuality, anti-traditional responses, mental processes are all conditioned by a social structure of parental affection.

Both *Esmond in India* and *A Backward Place* ring the note of east-west encounter. *Esmond in India* tells the story of Esmond Stillwood, an Englishman, who marries Gulab, the beautiful Indian girls. But the marriage fails due to the different nature in both the characters—Esmond is selfish and mean and Gulab is rough and unsophisticated.

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 Jhabwala’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.
The novel revolves round the life of Prem, a sensitive young man and a teacher who is absolutely surprised by the strange city and also an early marriage.

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. The narrative technique of the novel is equally, important. It moves back and forward from 1923 to the present with ease. Through diary and journal, the novelist speaks of the past and the present. The story tells us how Olivia and her husband Douglas name to India. Olivia falls in amorous spells of Nawab and consequently she manages to elope with him. This leads to the pregnancy and latter on, abortion of Olivia. She is given a cottage in the hills near the Nawab’s palace. She earns the title of the mistress of the Nawab.

The other women who has to suffer a lot without any rhyme or reason was the invisible narrator herself. She develops her weakness for Child, an Englishman turned Hindu. She helps him night and day thring his sickness. This sympathy turns into sexuality between them. The narrator, consequently, becomes pregnant, but unlike Olivia, she doesn’t get herself aborted. She is a lady of strong hope and patience. So, the joins an Ashram and there suffers quietly. Thus both the ladies become the silent sufferer destroyed by the ‘heat’.

Nayantara Sahgal, the niece of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and the daughter of Vijyalaxmi Pandit, is a novelist of politics. She is also known as a successful political columnist for different newspapers.
The famous novels of Nayantara Sahgal are *A Time to be Happy (1958), 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 dissatisfied woman in high class society and her concern of Indian political scene.

Her writing is generally characterised by simplicity and boldness. Her writing is also famous for keeping in touch with the latest political ups and downs with a tinge of western liberalism. Her novels truthfully mirror the contemporary Indian political theme. She herself declared that all her novels "more or less reflects the political era we are passing through" [5] (quoted by Jasbir Jain, Nayantara Sahgal). Her attitude in the novels is tantamount to that of Nehru, that is, co-mingled with the western outlook. Unlike the other political writers, she never professes any specific political ideology or favouring any political creed or political movement. Her novels only portray the contemporary incidents and political realities saturated with artistic colour and objectivity. All her major characters of the novel are centripetally drawn towards the vortex of politics. But besides politics, her fiction also focuses attention on Indian woman's search for sexual freedom and self realization. Nayantara Sahagal's first novel *A Time to be Happy (1957)* presents conflict between eastern and the western cultures. In this novel the protagonist is saved Shivpal who is the product of a public school and has a high social status in life. His main worry is that he can not belong entirely to India. His rootlessness is the cause of his discontent. The solution of this feeling of alienation comes through marriage. The narrator of the story is an elderly man to whom almost every character confides his thoughts.
Her novel *A Time to be Happy* is a light novel of high class women and young man.

Her second novel, *This Time of Morning (1965)*, 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 (1969)* has silence in stronger than all rhetoric, and whose seeming capacity for resignations is the true measure of her measureless strength. She moe than the sophisticated Kit and Mira, more than the rebel Govind and the reckless Roshan is symbolic of the Mother—*Mother India who is compassion and sufferance, who must indeed suffer all hurts and survive all disasters.*

*The Day in Shadow (1971)* is richly inspired by the political movement of the society. Though the main theme of the novel is politics, yet the problem of divorce and disintegration of the marriage in a typical Indian setting are also beautifully dealt with.

*A Situation in New Delhi (1977)* points out the Naxalite movement and student unrest and, above all, the aftermath of Nehru’s death. Here is this novel, there is no gap between the private world and the political world; both the worlds are reciprocally treated in which actions and characters are co-mingled.

While Ruth Prawer Jhabwala mirrors the social background in her works, Kamala Markandaya deals with the diverse contemporary problems—social, cultural, politics of the contemporary society in which the novelists grows up, Anita Desai (1937) is satisfied to dive deep into the inner working of the protagonists and brings into the hidden depths of human psyche.
Cry, the Peacock is the tragic story of Maya who is haunted by the astrological predication of the death of either wife or husband. In other words, she is the victim of Hardian fate and providence, that is, an uncannily oppressive sense of fatality. To crown the effect, she has no children and thus this leads to Maya’s isolation. She is so much segregated by society and astrological dilemma that in a fit of insane fury, she kills her own husband. The symbolism of the dead dog and the peacock fighting before mating are highly suggestive.

In The Voices in the City the scene shifts from Delhi to Kolkata. Here the Maya-Gautam tragedy is re-enacted in the form of Monisha-Jiban marriage. Monisha has to undergo so many unbearable tyranny and injustice, insult and abuse, in her husband’s dwelling.

In the long run, she commits suicide. Nirode, the brother of Monisha and Amla, her sister are also in Kolkata and all of them have to fight against the rigid conventions of middle class life. Amla is shocked and heart-broken when her love is rejected.

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 realized than the Indian protagonist. Where Shall We Go This Summer, as the title suggests, shows the tragic inner reality of Sita, the main character, who is stifled by the cruelty and callousness of urban life. Fed up with the burden of children, she runs away to a small island, and persuades her husband to return.

In Fire on the Mountain, Anita Desai presents the psychology of two different woman characters—Nanda, an unsentimental old
widen 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. The tragedy begins when Illa Das, Nanda's bosom friend and a social worker is raped and strangled. This incident so powerfully overcasts its dark shadow on Nanda Kaul that she makes her mind to lead a life of saint in the lap of lonely place, far from the din and bustle of city life.

In *The Clear Light of Day*, Vimala's attitude is somewhat similar to that of Nanda in the sense that she also preferred to live in a decaying house surrounded by a neglected garden containing a dark and mysterious well. The beauty of the book lies in the poetic and psychological portrayal of the hidden depth of the protagonist who is haunted by numerous nostalgic event of the past.

Thus, Anita Desai has heralded a new era in the realm of psychological portrayal of the character. She herself observes:

"My novels don't have themes—at least not till they are finished, published or read, do I see any theme. While writing I follow flashness of insides, I veer away from or even fight any thing that thereatens to distort or destroy this inside, and some how come to the end and look back to see the pattern of footprints on the sand."6 *(RUSIE p.1)*

Rama Mehta’s first novel *Inside the Haveli (1977)* has the credit of winning the prestigious *Sahitya Akademi (1979)*. It deals with the confrontation between culture and civilization between city and village. It shows how Geeta, a modern Mumbai girl has to lead a secluded life under the purdah in the Haveli.

Shashi Deshapade’s first novel, *The Dark Holds No Terror*
deals with an unusual character, Sarita, who dares to challenge the age-old traditions to marry a man of outside her cast. The love marriage between Sarita and Manu doesn't prove to be fruitful. Her recent novel, 

**The Bending Vine** is a feminine novel which represents 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 sexual mania of the commerical world. In narration of incident she is very frank and straight forward. Like Anita Desai, she has the gift of exploring the subdued depths of women psychology. In 1988, she shot into literary limelight by writing her first novel, Socialite Evening which is Lawerencian in expression. Her other works are: 

'Starry Nights', 'Sisters', 'Sultry Days', 'Strange Obsession', 'Snapshots', 'Second Thoughts', 'Shooting from the Hills', 'Small Betrayals', 'Surviving Men 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. Today, we see that sex which is the root of all our energy, plays a very vital role in man's life. Perhaps this is why most of the novels of Shobha De analyse the various aspects of sex, a great urge of human being. And this is turn appeals to most of the readers of modern scientific and commerical world where a large section of people are wildly hungry for power, wealth and sex.

It is to be noted that Shobha De, like D.H. Lawrence, has openly
discussed sex in most of her works. But they are not easily termed as pornographic. It has some fine images and symbols, words and phrases which make it attractive to the connoisseur of art. In art, it is not the matter that matters but manner that matters. Arundhati Roy has also done the same thing in her book, *The God of Small Things*.

A thorough study of Shobha De's novels show the novelist's perceptive portrayal of the secret depths of the human psyche; her accurate characterization; her saucy racy and captivating style which invokes vivid images and compels the reader to identify himself or herself with the characters and situations. In short, Shobha De has tried her best to expose the moral and spiritual breakdown society in which a hapless and forsaken woman longs for pleasure and wants to fly freely in the sky of freedom. Though she has been severely criticized by the champions of ethics and morality, we should not forget that whatever she has penned down, they are all fine pieces of poetic and metaphoric exactitude which haunt or mind long after reading. Shobha De's use of language and creation of new idioms by acclimatizing idioms from Indian language to English language, adds charm of the novel, *'Snapshots' (1995)* is about six women who belong to the upper class society.

Within the framework of her novels, Shobha De depicts the breaking up of the institution of marriage. The new concept of marriage envisages complete sexual freedom with no notion of fidelity. Shobha De presents love, sex and quarrels within the ambit of fictional framework. Life is presented as it is, not as it should be. De's use of language and her creation of a new idiom by acclimatizing the contemporary society to the English language, adds to the charm of
the novel. Arundhati Roy created history by winning Booker Prize for her novel *The God of Small Things* for the year 1997. She is the first Indian English novelist to win this coveted award. The plot of the novel 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, the Parwan. The novel opens with Raphal’s coming back to Ayemenen after a failed marriage, to see Estha, her twin brother who was sent to his father after Sophie Mol’s funed and now returned to their native place after twenty three years. The twins lived with their divorced mother. Ammu and their blind maternal grandmother Mammachy and their maternal uncle. Chacko, once a Rhodes Schools at oxford and lecturer in Madras Christian college who helped his mother to run their paradise pickle business.

Arundhati Roy won the Booker Prize for literature by her debut novel. *The God of Small Things*, a novel which registered a tremendous sale all over the world. The book has been translated into more than 40 languages in the world. V.S. Naipaul bagged this Prize in 1972 for *In a Free State*; Ruth Prawer Jhabwala did it in 1975 for *Heat and Dust*; Salman Rushdie did it in 1981 for *Midnight Children*. However, all the above authors are only of Indian origin. But Arundhati Roy has got the credit of being the first entirely home grown Indian no have this prestigious prize. Unlike other Indian novelists, Roy is born, educated and brought up in India.

Arundhati Roy fashioned a new language for fiction.
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.

The novel, *Mother of 1084* portrays the psychological and emotional crisis of a mother whose son is lying dead in the police morgue. She begins to think the revolutionary commitment of her son and at the same time she also thinks her own alienation, as a woman and wife from the hypocritical, bourgeois society. The son, Brati is seen in this novel rebelling against the hypocrisy and corruption prevalent in administration, in the police, in the politics and in the intellectual society. He is dumb founded to see that the corrupt and the immoral people occupy the highest position in the society while the genuine people who care for the country are brutally killed.

Kiran Desai was known only as the prominent Indian novelist. Anita Desai’s teaching creative writing at Massachusetts Institute of Technology has been thrice short listed for the Booker Prize, in 1980 for *Clear Light of the Day*, in 1984 for *In Custody* and in 1999 for *Fasting, Feasting*. In 1998, came her celebrated debut novel, *Hulabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, which was published to unanimous acclaim in over twenty two countries and went to win the Batty Task Award, a prize given by the society of Authors for the best new novels by citizens of the common wealth. In 2006, eight years later with *The Inheritance of Loss* Kiran Desai at thirty five, not only became the youngest ever woman writer to win the prestigious Man Booker Prize.

Jhumpa Lahiri is another significant name who is contributing in
the field of English literature. Her famous works are—*The Namesake, Interpreter of Maladies and Unaccustomed Earth*.

Thus, this brief survey of Indian women novelists in English clearly shows that women have made their permanent mark in the field of English fictions. They are being conferred on not only national but international awards also. In most of their writings they have tried their best to free the female mentality from the age long control of male domination. In short, in their novels, the protagonists are mostly women characters 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. Even today the condition of Indian women in the remote villages is very heart-rending. They are still getting step motherly treatment by the parent in both education and nourishment. So, the thing that most urgently needed a relation which must be tinged with the colour of both modernity and conventionality, antiquity and spirituality.

**Biographical Sketch of Manju Kapur**

As far as Manju Kapur’s biographical elements are concerned, they are rather scanty, as she never discloses them to anyone. But still the little is in the form of her date of birth i.e. 25 October, 1948 and some other details. She belongs to an affluent family of Dalmias. She is married to Gun Nidhi Dalmia, a business man, and is living in
27 Akbar Road, New Delhi. Tall, fair complexion, short hair, of course, beautiful face and sharp features comprises her physical attributes. Temperamentally she is down-to-earth, polite, welcoming, considerate and most important the best of hosts. Her children Katyayani, Amba, Maya and Agastya fill her lap. Her teaching career completes fourteen years in Miranda House, Delhi University. She has taken volunteer retirement only to devote all her time to novel writing. As for her qualification, she did her M.A. in English from Halifax University, Canada, and M.Phil. from Delhi University. First tried her hand in poetry, then in drama but finding both cumbersome, she found her forte on novel writing and now is a full time novelist. She aspires to be counted among the leading Indo-Anglian fiction writers. Her being a teacher has not been a desired step but due to the parents’ obligation who thought teaching profession befitting for her, she became one. Her literary output consists of four novels and her fifth novel is going to be published in 2011.

Her first novel 'Difficult Daughter' (1998) received tremendous international acclaim, won the Commonwealth Award for first novels (Eurasia section) and was the number best seller in India. The second novel 'Married Woman', 'an enthralling', 'convincing', 'absorbing.... a magnetically alert', 'deeply readable novel' was brought out in 2003 and was short listed for Encore Award. She got her third novel 'Home' published in 2006 which was also short listed for crossword award. Her last novel 'Immigrant' appeared in 2009.

"Among the shining stars of literary sky, Manju Kapur is also a glowing star of Indian Writing Fiction. She has joined the growing number of women writers of India, like Shashi
Despande, Arundhati Roy, Gita Harihar, Nayantara Sehgal, Shoba De and the likes. She earned the fame and name with the publication of her first novel 'Difficult Daughters' in 1998 (2). It received huge national and International acclaim. Such has been the popularity of her work that it has been translated into several languages. For examples–Spanish, Dutch, German, Greek, Italian and many more. The novel published shortly after Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things and bagged the 'Common Wealth' writers prize for the best first book in Eurasia section. It was the result of her five years research at the book eight times over seven years and each time I thought that I have finished the book.\textsuperscript{7} (50 years of Indian Writing p.67)

"The novelist Mukul Kesavan commands Difficult Daughters as "a first rate realistic novel about a daughter's reconstruction of her tremble past, hinging on her mother’s story.\textsuperscript{8} (50 years of Indian Writing .............p.76)

"The novel is based partly on the life of Kapur's mother Virmati, which is also the name of the novel’s main character. The novel’s dedication "to my mother and her mother and to my father" emphasizes this deep and abiding woman to women attachment that is also the books central thematic concern."\textsuperscript{9} (SANIE, P.122)

Her next work 'A Married Woman' was published in 2002. It is also quite as powerful as its predecessor. Kapur negotiates different issues emerging out of a socio-political upheaval in her country. Set against the bloody backdrop of Babri Masjid
demolition, the novel explores the space in domestic relation and sexual intimacy between woman to woman. About the controversial issue and theme Manju 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 with which push the life of Astha, my heroine, towards awareness of political matters and to world outside the confines of an unhappy marriage."10 (The Hindu…)

In 2006 her third novel 'Home' was published. Its story revolves around a large typical Indian family. Unlike Kapur's first two novels, it explores the complex terrain of the Indian family with much inside and affection without venturing into any social, political or religious issue. It had been short listed for Hutch Crossword Book Award 2006. According to Hindustan Times– a leading newspaper declares it 'superb'.

Her latest work is 'The Immigrant' published this year 2009. It is a passage to Canada of 1970s. For an immigrant there was no going back, notes Manju Kapur in her intensely readable tale of an Indian husband and wife to Canada’s frozen expanses.

Besides, these four novels, Kapur have also adopted other genres of writing. For eg.—

**Short Stories :**

Essays and Press Articles:


"Speaking up for inter-community or Cross Marriages"
In Outlook (New Delhi) 14 Jan. 2007.

Kapur has partially given a personal tinge to her novels. If we trace autobiographical notes in ‘Difficult Daughters’ we find that the name of the protagonist ‘Virmati’ is the name of her mother and the picture on the jacket of her book is her mother’s. In the novel it is Kasturi’s. Like Virmati Manju Kapur teaches in a college. She had a traditional upbringing and her mother’s priority for her daughter was marriage. As Manju Kapur says conflict between daughter and mother is inevitable and, I suppose I was a difficult daughter (50 years of Indian .........) Kapur’s parents were well placed Arya Samajis like Virmati’s relations. Her father like Virmati’s husband was, a professor before he became a bureaucrat.

In the novel (Home) Kapur’s joint family resembles to Banwari Lal’s. She has mentioned her daughter’s names—Katyayni Agastya in chapter XV entitled The Karol Bagh House. The setting of the story of the Immigrant is partly Candatian and partly Indian. Halifax, Nova Scotia of Canada is the place where Manju Kapur herself studied and spent a few years as the protagonist of the novel Nina and her dentist husband Anand live.

Post independence era witnesses the growth of Indian writers basically in fiction. They registered their names not only in the native
sphere but also in the alien sphere. A large number of Indians use the 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 (nationalistically) will henceforth be confident indispensable, participants in that literary conversation)”\textsuperscript{11}.


Fiction writing is the most dominant form in the twentieth century. Manju Kapur along with her contemporary writers such as Kamla Markandya, Shoba De, Ruth Prawer Jhabwala, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Bharati Mukherjee captures the Indian ethos very successfully and skillfully. At the same time they show their deep insight into human nature and their understanding of day to day problems.

Though Indian woman writers, wax eloquence on all aspects of the flaws and felicity of characters both male and female. The main thrust is on female character.

Thus Manju Kapur has also represented her all protagonists female in her novels, either she is Virmati in \textit{Difficult Daughters}, Astha in \textit{A Married Woman}, in \textit{Home} Nisha and Nina in \textit{the Immigrant}. All her protagonists search for their identity and seek space for themselves in their relationships. As Virmati seeks her identity and space in her own home and after marriage in her husband Professor
Harish’s house with his first wife Ganga The conflict between tradition and modernity, striving for freedom is a modern topic of Manju Kapur and it is well-depicted in Difficult Daughters.

Kapur suggests that the root all present-day evil is this tension between modernity and tradition.

In Difficult Daughters—daughters include two daughters Virmati the main character of the novel is difficult for her parents (Kasturi and Suraj Prakash) and Ida has been a Difficult Daughter for her parents (Professor Harish & Virmati). Infact Kapur wants to suggest society as well. While Anita Nair says, "Daughters are difficult only when life becomes difficult for them." Infact in her quest of identity, Virmati rebels against tradition. She is impelled by the inner need to feel loved as an individual rather than as a responsible daughter. The story tells how she is torn between family duty and desires for education and illicit love, this is a story of sorrow, love and compromise. The major portion deals with Virmati’s love affair with Professor and rest part describes fighting struggle for freedom set around the turbulent years of World War II and the partition of India.

In her 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. In contrast to other fiction writers who focus on a historical view, Kapur's stresses on the complex portrayal of the social and communical unrest. The focus here shifts from a women rebellion again society shackled in tradition, torn between duty and desire, to an exploration of the positioning of a women in sexual orientation.
In the India's Homophobic socio-cultural context, where any overt expression of sexuality by women is considered as promiscuity, Kapur's novel explores the twin explosive subjects of sexual intimacy between women and Hindu Muslim confrontation, against backdrop of respectable middle 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 lesbiansim, Deepa Mehta too, in her film *Fire* focused and projectd the word of lesbian utopia. However, though novel approaches this "*Women Identified experience*" it does not specifically address lesbians are [present an ideal role model in the protagonist who could be emulated by the invisible lesbian community in Indians society. The novel should not simply be assessed as a rendition of lesbian relationship. Set at a time of sociopolitical upheaval, a married woman is well balanced depiction of a country’s inner development- its strengths and its failure and anguish of a women’s unrest, which as complicated as the social and political upheaval going around her. Manju has beautifully combined love, family values, communal riots a married woman’s life and how 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 economics privations and yarning for much more. Cast in the rising independence of urban women from the shackles of feminist rhetoric, A Married Woman expects the acknowledgement of oppression and the inability individual, to effect change in circumstances, despite the antagonistic forces and expectations of
the family and society.

Kapur 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 Astha'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."13

Like her earlier two novels, Manju Kapur's novel 'Home' beautifully weaves "Conflicting loyalties, intrigues, triumphs" as well as the "small rebellious an instance power struggles" which constitutes the universal human experience. Here, too, the canvas is the familiar one. The ordinary middle class joint family and the subject is the exploration of the lives of ordinary women, and the ways in which they connect to and resist other women, as it had been in Difficult Daughters and A Married Woman. A novel about the pressure and rewards of living in a traditional extended but close knit Indian family of shopkeepers: brothers and their families living in the same house, 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 except every brunt easily as something controlled totally by fate. Kapur's novel describes submissiveness of women to their mother-in-law when they show resentment of theirs daughters-in-law; the pressures on wives to produce children—boys for preference- and disgrace if they
fail to do so; and the women in the novel are 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. This shifts in relationships the power struggles within a family, the suppressing individuality are all very minutely captured by Manju Kapur.

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 in the works of Manju Kapur.

The themes of Manju Kapur are not new. Whatever she has portrayed in her novels has been depicted earlier in her contemporary writers but every writer, poet or author has its own style and perception to view something. What pleases me in Manju Kapur's observation is that she has analyzed her each and every character with well understanding. The characters are simple and lifelike. They belong usually from middle-class family. This is one of the techniques the author employs to make the readers deeply involved and subsequently the novel becomes quite absorbing and interesting (for example the characters of the novel 'Home' are the next door human beings) whether she is Virmati in *Difficult Daughters*, Astha in *A Married Woman*, Nisha and Nina in Home and the Immigrant respectively. Not only the protagonists of the novels but other major and minor characters of the novels also portrayed with sharp sensibility.
Kapur’s prose is bare, devoid of the stylistic flourish that has become a characteristic of Indian writing in English. Difficult Daughters has been well received by one and all. Urvashi Bhatalia of Kali for women was struck by the simplicity of Manju Kapur’s writing style. There is no gimmickry in the language as we see in some other books.
REFERENCES

6. Ibid., p.76.
8. Ibid., p.76.
9. Rastogi, Pallavi, South Asian Novelists in English : Manju Kapur, P.P.122
13. Ibid.