Traditions are often presumed to be ancient unalterable and deeply important, through they may sometimes be much less "natural" than is presumed. Some traditions were deliberately invented for one reason or another, often to highlight or enhance the importance of a certain institution. Traditions may also be changed to suit the needs of the day, and the changes can become accepted as a part of the ancient tradition.

Tradition can be highly evaluative concept. Conservatives often evoke the idea of tradition to express reverence for continuity and the past. Tradition can act as an anti-theoretical concept deployed to question the role of doctrine and reason within social life.

The word tradition comes from the Latin noun tradition (handing over), which derives from the verb trader (hand over, deliver). Tradition corresponds closely to the Greek paradosis, which also comes from a verb (paradidomi) meaning "hand over". Tradition can be used literally or figuratively, in the latter case often to mean "teaching" or "instruction". Culture depends on teaching and learning, and teaching and learning presuppose a tradition. The concept of tradition thus applies to all fields of culture, including science, arts and letters, education, law, politics and religion.

Traditional cultured practices such as enforced and chastity have historically tended to place restrictions principally on women, without imposing similar restrictions on men. Some controversial traditional
cultural practices such as female genital cutting have described as attempt at nullifying women’s sexuality altogether. Other cultural practices such as honour killings threaten unsanctioned female sexual behaviour with death, often all the hands of the woman’s own relatives.

In 1850-1950 the colonial ventures into modernity brought concept of democracy, equality and individual rights. The rise of the concept of nationalism and introspection of discriminatory practices brought about social reform movements related to caste and gender relations. This first phase of feminism in India was initiated by men to uproot the social evil of Sati, to allow widow remarriage, to forbid child marriage, and to reduce illiteracy, as well as to regulate the age of consent and to ensure property right through intervention. Women in this phase were categorized along with lower castes as subjects of social reforms and welfare instead of being recognized at autonomous agent of change. The emphasis was on recreating new space in pre-existing feminine roles of caring. The women involved were those related to male activities, elite, western educated, upper cast Hindus.

During 1915-1947 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 woman-hood, special yet separated from public space women’s participation in the freedom 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.

With the rise of new wave of feminism across the world, a new generations of Indian feminists emerged. Women have developed ac-
cording to their situations and have become advanced in various fields. They have become independent in respect of their reproductive rights. In recent times, contemporary Indian feminists are fighting for abortion, breast feeding, co-operation, control of the female body, diversity, divorce, education, equal pay, freedom, gender, independence, individual autonomy, maternity leave, nonviolence, reproduction, rights, sexuality and tolerance against discrimination, domestic violence, objectification, patriarchy, prostitution, sexism, sati and stereotypes. Madha Patkar, Madhu Kishwar, and Brinda Karat are some feminist social workers and politician who continue their fight against fundamental causes of women's oppression in post independent India in the political field. In the literary field Amirtha Pritam, Kusum Ansal, Sarojini Sahoo are some eminent writers of India who makes a link between sexuality and feminism and write for the idea "A Women's Body", "A Women's Right" in Indian languages. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, Leela Kasturi, Sharmila Rege, and Vidyut Bhagat are some essayists and critics who write in favor of feminism in English.

Woman is man's companion, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the activities of the man to the very minutest details and she has an equal right to freedom and liberty as him. She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. This ought to be the natural condition of things and not just as a result of learning to read and write. By sheer force of a vicious custom, even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying superiority over women, which they do not deserve and ought not to have. Many of our movements stops halfway and much of our work does not yield appropriates results because of
the condition of our women. Man and women are equal in status, but are not identical. They are a pair each being complimentary to the other; each helps the other, so that without the one the existence of the other cannot be conceived. Therefore it follows as a necessary corollary from these facts, that anything that will impair the status of either of them will involve an equal ruin of both.

Indian tradition has generally respected even God is regarded as half man, half woman. Manu declares that where women are honored, the gods are pleased; where they are not honored, all work becomes fruitless. Women are human beings and have as much of a right to development as men have. The fact that we are human beings is infinitely more important than the physiological peculiarities, which distinguish us from one another. In all human beings, irrespective of their sex, the same drama of the flash and the spirit, of finitude and transcendence, takes place. Women cannot do some things that men can. Their physiology prevents this. That, however, does not prove any inferiority on their part. We must do things for which we are made and do them will. The relation of men and women is the expression of an urge for duality. Each is a self, which requires the other as its compliment. The division of the sexes is a biological phenomenon, not a historical event. Male and female constitute ordinarily a fundamental unity.

The worth of a civilization can be judge by the place given to women in the society. One of several factors that justify the greatness of India’s ancient culture is the honorable place granted to women. The Muslim influence on India caused considerable deterioration in the status of women. They were deprived of their rights of equality
with men. Raja Ram Mohan Roy started a movement against this inequality and subjugation. The contact of Indian culture with that of the British also brought improvement in the status of women. The third factor in the revival of women's position was the influence of Mahatma Gandhi who induced women to participate in the Freedom Movement. As a result of retrieval of freedom, Women in Indian have distinguished themselves as teachers, nurses, airhostesses, booking clerks, receptionists, and doctors. They are also participating in politics and administration. But in spite of this amelioration in the status of women, the evil of illiteracy, dowry, ignorance, and economic slavery would have to be fully removed in order to give them their rightful place in Indian society.

In the later period the position of women went on deteriorating due to Muslim influence. During the Muslim period of history they were deprived of their rights of equality with men. They were compelled to keep themselves within the four walls of their house with a long veil on their faces. This was definitely due to Islamic influence. Even today in some Islamic countries women are not allowed to go out freely. The conservative regimes of Iran and Pakistan, for example, have withdrawn the liberties given to women folk by the previous liberal governments. Even in India the Muslim women are far more backward than their Hindu's, Christian and Sikh counter parts. The sight of Muslim women walking with long 'Burkas' (veils) on their person is not very rare. The women are, as a matter of fact, regarded as captive and saleable commodities in Muslim families. One man is allowed to have so many wives with the easiest provision of divorce. The husband can divorce a wife just by saying 'I divorce you' under
the provision of Muslim laws. This is what the emperors did hundred years back and the men are doing it even now in all Islamic countries. Even in this last phase of this twentieth century rich and prosperous men of Islamic countries keeps scores of wives in their harems. It was natural outcome of the Muslim subjugation of India that woman was relegated to a plaything of man, an ornament to decorate the drawing room. Serving, knitting, painting, and music were her pastimes and cooking and cleaning her business.

In the wake of Raja Ram Mohan Roy's movements against women subjugation to men and British influence on Indian culture and civilization the positions of women had once again undergone a change. However, it was only under the enlightened leadership of Mahatma Gandhi that they re-asserted their equality with men. In response to the call of Gandhi they discarded their veil and came out of the four walls of their houses to fight the battle of freedom shoulder to shoulder with their brothers. The result is that the Indian Constitution today has given to women the equal status with men. There is no discrimination between men and women. All professions are open to both of them with merits as the only criterion of selection.

As a result of their newly gained freedom Indian women have distinguished themselves in various spheres of life as politicians, orator, lawyers, doctors, administration and diplomats. They are not only entrusted with work of responsibility but also they perform their duties very honestly and sincerely. There is hardly any sphere of life in which Indian women have not taken parts and shone their worth. Women exercise their rights to vote, Contest for Parliament and Assembly, seek appointment in public office and compete in other spheres of life with
men. This shows that women in India enjoy today more liberty and equality than before. They have acquired more liberty to participate in the affairs of country. They have been given equality with men in shaping their future and sharing responsibilities for themselves, their family and their country.

It is a fact that women are intelligent, hard working and efficient in work. They put heart and soul together in whatever they undertake. As typist and clerks they are now competing successfully with men. There are many women working in the Central Secretariat. They are striving very hard to reach highest efficiency and perfection in the administrative work. Their integrity of character is probably better than men. Generally it was found that women are less susceptible to corruption in form of bribery and favoritism. They are not only sweet tongued but also honest, efficient and punctual in their jobs as receptionists, air-hostesses and booking clerks at railway reservation counters. As a matter of fact they are gradually monopolizing the job of receptionists and airhostesses.

Another job in which Indian women are doing so well is that of teachers. In country like India where millions are groping in the darkness of illiteracy and ignorance efficient teaching to the children is most urgently needed. By virtue of their love and affection for the children the women have proved the best teachers in the primary and kindergarten schools. They can better understand the psychology of a child than the male teachers. Small children in the kindergarten schools get motherly affection from the lady teachers. It is probably significant that the Montessori system of education is being conducted mostly by the women in this country.
There is no denying the fact that women in India have made a considerable progress in the last fifty years but yet they have to struggle against many handicaps and social evils in the male dominated society. The Hindu code Bill has given the daughter and the son equal share of the property. The Marriage Act no longer regards woman as the property of man. Marriage is now considered to be a personal affair and if a partner feels dissatisfied she or he has the right to divorce. But passing of law is one thing and it absorption in the collective thinking of society is quite a different matter. In order to prove themselves equal to the dignity and status given to them in the Indian Constitution they have to shake of the shackles of slavery and superstition. They should help the government and society in eradicating the eves of dowry, illiteracy and ignorance among the eves. The dowry problem has assumed a dangerous form in this country. The parents of the girl have to pay thousands and lakhs to the bridegroom and their greedy fathers and mothers. If promised article are not given by the parents of brides, the cruel and greedy members of the bridegroom’s family take recourse to afflicting tortures on the married women some women are murdered in such cases. The dowry deaths are really heinous and barbarous crimes committed by the cruel and inhumane person. The young girls should be bold enough if not marring the boy who demand dowry through their parents. The boy should also refuse to marry if their parents demand dowry. But unfortunately the number of such bold and conscientious boys is very few. Even the doctors, engineers, teachers and the administrative officers do not hesitate in allowing them to be sold to the wealthy fathers of shy and timid girls. Such persons have really brought disgrace to their
cadres in particular and society in general. The government should enact stringent laws to afflict rigorous punishment on dowry seekers, women’s murderers and rappers.

For every truth you find in India, the opposite is equally true. This well-worn cliché is doubly true when looking at the lives of Indian women. Indira Gandhi’s rule as Prime Minister of India, was a triumph for women in leadership, yet the nation under her rule was populated by hundreds of millions of impoverished women, whose lives changed remarkably little during her term, In the 1990s, India had one of the highest number of international beauty contest winners and one of the lowest rates of female literacy in the world. Maternal mortality rates in some rural areas of India are among the worst in the world, yet India has the world’s largest number of professionally qualified women, with more trained female doctors, surgeons, scientists and professors than the United States.

A belief or practice in any field of culture may be said to be a tradition to the extent that it is received from the hands, lips, or the example of others rather than being discovered or invented; that it is received on the assumption that the authors and transmitters are reliable and therefore the tradition valid; and that it is received with express command and conscious substantial change.

Hence, as a source of knowledge, tradition is to be distinguished from rumor and fashion, although received from others, are not necessarily assumed to be reliable or to merit transmission without alteration; on the contrary, they invite speculation and elaboration. Tradition, purporting to embody is a fixed truth from or authoritative
source, demands faithfulness and obedience.

Tradition refers to the adherence to practices handed down from generations past. Unforced all persons ought to endeavour to follow what is right, and not what is established.

India is a land of diverse cultures. The variation in physical, climatic conditions and the extent of exposure to other cultures have greatly influenced the traditions and culture of the different regions. There is an underlying basic factor common to the whole of India, with variations in the practices based on their local need and influences. Further, the greatness of India has been in accepting the best from all the invaders and intermingling the new customs and styles with the existing.

But in India we can also see some traditions, which is harmful for women. These tradition led women into a world in which they even don’t know their real existence or power. From ancient period we can see lot of traditions which are not logically correct, only for namesake of tradition women has been always pressed by man dominant society. For example we can see Sati custom, child marriage etc.

Sati is the traditional Hindu practice of a widow immolating herself on her husband’s funeral pyre.

The status of women in Indian society is a complex one-women are both abused as well as revered in the Indian society, sometimes within the same household. The Hindu religion calls for worship of the woman-hood, and several rituals are conducted in honor of women. At the same time, it denied such privileges as performing the last rites and equal share of inheritance. The conditions of divorced women;
widows and working women need substantial improvement.

Indian women spend time with the family members—mostly others female relatives. The educated women have friends they have made in school or work. (Contrary to perception, a large percent of women in India Work). Indian women also spend time with chores, raising children, watching movies, and caring for community.

**Mamta Misra** (writer and an active member of saheli, Austin) wrote "**On Women and Tradition**" shares some facts of women’s situation with us. She says—

"Once, as part of my volunteer work for safe Place, I was talking to students at a local high school about dating violence and date rape prevention. The teacher of that class was amazed that a woman from India, a country where women generally perceived to be shy and submissive, would feel comfortable talking about such thing in public. After the presentation, she asked me, with a mixture of hesitation and admiration, if it wasn’t unusual for a woman coming from an Indian tradition to do so. I answered her with a “Yes and No”, saying that my culture is very diverse, with room for many kinds of people and attitudes. My American friends have often been puzzled by the apparent contradictions found in the position of women in Indian culture. The fact is that South Asian Countries have had female Prime Ministers contrasts with the fact that women in these countries often don’t have a voice, aren’t heard, or are in other ways oppressed. People here are impressed when I tell them that in my religion, revered deities that represent power, wisdom, and wealth have female images. And then I see the unasked question in their, "**Then why the burning brides?**"
Another fear that stands against women’s freedom and equal rights is the fear of lack of their safety. Women’s right andWomen’s safety are mutually exclusive, goes the argument. Therefore, women should give up some of their rights in order to be safe. They point to some of the practices in their tradition. Such women are living within the walls of their Home, under the protection of the male members of their family—father, brother, husband, and son. It is women’s safety and well being, they fell, which is at the root of such traditional family structure. At the same time, we find that women are not always safe in their own Homes and the isolation is a roadblock to their safety. In some cases, the people who are supposed to protect them are the ones who hurt them.

Furthermore, tradition not only shows bondage for women, it also gives us glimpses of freedom and equality for women. In ancient Vedic tradition, we find examples of women’s freedom to intellectual and spiritual pursuit in the gurukula with men. During Buddhist period large numbers of women left their Homes and became nuns. Some of them composed poetry with messages of freedom. This tradition continues through the Middle Ages where women bhakta poets like Avvaiyar, Andal, Akka Mahadevi, and Mirabai lift the confines of their Homes and did as they pleased without fear. These women have been given the place of saints in our tradition and their compositions are sung with love and devotion. This tradition of saying ‘no’ to the confines of Home and to rebel continues in the modern history of women’s participation in the independence movement and post independence. Women’s movements in India such as the Chipko movement to save our forests, women’s movements to protect men from alcoholism and women and children from men under the influence by rebelling against
government policies regarding the sale of alcohol.

The modern Indian woman is described as one who is free of all inhibitions- she rides to work on her Scoot Pep, wears western clothes like jeans. Now, taking the example of the character Esha from the book, one night at the call center, by Chetan Bhagat, the protagonist described her as one of those kinds of women who slogged all night yet was rebuked by her mother-in-law. She works and yet, she has to do all the household chores. Is this your definition of the Modern Indian Woman? This brings us to today’s topic-is the Modern Indian women no longer captive of traditions. In my view, no matter how much we say that the Indian woman is no longer captive of traditions, the fact remains that there will always be the elders who will always want their bahu to be the perfect submissive Indian woman. It is only because of this that Indian women will never be free of traditions. Moreover, India is a large country with many regions not very public, there are still villages that are practicing Sati and unfortunately, we can do nothing about it.

As far as the women tradition and rules are concern, our Indian writers wrote such pieces of writing that reveal the fact of women’s bondage in their houses and in their society. Our Indian writers or novelists pay so much attention on this type of situation.

The Indian English novel evolved as a subaltern consciousness; as a reaction to break away from the colonial literature. Hence the postcolonial literature in India witnessed a revolution against the idiom, which the colonial writers followed. Gradually the Indian English authors began employing the techniques of hybrid language, magic
realism peppered with native themes. Thus from a postcolonial era Indian literature ushered into the modern and then the post-modern era. The saga of the Indian English novel therefore stands as the tale of changing tradition, the story of a changing India.

With the emergence of feminist criticism (with its own theory and aesthetics, as in Feminist Literary Criticism: Explorations in Theory, ed. Josephine Donovan, 1975, A Literature of Their Own by Elaine Showalter, 1977, The New Feminist Criticism, eds. Patrocinio P. Schweickart and Elizabeth A. Flynn, 1985, A World of Difference by Barbara Johnson, 1987, No Man’s Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, 1988-1989, Beyond Feminist Aesthetics by Rita Felski, 1989, Reading Black, Reading Feminist: A Critical Anthology by Henry L. Gates, Jr., 1990 and many more), it is but natural that literature written by women should be read, interpreted and evaluated in a new mode based on a radically altered set of expectations and values. (We assume that such aesthetic and critical processes like reading, interpretation and evaluation are still valid in academia where the notoriously anti-literature notions of post-structuralism and post-modernism have not yet been dislodged). That a patriarchal society’s traditional hold is reflected in the way male and female protagonists are portrayed in literature is but one index. While contemporary writers exemplify this new feminist awareness, there have been in the past similar voices crying against gender-based injustice well before the dawn of the modern era and its concerns. A worthy example of such early pre-feminist feminist is Kate Chopin and her uneven but bold, starting and prescient novel, The Awakening,
1899. She was born before the American Civil War. She lived in the highly conservative state of Missouri and a somewhat freer state of Louisiana. She felt a kinship with French writers, Maupassant, Mme. de Stael or George Sand, rather than those writing in English. She shocked those around her by her unconventional ways. She shocked her publishers and readers even more by her candid and daring depiction of human sexuality, something which writers, especially female, did not do at the time. These voices long ignored or forgotten are now being rediscovered and reinstated, alas, sometimes uncritically.

Feminism holistically, then, as a socio-political program, advocates freedom, justice, equality, dignity, compassion and other egalitarian values to benefit women everywhere as they are the ones denied these considerations for long. The enormity and complexity of the issues and claims involved must be recognized if the long debate is not to be wasted in mere narrow-minded, fissiparous and personal tendencies.

Now from the concerns of middle-class women in North America and Western Europe, the movement is enlarged to comprise the problems of women everywhere whatever their class, economic well-being, race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic origin and the like. Feminism seen thus is in fact a twentieth-century renaissance whose sometimes unavoidably conflicting voices must be faced.

Feminism emerges as a concept that is based on a critical analysis of male privilege and women’s subordination within any given society; it opposes women’s subordination to men in the family and society. Feminism is a global and revolutionary ideology that is
political because it is concerned with the questions of power. A feminist is one who is awakened and conscious about women’s life and problems. The feminist is one who is awakened and conscious about women’s life and problems. The feminist apprehends certain features of social reality as intolerable as to be rejected if one is to transform the society for a better future. The concept of women is of central importance in the formations of feminist theory. Themes explored in feminism and feminist theory include patriarchy, sexual objectification and oppression. In literary theory feminism means challenging the patriarchal canons feminist theory studies a structural inequality of women caused by systematic social injustice.

The study of feminist theories begins with the eighteenth century and continues until the present times. Feminist theories try to identify such biases and then negotiate them by sensitizing readers to their existence. Feminism is a political perception based on two fundamental premises. Gender difference is the foundation of a structural inequality between women and men by which women suffers systematic social injustice. The inequality between the sexes is not the result of biological necessity but is produced by the cultural construction of gender differences. Sex refers to the determining of identity on the basis of biological category while gender connotes the cultural meaning attached to sexual identity. In other words gender is the product of cultural conditioning. Feminism theories range themselves against various structures and inter relationship of power the state, the church, law and the academy, which they see as patriarchal. Socialism and feminism at the beginning of the nineteenth century emphasized the ways in which discrimination against women is manifested and how
that can be resisted.

For feminist the text is battleground where actual power relations between men and women are placed out. The representation of women in literature was felt to be one of the most important forms of socialization. The women's movement of the 1960s was a renewal of an old tradition of thoughts and action. This movement was literary in the beginning in the sense that it realized the significance of the images of women promulgated by literature. The women's movement became a major political in economics and culture. Literary critics influenced by the movement undertook a whole new project. Feminist critics assume that literary texts operate on the lines of power struggle between men and women. The text naturalized the oppression of women Feminists critics argue that literary texts reproduce social basis that see woman as only the other partner of male. Religion, social conditions and cultural traditions perceive the woman as an adjunct to the male. This means that the women's identity is never separate but is subsumed under that of the male. The woman is typecast, as 'Mother Nature' thus reducing her to the perpetually giving all forgiving nature that never demands anything and is willing to suffer anything for her son. Sex is biological while gender is socially constructed. There is no necessary link between gender and biological sex. Masculinity and feminity are essentially coercive categories.

In 1960s and 1970s feminism largely represented and was concerned with problems faced by western middle class women while at the same time claiming to represent all women. Feminist activists emerged from diverse communities.

Many feminist argue that feminism is a grass root that seeks
to cross binderies on social class, race, culture and religion. In 1970 in feminist criticism the major effort went into exposition what might be called mechanism of patriarchy and women, which perpetuated sexually inequality. In 1970 Elaine showalter detects in the history of women’s writing a feminine phase. In 1980 feminist criticism explored the female world and outlook.

Her first novel, **Difficult Daughters**, is set during India’s independence struggle and is partially based on the life of Manju Kapur’s own mother, Virmati with several books to her credit. Happy that women’s writings have come of age in India, she says, "*Women have a lot of things to say. But, unfortunately not much is given to them. However, there is a lot of interest in what women has to say-and many, specially the regional women writers, write under tremendous personal pressure*"\(^2\).

Manju Kapur’s novels furnish examples of a whole range of attitudes towards the importance of tradition. However, Mrs. Kapur seems aware of the fact that the women of India have indeed achieved their success in sixty years of Independence, but if there is to be a true female independence, too much remains to be done. The conflict for autonomy and separate identity remains unfinished combat. Women under the patriarchal pressure and control were subjected too much more burns and social ostracism. They were discriminated and were biased in lien of their sex. The life, women lived and struggled under the oppressive mechanism of a close society were reflected in the novels of Manju Kapur. Taking into account the complexity of life, different histories, cultures and different structures of values, the women’s question, despite basic solidarity needs to be tackled in
relation to the socio-cultural situation. The impact of patriarchy on the Indian society varies from the one in the west. Manju kapur has her concerns, Priorities as well as their own ways of dealing with the predicament of their women protagonists.

Manju Kapur’s female protagonists are mostly educated, aspiring individual caged within the confines of conservative society. Their education leads them to independent thinking for which their family and society become intolerant of them. They struggle between tradition and modernity. It is their individual struggle with family and society through which they plunged into a dedicated effort to carve and identity for themselves as qualified women with faultless backgrounds. The novelist has portrayed her protagonists as a woman caught in the conflict between the passion of the flesh and yearning to be a part of the political and intellectual movements of the day.

Since Gandhiji helped the women to cross the threshold of family life and move out into the outer world of freedom struggle and social reform, the women is presented with varied opportunities not only today but also yesterday during freedom movement. Yet writing in 1988, Manju Kapur in her novels presents women who try to establish their own identity. The women of India have indeed achieved their success in half a century of independence, but if there is to be a true female, independence, much remains to be done. The fight for autonomy remains an unfinished combat. 'Difficult Daughters' 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 author very intelligently
depicted the Indian scenario with the help of her characters. The pain and horrible experience of partition is the key world of this novel.

'Difficult Daughters' is a unique collection by Manju Kapur. The novel is beautifully written, with a story that is fascinating in so many ways spanning three generations, this story centers on a woman born at the turn of 20th century into a Punjabi family. It tells of an illicit affair and its wider political and social implications as well as not least the bothered issue, for Indian women, of marriage versus education. In her quest of identify, 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.

'Difficult Daughters' is the story of a freedom struggle. While India fights for freedom from the British Raj, Virmati fights for the freedom to live life on her terms. Like so many other Indian girls, she wants to decide what to study and where, whom to marry and when. In the end it appears that she might have achieved all that but it ceases to be important. For in the throes of the struggle, she looses a part of herself. She is torn in two halves, one of which is on the side she is fighting against. All this when India attains freedom, but at the cost of Partition, at the cost of losing half its soul, losing the faith of her family members, loosing the control over her own destiny. Things must have changed, but how much really? Even today, thousands of girls sit within the four walls of their houses and wonder why they do not have the right to choose their own lives, decide their own destiny.

'Difficult Daughters' compels one to think along these lines.

This is the key point 'Destiny' in this study that moulds the
life of all the characters in this story. The search for control over one’s destiny, surely the key theme of ‘Difficult Daughters’, refers to the Independence aspired to and obtained by a nation, but also to the independence yearned after by a woman and member of that same nation. Virmati, like so many other sub-continental women’s is asked to accept a typical arranged marriage.

"She rebels against that destiny, to the lasting shame of her family, above all of her mother." ³ (DD. p.78)

The happiest and most attractive period in Virmati’s life is, beyond doubt that which she spends in Nahan, the capital of Sirmaur as the headmistress of a girl’s school. It is there that she achieves the greatest degree of control over her life and her performance wins her a deserved respect but the particularity of Virmati’s destiny, at this stage of her life, is that she has to exercise her responsibilities by herself. In the micro-state to which her destiny leads her, she has no family and close-friends. She believes, she needs a man and she makes the wrong choice, returning to a relationship that had already brought her nothing but suffering and she is obliged to quit her school, house and employment.

She did, however, still have another option open. There was another place she could have gone to Shantiniketan. She could have remade her life there. Unfortunately, she has to change train in Delhi, and the long waiting time opens up a trap that she falls into, she contacts an acquaintance in the capital, who is also a friend of the fateful Professor. The glimpse of a spiritual awakening, of a renewed autonomy, fades into the distance. Virmati’s married life with the Professor in
Amritsar turns out to be a disaster. In the end, her individual history disappears and becomes all but irrelevant, swallowed up in the greater and more resonant collective tragedy of partition. Yet despite all this, Virmati has in her life’s path encountered other women, who like her aspired to a different life, and who succeeded better than she did.

These women are Shakuntala, her cousin and Swarna Lata, her room mate in Lahore. Both are representatives of a certain female type that recurs in Indian literature. In Virmati’s extended family, her cousin Shakuntala appears from the beginning as the example of the ‘modern’ and ‘liberated’ women, later in Swarna Lata, Virmati encounters a woman who leads a similar lifestyle, an ultra committed activist. In other words, the psychological annihilation of Virmati, at hands of her own family and her husband’s should not be read as fatality, what happen to Virmati is no doubt the most representative destiny of the Indian woman, quantitatively or statistically.

The title of the novel ‘Difficult Daughters’ is an indication to the message that a woman, who tries in search of an identity, is branded as a difficult daughter by the family and the society as well. ‘Difficult Daughter’ is a story of a young woman, named Virmati born in Amritsar into an austere and high-minded household. The story tells that how she is torn between family duty, the desire 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. The search for control over one’s destiny, surely the key theme of Difficult Daughters, refers to the Independence aspired to and obtained by a nation (despite its cruel division by a fateful Partition), but also to the independence
yearned after (and finally not obtained) by a woman and member of that same nation (or of one of its rival communities). Virmati, the heroine, seeks human relations that will allow her to be herself and to exercise the degree of control over her life which, as an educated woman, she knows she deserves. Born in Amritsar in the Punjab in 1940, the daughter of a father of progressive ideas and a traditionalist mother (Kasturi, obliged to give birth to no less than 11 children), she aspires to a freer life than that offered her by those around her. This aspiration is condemned to failure, thanks to the incomprehension she receives from both her own family and that of the man she marries - but also thanks to her own mistakes, for no-one obliged her to marry who became her husband, and she was free not to make the choice she did.

Virmati, like so many other subcontinental women, is asked to accept a typical arranged marriage. She rebels against that destiny, to the lasting shame of her family, above all of her mother. Insisting on her right to be educated, she manages to leave home to study in Lahore. Nonetheless, she falls in love with an Amritsar teacher known as 'The Professor', a married man who first appears in her life as her parents' tenant. After a number of vicissitudes, including a period as a school principal in a small Himalayan state, she finally marries the man she loves (or thinks she loves), and returns to Amritsar to live with him. However, he refuses to leave his first wife, and the consequences for Virmati are harsh indeed: she ends up being marginalised by her own family and despised by her husband’s. Virmatí’s tale is told, from a present-day perspective, by Ida, her only daughter, who seeks to reconstruct her late mother’s life-story, against the background of the
Independence movement of the 1940s and the subsequent trauma of Partition.

The pages of *Difficult Daughters* speak not only of Virmati, but of other *'Difficult Daughters'*; who succeed better than she did in their parallel struggles for independence in their lives. At the centre of the narrative, we are confronted with a woman who fights but falls by the wayside; but at its edges, as no doubt less representative but still symbolic figures, we encounter -as will be seen below - other women, whose relative success points the way to the future.

The happiest and most attractive period in Virmati’s life is, beyond doubt, that which she spends in Nahan, the capital of Sirmaur, the small Himalayan state run by an enlightened maharaja which gives her refuge for a while as the headmistress of a girl’s school. Sirmaur existed in reality, and is now part of the federal state of Himachal Pradesh. It is there that she achieves the greatest degree of control over her life: there are rules she has to obey (and breaking them proves her fall), but she is able to teach inside an ordered framework, and her performance wins her a deserved respect. It is true that the single or widowed lady teacher or headmistress is something of a stock figure in modern Indian literature. But the particularity of Virmati’s destiny, at this stage of her life, is that she has to exercise her responsibilities entirely by herself. In the micro-state to which her destiny leads her, she has no family or close friends. She attains a near-exemplary level of female autonomy. For the first and only time, she has her own place to live, and yet she falls. She believes she needs a man, and she makes the wrong choice, returning to a relationship that had already
brought her nothing but suffering. The repeated clandestine visits of the fatal Professor lose Virmati her employers’ confidence, and she is obliged to quit her school, house and employment. Retrospectively, the Nahan period appears as the one utopian moment in Virmati’s unfortunate life. This sensation of a distant utopia is reinforced if the 21st-century reader recalls that these are circumstances from a past epoch which could not be repeated today, for better or for worse: the maharajas are a thing of the past. The more than 500 princely states of pre-Independence and pre-Partition India varied enormously in size, from the huge domain of the Nizam of Hyderabad to miniscule territories like Sirmaur. Kapur’s text declares: "Nahan, clean and prosperous, was ruled by an enlightened royal couple"\(^4\) (D.D. p.182). It may be that not all the maharajas were as retrograde as is often thought, and that not all should be seen as like the cynical and exploitative Nawab of Bahawalpur who has been so fiercely condemned by V.S. Naipaul. All in all, what Virmati finds in Nahan is a certain lifestyle- employment in an isolated but well-ordered ministate, capable of providing her with some degree of psychological and mental refuge- which would not be an offer to her equivalent today.

She did, however, still have another option open. There is an opening that she glimpses, but which finally eludes her. There was another place she could have gone to: Shantiniketan, the destination that she evoked with her employers to avoid open scandal, but which also an orator: "Heavy applause broke out as Swarna finished speaking"\(^5\) (D.D. p.145). Swarna continues her political activity post-marriage, expressing herself on the matter to Virmati as follows:
"We have plenty of married women working with us. I'm married, aren't I?" (D.D. p.252). One may draw a parallel between the careers of Shakuntala and Swarna, although here a qualification needs to be made: on the one and only occasion when the two meet, they do not get on - a small narrative irony which points up Kapur's ability to avoid both reductionism and sentimentalism. In the end, the path of political activism does not attract Virmati, as she herself recognises "I am not like these women. They are using their minds, organizing, participating in conferences, being politically active, while my time is spent being in love" (D.D. 142). She chooses - it cannot be said for her own good- the road that leads to the Professor: a road not taken by Swarna, with whom she finally feels obliged to break off relations: "And Swarna dropped out of her life" (D.D. p.252).

At all events, it may be said that Virmati's frustrated life is, as it were, framed - as if in a triptych - by those two other, much more successful lives: those of Shakuntala and Swarna Lata, both emblematic of the educated, politicised and emancipated woman. In other words, the psychological annihilation of Virmati, at the hands of her own family and her husband's, should not be read as a fatality. What happens to Virmati is no doubt the most representative destiny of the Indian woman (even if educated), quantitatively or statistically, but Kapur's novel shows that other paths also exist, while further stressing that choices are by no means simple or either-or.

There are types of female negotiation that work, and others that do not: but nothing is predetermined. "In this novel, one needs to stress that the disjunction between the weight of gender-determined
tradition, on the one hand, and the yearning for independence and self-affirmation, on the other, does not appear as a simple dichotomy of life-choices. In no case are things black and white. There is a whole range of complex emotional shades of grey between the two alternatives". One may here invoke, from a comparative viewpoint, another novel by an Indian woman writer, Anita Desai’s Fasting, Feasting, which appeared in 1999, shortly after Difficult Daughters. Here, if Uma, the female protagonist of the novel’s Indian part, is unable to get out of the dull mediocrity of her existence as an unmarried daughter - and if the fate of her cousin Anamika, who could have gone to study at Oxford but ends up a victim of the epidemic of bride-burning, is even worse - Uma’s sister Aruna appears by contrast as the representative of a different type of Indian woman, the ‘socialite’ who succeeds in imposing her personality by the skillful pulling of social strings. It may be concluded that, however sadly typical the experiences of Virmati, these also exist paths that lead, with positive effect, to less typical destinations where demands are raised and recognised. Difficult Daughters is not a pure third-person narrative. Virmati’s story is told mostly in the third person (with some recourse to the epistolary mode), but is framed by the first-person narration of search. The search is that of Virmati’s daughter, Ida, as she seeks to reconstitute her mother’s history. Ida, an educated woman, divorced and childless, apparently leads a freer life than her mother’s in external terms; yet inside her she feels, even if not quite so acutely, some of the same anxieties as had plagued her mother: "No matter how I might rationalize otherwise, I feel my existence as a single woman reverberate desolately"9 (D.D. p.79). It is clear from the book’s pages that Ida,
the narrator through whose voice Kapur speaks, has achieved more than her mother (and much more than her grandmother): and that this is so even through the simple creative fact of ‘writing down’ her own family history. To quote Dora Sales again (this time from an essay on the novel in English): ‘In Difficult Daughters we do not listen to Virmati’s voice. She could not speak out, being certainly situated at the juncture of two oppressions: colonialism and patriarchy. What we have is her daughter’s reconstruction and representation’. There is, then, a qualitative leap between the lifehistories of (narrated) mother and (narrating) daughter. In addition, as another of Kapur’s commentators, Gur Pyari Jandial, correctly points out, it would be a mistake to devalue Virmati’s struggle because she failed, for what mattered was to have made the attempt:

"What is necessary is to break the patriarchal mould, and for Virmati to have tried to do that in the forties was a great achievement”\(^\text{10}\) (D.D. p.98).

The women of India have indeed achieved their successes in half a century of Independence; but if there is to be a true female independence too, much remains to be done. The fight for autonomy remains an unfinished combat; and it is from that perspective that, in her second novel, A Married Woman, published five years later, that Manju Kapur, this time from an eminently contemporary viewpoint, returns to the narration of women’s issues, deploying an approach that, as in Difficult Daughters, manages to be, simultaneously, both Indian and universal. And that, too, is ‘a great achievement’. The story of partition goes along with the life story of Virmati. Due to Second World War and demand of separation the life becomes worst.
It is 1943 and the month is December. Hindu Mahasabha Silver Jubilee celebration is going to be held. All the people are requested to gather at the appointed place then suddenly Communal Riot begins and snatches the life of Suraj Prakash - father of Virmati who was returning his home anticipating the danger but of no use. He has been hit on the back of the head. He dies and follows the death of his father Lala Diwan Chand.

These two deaths make Virmati dumb and senseless. She does not speak to anybody. She goes to her mother's house but could not dare to speak even a single word to her Mati. After sometime with accumulated strength she speaks with her mother with a low voice but Kasturi blames Virmati for her father's death. She feels so much grief at heart and comes back to her home.

The Professor Sahib tries every possible way to console her. He makes love to Virmati every night. Resultly she becomes pregnant and now starts a new phase of her life. Her mother-in-law forces Harish to lie Virmati with her as she has her opinion that a pregnant woman must be governed by pure thoughts loose clothes, sweet cooling liquids etc. She will recite Gita to her every night - Harish finds himself defenseless before these oblique references. Virmati too hears this and gets surprised at her concern. But she can not do anything. She lies with her every night restlessly. Suddenly she gets a shock. She could not continue her pregnancy. She loses her baby. Both husband and wife feel sorry for that. After one abortion and one miscarriage Virmati feels better but totally vacant within her heart. To come out from this mental agony Harish sends her for further studies to Lahore. Ganga rejoices.
It is now 1944. On the war front the Allies are slowly winning. India continues to feed this effort with money, goods and manpower.

On the National front after the 1942 agitations, most of the congress leaders are still in Jail. In Lahore Virmati stays at a house which is of her husband's friend's sister. Where she meets with Swarnalata who is now married and has a son. Still she is involved in her political activities while Virmati is behind marriage. Harish comes to Lahore whenever he gets holidays to meet her. Both recall their memories of Lahore how they had passed their nights secretly in Sayyid Hussain’s House.

Harish also expects to Virmati that she should come to Amritsar in her vacation as he has no holiday. But she is not at all willing to go back to that suffocated home which belongs to his wife Ganga. Communal riots are at its extreme. Harish sends his whole family back to Kanpur his old house. Now he is alone in Amritsar. Waiting for his beloved Virmati. She comes back after completing her exams.

The dreadful scene of partition is floating in the eyes of Kailash Nath, Kanhaiya Lal, Swarnalata Indumati, Shakuntala and Parvati’s husband. All of them express their views on the division of India to Ida who is doing her mother alive again along with the event of formation of India and Pakistan Gopinath says-I will never forget the sight of that train. I threw up on the plateform. It was taken straight to the shed to be washed. There was blood everywhere, dried and crusted, still oozing from the doorways, arms and legs hanging out, windows smashed. Indumati-The Mussulmans chopped our people’s heads off, raped our women, cut off their breasts, all of which they claimed was
in retaliation for what the Hindus were doing to them. Kailashnath remembers when it started. It was 5 March. They looted and burnt, drank our blood, destroyed our peace. And put the fire of revenge in our guts. They had always hated us, tried to poison the well once.

*Kanhaiya Lal: I am a doctor and I had never seen so much blood. Amritsar was burning. Every night, for days and days, the sky was red, we could smell the smoke all the time*”¹¹ (DD. p.268).

Now Virmati lives with her husband in Amritsar. There is nobody except both. She is now six month pregnant and gives birth a girl baby in due time. Both name her as Ida when India also emerges as an independent state after a long slavery, then Ida takes birth. Ida’s father is so much moved with the prevalent condition of the country.

Ganga never comes back to her husband. Virmati adopts Harish’s first two kids Giridhar and Chhoti as her children with her daughter Ida. Now Ida concludes her narration and asks her mother not to haunt her any more.

Infact the whole story is a mingling of past and present. And it also answers to the narrator Ida’s unambiguous declaration at the beginning that she wishes not to be like her mother.

In her novel *'A Married Women'* Manju Kapur has taken writing as a protest, a way of mapping from the point of a women’s experience. Kapur negotiates different issues emerging out of a socio-political upheaval in her country. In a realistic way, she has described the Indian male perception of women as a holy cow even though women are not very interested in history and those in power
trying to twist and turn historical facts to serve their own purpose. Mrs. Manju Kapur's second novel 'A Married Women' is the story of Astha an educated, upper middle class, working Delhi woman. As a girl, she was brought up with large supplements of fear. She was her parent's only child. Her education, her character, her health, her marriage these were her parent's burdens. But like a common school going girl she often imagines of romantic and handsome man holding her in his strong manly embrace. In her adolescence she falls in love with a boy of her age. Day and night the thought of him kept her inside churning. She was enable to eat, sleep or study. In the mean time she is emotionally engaged with Rohan and they enjoy physical relationship. The relationship is finished within a few days as Rohan moves to Oxford for further studies and her marriage is settled with Hemant who belongs to a bureaucrat family. They live in Vasant Viha, a posh colony in New Delhi. They start their married life and soon Astha is fed up with it. Astha starts teaching in a public school after much resistance from her husband and her parents. During her staying in this school she participates in a workshop on communalism, which is being led by an intellectual artist Aijaz Akhtar Khan, the founder of 'The Street Theater Group'. Aijaz teaches history and during the holidays he performs plays in school, slums, factories, streets, small town and villages to create empathy and to generate social awareness. Although at this time Astha had been a mother of a son and a daughter. She is fascinated by the multifaceted personality of Aijaz. But ferocious soon this relationship is over as the workshop finishes. After a few days Astha reads the news of Aijaz's murder. Babri Masjid is demolished in Ayodhya and there is a lot of turmoil through
the country. To established religious harmony and social integration processions are organized by 'The street theater Group'. In one of such procession Astha meets Pipeelika and she comes to know that she is the widow of Aijaz. She feels great empathy to Pipeelika and a powerful physical relationship is established between them. This relation is a challenge for her husband and her family. They both live together and deep emotional attachment develops between them. Astha is on the verge of loosing her conventional marriage. Pipeelika leaves India to study abroad and Astha returns back to her family. 'A Married Woman' is beautifully honest and seductive story of love and deep attachment set a time of political and religious turmoil. Mrs. Manju Kapur's second novel 'A Married Women' (2002) is the story of an educated, upper middle class, working Delhite women Astha. As a girl "she was brought up properly, as befits a woman, with large supplements of fear. One ship might find her alone, vulnerable and unprotected. The infinite ways in which she could be harmed were not specified, but Artha absorbed them through her skin, and ever after was drawn to the safe and secure"(p.1).

She is her parents' only child. Her education, her character, her health, her marriage are her parents' burdens and liabilities. They are very conscious of them and they never forget Astha to realize it. Like a common teenager school going girl she often imagines of a romantic and handsome youngman holding her in his strong manly embrace. In her adolescence she falls in love with Bunty, a boy of her age.

"Day and night the thought of him kept her insides churning; she was unable to eat, sleep or study. Away from him her
eyes felt dry and empty. Her ears only registered the sound of his voice. *Her mind refused to take seriously any thing that was not his face, his body, his feet, his hands, his clothes. Hours were spent in planning accidental meetings how to bump into him ........ how to die at his doorstep*"(AMW p.72).

This affair had a tragic end. The minute her mother knew this, she went to Bunty's house and from there on Bunty and his family refused to have anything to do with Astha.

In the final year of her college she is deeply involved with Rohan, a senior student of university. They miss classes, lie at home, haunt for isolated meeting places. It starts with kisses. He kissed her fingers, nails, palms and Astha feels something flow inside her as she started at his bent head. She had never been aware of her body’s separate life before. But it is soon over as Rohan went abroad to study and Astha knew he did not love her and he was toying with her emotions.

Asth a completes her college education and her marriage is settled with Hemant, foreign returned son of a bureaucrat living in the posh colony of New Delhi. They start their married life and soon Astha is fed up with it. She starts teaching in a public school after much resistance from her husband and in-laws. Astha becomes mother of a girl and a boy while her husband is involved in setting up a factory.

She feels fulfilled as; "she often looks as her family, husband, daughter, son. She had them all.... Her in-laws frequently commented, 'woman is earth', and it is true she felt bounteous, her life one of giving and receiving, surrounded by plenty.... she had partaken of the archetypal experiences marked out
for female race"(AMW p.84)

Beleaguered by her job, small children, husband and household responsibilities, Astha sometimes thinks of resigning from the school, but between her marriage and the birth of her children, she too had changed from being a woman who only wanted love, to a woman who valued independence. Her salary means she did not have to ask Hemant for every little rupee she spent. And so the once looked down-upon job becomes dear to her. She can not leave it. But this over exertion makes her sick. Job anxieties and family stresses make her worse. In such physical and mental state she starts sketching and writing poetry but finding no refuse, she gives them up.

During this stage of mental abeyance the street Theatre holds a workshop in the school where Astha teaches. The owener of the workshop Aijaz is a genius. He dramatises social issues like unemployment, poverty, atrocities against women and communalism etc. He performs at schools, at factory gates, outside offices, at bus stops. Despite her husband’s annoyance she participates in this workshop. She is asked to write a script of the drama Babri Masjid. She works very hard and finds a lot of appreciation from Aizaz, the director of the play. During this workshop she finds that a tender feeling is developed between them. This relationship is deep-freezed as the workshop is over.

After a few days Astha reads the news of Aijaz and his troupe members’ murder while staging a play on Babri Masjid-Ram J anambhoomi controversy. Tears rolls out of her eyes when she reads the news item. She participates in the condolence meeting and funeral procession. She also joins the massive protest rally organized by
Sampradayakta Mukti Manch. She is told that Aijaz has left behind a widow. She wants to meet her and share her agonies.

In the holidays Astha’s husband plans a family tour to Goa. There in a shop while purchasing Astha sees an antique silver box priced at five thousand rupees. It is so beautiful she falls in love with it. She requests her husband to buy it as a memento to Goa tour but he rejects the idea abruptly. Astha requests again, 'I also earn. Can't I buy a box if I want, ever if it is a little over priced?' ‘You earn!’ snorted Hemant, "What you earn, how that is really some thing, yes that will pay for the holiday."¹⁵ (AMW p.94) For the rest of the trip she is badly disturbed emotionally, mentally and physically. She thinks hopelessly that "money spending was decided by him, not by her."¹⁶ (AMW p.102) Astha feels being a woman she is sick of sacrifice. She does not want to be pushed around in the name of family. She is fed up with the idea of indian womanhood.

She decides to go to Ayodhya for a protest against fundamentalism. Her mother-in-law disapproves her going as, "You know I never try and stop you from doing anything. Even when you neglect the children, and are busy in your paintings and meetings. I do not say anything. I am not the type to interfere... but it is my duty to point out that you are going too far"¹⁷. (AMW p.187)

Her husband too react fiercely, "As my wife, you think it proper to run around, abandoning home leaving the children to the servants."¹⁸ (AMW p.112) Astha goes into familiar distress. As his wife? Is that all she is?

During her stay at Ayodhya she meets one of the participant
Pipeelika and visits various places and temples with her and begins to like her. Later she is informed that the woman she met was Aijaz’s widow. Pipee comes to Delhi and spends time with Astha. A powerful emotional relation develops between them despite offences from her husband and children. Astha falls in love with Pipee. A strong sexual relationship is established between them within a few meetings. Astha spends more and more time with Pipee. She is on the verge of loosing her conventional marriage with Hemant and traditional family life. She lives in a haze. Her roles of mother and wife are on litmus test. She decides to leave her home, husband and family for Pipee. Suddenly Pipeelika is offered a scholarship from Americal University to do research. She leaves India to study abroad and Ahtha returns back to her family hump and heart broken.

'A Married Woman' is an honest and seductive story of love, passion, and attachment set at the time of political and religious turmoil in India. Driven by a powerful physical relationship with a much younger woman, the main character of the novel risks losing the acquisitios of her correntional marriage and safe family. The novel raises the controversial issue of homosexual relationship in a challenging way. After all gay and lesbian relationships are not mere fancies. This is getting more and more visible in modern societies though we may or may not accept it. Various elements of feminism are clearly visible in the novel 'A Married Woman', Astha faces biological subjugation in her relationship with the mother in the childhood and with husband in her married life. Her inability to buy an art piece in Goa exhibits her economic dependence inspite of being an earning member of the family. Her mother and father constantly remind her that she is vul-
A Married Woman

(2002) is a work of investigative reporting on the most controversial and political issue of the demolition of Babri Masjid and a woman’s obsession with love and lesbianism. The novel is a kind of narrative on a woman’s incompatible marriage and resultant frustration and the contemporary political turmoil in its historical context. Like Difficult Daughters, A Married Woman "has a sophisticated plot". The story of love is honest. Set at a time of political and religious upheaval it is narrated with sympathy and intelligence for anyone who has known life’s responsibilities. The novel is a sincere confession of a woman about her personality cult in the personal allegory of a bad marriage. Astha the 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 she 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 started 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. Sharing her feelings “we should struggle with her, agonize together with her about her choices, and weep with her once she’s made them”\textsuperscript{10} (AMW p.114). Astha’s family affairs are not good and nothing is right with her. Hemant doesn’t prove a suitable boy nor she becomes a desirable daughter-in-law in her in-law’s house. In the Kosher world of \textit{saas bahu social} dynamics, she does not want only to be heavily indooled, bejewelled and walk around the tulsi plant every morning and offer a mandatory pooja. As a married woman she becomes an enduring wife and sacrificing mother. Her temperament incompatibility with her corporate thinking husband compels her to play the role of “mother and father” for her children. This denies her self fulfillment and leads 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, its subtle oppression and she yearns for freedom.

\textbf{A Married Woman} is a novel with a social purpose. It deals with three issues – reinterpretation of history, political ideologies and feminist views in the present context. The pointed references to life and delicate dealing with political activities of the time are presented with the historical backdrop of \textit{Babri Masjid- Ram Janambhoomi} episode. This gives the story a tangible shape with the articulation of emotional issues, communal hatred and women concerns. While the
political backdrop is controversial and no conducive for the secularists, the demolition of Babri Masjid adds substance to the novel. The main ideas conceived in the novel are based on family life, sexual relationship, gender discrimination, socio-political upheaval and the desire for peaceful co-existence. The purpose of the novelist seems to be uni-dimensional with the idea of love what can really drive a woman into such a relationship. In her interview with Nivedita Mukherjee, Kapur says, "It is an attempt to inject an element of artistic and emotional coherence. Actually a relationship with a woman does not threaten a marriage as much as a relationship with a man". The novel exposes the domestic terrain where woman explores the space in her domestic relationship. Kapur has remained very truthful in presenting the women and the challenges they face in their personal, professional, religious and socio-political levels.

"Home" (2006) is the third novel of Manju Kapur. This is a fast moving story, which makes an ordinary 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 neighbourhood of Karol Bagh. Banwari Lal has two sons and one daughter. Elder is Yashpal, younger is Pyare Lal and daughter's name is Sunita who is already married to a person named Murli before the beginning of the novel, who is married to Murli a person beyond the status of Banwari Lal in views as well as in money. It seems that Sunita likes the boy that’s why she is married to him. 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, the alliances they made has 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. 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. Neither does his grand daughter who makes choices considered unavailable to the women to the family. Both brothers carry their lives as well as business according to the wishes of their father. As the time passes Banwarilal dies and the whole burden of the family comes to Yashpal, being the elder one. He has one sister who dies in a kitchen accident and she had a child named Vicky.

At the beginning of the story Sona and Rupa both sisters are childless. They could not conceive for a long time. Sona keeps fasting but it is of no use. Sona belongs to a rich family in comparison to her sister Rupa. Rupa’s husband is an educated man. They pass their lives happily. After a long time Sona gives birth to Nisha and then to Raju. Nisha is physically tortured by Vicky, her cousin. She feels mentally disturbed so she is sent to Rupa’s home for a change. Here she gets education well. After some time she returns to her home where no one pays much attention towards her study and she gets compartment in two subjects. She is guided by Premnath. She passes in it and enters in college for getting higher education. She meets a boy and decides to marry him ignoring his caste and creed. But fails in doing so and later on she has to wait for a long time in spite of all her physical and mental attainments due to astrological reasons. Thus the novel depicts
how family norms are ignored by the new generation.

Manju Kapur’s third novel 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 Banwari Lal family must adapt. But, instead of branching out, the sons remain apprenticed to the struggling shop, and 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 in the making of pickles or the search for education - becomes ever stronger. Very human and hugely engaging, "Home" is a masterful novel of the acts of kindness, compromise, and secrecy that lie at the heart of every family.

Kapur effectively captures and reworks these tropes. Even the title indicates an ironic nod to some long-running soap. Along with young Nisha’s dilemmas, the 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.

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. It will be interesting to note man woman relationship in the three novels of Manju Kapur. As an element of feminism especially in the realm of biological, sexu-
al, cultural and racial aspects will also be probed in the three novels.

The concept of new women in Indian society varies from the one in the west and therefore Manju Kapur has tried to evolve her own stream of emerging of new women grounded in reality. She has her own concerns priorities as well as her own ways of dealing with the predicament of her women protagonists. Her novels make a significant contribution in this direction. In an interview Manju Kapur asserts.

I have tried to remain as truthful about this as was possible. I have some personal reservations about the nature of such activism and its efficacy and I think that this comes across in the book. Like me, Astha also realises the futility of preaching to the converted: yet, like me, she too wants to register a protest. I used Astha’s growing interest in political activism as a device to make her grow and become a woman, using her unhappiness at the secret support for fundamentalism among people around her. Several women I know who are involved with political activism have stories not unlike Astha’s behind them. Other than that, I do hope that my use of the group’s activities does not offend anyone simply because my use of it has in that sense been strictly honorable.

In India, Women play a very important role in society. Women in India get a prominent role in all walks of life. Now women are shining in every field and are doing as well as men. For example- Mizoram have a higher proportion of women in its population than men. However most of the states in India have fewer women then men in their population. New colleges for women are being opened India all the time. Even male colleges are changing to co-educational faculties. Women are working on night shifts in their employment, just as men
do. That is one side of the story. On the other hand, you should look at the other side of these optimistic statements.

The Indian saint of today’s times Mother Teresa is the name which every Indian whether rich or poor is 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 have deserted. She did not care whether she is in the company of a person suffering from communicable disease or whether it is day or night. 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 caste, creed or religion.

Another important name working for the cause of people includes, Aruna Roy who worked for the save RTI Campaign and Medha Patekar who is associated with Narmada Bachao andolan.

Indian women have not just made their mark on earth but they have engraved their name in the whole universe by flying to space. Kalpana Chawla, who was the member of Colombia Space Shuttle, which exploded on its way back, was the first Indian women astronaut who visited space station. And now following on her footsteps another woman of Indian origin Sunita Williams has become the second on to be the member of international Space Station crew.

Indian women have mastered anything and everything which a woman can dream of. But she still has to go a long way to achieve equal status in the minds of Indian men. The desire of Indian women can be best summed up in the following lines of ‘Song of an African woman:
I have only one request.
I do not ask for money.
Although I have need of it,
I do not ask for meat.....

I have only one request,
And all I ask is
That you remove

The road block.

From my path.21

Women’s groups fought for the creation of new women-sensitive laws or amendments to existing laws. Due to the pressure of such groups the following changes took place in 1950; women in India received the right to vote. India was one of the first countries in the world to give women the right to vote. In 1983 an amendment was made to laws pertaining to rape. Among the provisions was a minimum of seven years’ imprisonment for this crime. For Sati, in 1988 the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act was passed. It clearly states that burning of burying alive of widows is revolting to the feelings of human nature and is not enjoined in the religion. For domestic violence, a legal provision was introduced under Section 498 of the criminal code. Under this provision violence inflicted on woman by her husband or his family was declared a non-bailable, non-cognizable offence.

Indian authors pay attention on the struggling life of women in their own Home. Manju Kapur is a writer who portrays the life of a
women especially Indian women’s very minutely in her novels.

Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters* is a story of a girl from a wealthy and distinguished family residing in Lahore before Independence. Virmati’s mother, Kasturi is educated too. Though Kasturi and other family members believe in education for girls, also opine that girls must be married off at the completion of necessary education. Girls are not encouraged for higher studies and selecting a carrier or a life partner for themselves. However, shakuntala, Virmati’s cousin, is a M.Sc. in Chemistry and works at Lahore College. She is strong-willed and career oriented. She is self-assured and cherishes the idea of being something other than wife. In an intimate conversation, she tells Virmati:

"*Here we are fighting for the freedom of the nation, but women are still supposed to marry and nothing else*”\(^{22}\) (DD. *p.14*).

Shankuntala always inspire virmati, the protagonist, think above the rested interest and get involved and light for social and national cause. She says:

"*Time are changing and women are moving out of the house, so why not you?*”\(^{23}\) (D.D. *p.16*)

Virmati too often marvels at the ways of Shakuntala, her cousin and has all appreciation for her, when virmati comes to know that Shakuntala reads papers, attends seminars and travels with her friends Virmati replies.

"*I want to be like you, Pehnji*”\(^{24}\). (D.D. *p.17*)
This reflects that the seeds for aspiration and emancipation are already lying there in the heart of the protagonist even much before she meets Harish, the professor. We find the novelist speaking the protagonist’s mind in the very ensuing paragraph:

"It was useless looking for answers inside the Home. 
One had to look outside. To education, freedom and the bright lights of Lahore Colleges"25 (D.D. p.17).

As the story proceeds, we are apprised of the fact that Virmati, the representative of pre-independent India is not granted the freedom to pursue her studies. As a corollary, the task of shaping her future lies in her own hands. She feels awfully bad when she fails her F.A. and her parents start looking for a match for her but she insists on reappearing in the F.A. exams and starts studying in the college. Harish, the professor's neighbor who makes her understand his need for companionship, in reality takes interest in her as a beautiful female being. Manju Kapur while describing the classroom scene writers:

"Ignoring the half-dozen young men who rose to five her their place, Virmati sat on the floor in front of his desk, looking up at him with large eyes. The professor drank in the symbolism of her posture greedily"26 (DD. p.46).

Further, in last line of chapter VIII Manju Kapur remarks the following where she informs the readers how Virmati finally get embroiled in professor’s wily predilection :

"But by then, the professor's desire to possess had extended to her heart and mind"27 (D.D. p.47).
Her Virmati reminds us of Sarita, the protagonist of the Dark Holds No terror, a novel by Shashi Deshpande. Virmati like Sarita dares to challenge the age-old traditions. The only difference is that Sarita goes to marry a man outside of her cost where as Virmati marries Harish who also does not belong to Punjabi community but she agrees to become a second wife. However, both the marital bonds finally prove to be fruitless. Nevertheless, like Sarita, virmati sounds bold, outspoken, determined and action oriented when she lift cudgels against male chauvinism yet she realizes the hopelessness of her illicit love soon as she becomes the second wife of Harish, she turns into a block of wood even before the first year of her marriage lapses. In her husband’s company, she becomes a penumbra, a cast shadow as she fails to excucise her rights and freedom as an individual. Though the social opprobrium is not expressed openly, yet she apparently becomes isolated, silent and with drawn. She is unable to discover her own identity in Harish’s world. She fails to get a sense of belongingness, which is usually share by couples. She finds herself dislocated, displaced and disoriented. She suffers both from the loss of identity and alienation at her marital Home. Their love does not seem to be profound but a nauseating apology. Consequently Virmati faces intense frustration, bitter disappointment and awfull disillusionment. Her mind and her heart are constantly agitated, rippled and tumultuous with thoughts of her freedom and position in the society and family. When Harish takes pride in discussing the political scenario at national and international level, she is worried about her own freedom. In the conversation that takes place on 8 May, Harish tells Virmati:

She does not respond to the above statement by Harish but she
reminds herself of her dormant dream of emancipation:

“And me, thought Virmati, what about me? The war, or the end of it.... Suddenly he is transformed. He becomes visionary.... I feel so utterly left out, so utterly cold. Will there be any change in my life, I wonder?”28 (DD. p.255).

She starts pondering over her own position and wishes her voice to echo so that her needs are acknowledged. For this obvious reason she refuses to go back Home and tells herself bluntly:

“I will relate to you with dignity or not at all. None of this hiding and whispering and keeping my voice down and struggle over who is going to wash your underwear and who is going to clean your shoes. None of this for me”29 (D.D. p.155-56).

The marital Home and the bed that she seems to have craved for years, she is ready to renounce and look for an opening. She displays a prodigious strength of mind to fulminate her dejection. After she dares to cross the patriarchal threshold, she finds her free spirit curtailed and chopped.

Mahatma Gandhi’s non-cooperation movement, which is stirring millions of Indians to raise their voice for political freedom, also provides and insight to Virmati, the cult of women liberation for focusing on her personal salvation.

A corollary to this thinking of hers, the battle of her own independence, which she started in her youth, she takes it up again. The conflict between her desires and reality intensifies and thus ensues an inner struggle in Virmati’s heart as she is drawn into a life of cha-
The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother. The inner voyage of Virmati in the novel is greatly influenced by what Virginia Woolf maintains: Life is not a series of gig lamps arranged symmetrically, life is a luminous halo, semitransparent envelop surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.

Thus, Manju Kapur has dealt with mind and the soul of protagonist, her inner workings and hidden and silent thoughts rather than her appearance.

With the advent of freedom for the country, it can be easily comprehended that the man who talks about freedom dogmatically, does not provide liberty to his wife who bore the pangs and suffering of keeping the child in her womb for nine months even for such a trivial matter like keeping the name of the new born child of her choice.

Virmati who has sacrificed so much in her life to marry Harish is insouciant of her own identity. I believe that it is Virmati who has taken the first steps towards the journey of women liberation from the clutches of the egoist male society but her daughter Ida takes this voyage to culmination. She vehemently opposes male-supremacy and wishes to exercise her right to equality. She clearly repudiates the role of being victims at the hands of dominating males of the society. Ida is able to sense clearly that women need to staunchly believe in the strength of their womanhood if they want the world to recognize their existence. When Ida remarks, “The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother” (D.D. p.69), She probable means just by defying the patriarchal uphold, women cannot achieve their self the way her mother did. She recognizes her mother’s weaknesses, but while tracing her life events, she becomes aware of the pugnacity that
Virmati undergoes for creating a space for herself. She acknowledges this fact in the concluding paragraph of the novel where she says,

"This book weaves a connection between my mother and me, each word a brick in a mansion I made with my head and my heart. Now live in it, Mama, and leave me be" (D.D. p.92). Perhaps Ida has dedicated the work to her mother as it is about her. And she asks her mom to leave her, as she needs to take her the journey ahead in a bolder way.

In A Married Woman it was the demolition of the Babri Masjid and here it is the Emergency. I grew up during the period and if you had an opportunity to leave, you went, hoping never to return again, leaving all that was familiar, all that you thought was yours for good, says the 50-something, who returned to India despite a brief stint at Halifax in the early 1970s.

Kapur, who teaches English at Miranda House, is on an indefinite sabbatical at the moment, using the time to pen her next novel that centers on custody. "Teaching has helped me a fair bit. But what has been crucial to me is my extensive reading habit. In order to be a good writer, it is important to broaden your literary consciousness. Just the awareness of what language can do and how you are constantly challenged to do something different is important," (D.D. p.98) she says, remarking that most of her novels go through multiple drafts and that her laptop is peppered with various versions of her manuscripts. "I made 14 drafts for The Immigrant".

Thus Manju Kapur has written with immense concern and un-
derstanding for her female characters, particularly Virmati. The suppressed and subjugated world of Indian women comes to full light in the character of her protagonist. She dexterously delineates all kinds of visible and invisible pressures that kept Indian women suffocated for long. I feel in a very symbolic manner Manju Kapur puts the whole story against the backdrop of Indian freedom movement. Like Anita Dessai and Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapur can be considered a prose rhapsodist of female sentiments, feelings and emotions through human conscientious awareness. She can be termed as one of the most powerful forerunners of women's emancipation movement on Indian soil.

Manju shares thoughts and experience of her. "Simple" is an overused term from the critic's lexicon, but it sits very well with the work of Manju Kapur. The cozy, unthreatening titles of her novels (A Married Woman, Home, Difficult Daughters), their linear plots and the stillness of her prose conceal an acute understanding of social hypocrisies. Though her work is not judgmental in tone, it's uncommonly perceptive about human foibles. She can write lucid, conversation-driven narratives about joint families while also making sharp observations about the inconstancy of people and their relationships, as well as the subtler points of self-deception in a tradition-soaked society.

Kapur herself is on an indefinite sabbatical from her job teaching English at Miranda College, and now divides her time between her home and the library of the Delhi Gymkhana, where she goes to write. Her own straightforward explanation for the nuances, almost anthropological quality of her work is that it comes from a lifetime of studying and teaching literature. "Literature by women, about families, always has these larger considerations," she says—
"With years of studying texts, it becomes almost second nature to look beneath the surface - at social and economic forces, gender relationships and how they are played out in an arena that, in my writing, happens to be the home. But then, all sorts of things happening outside do affect what is happening inside the home."

This in turn meant adding to his back-story, and numerous revisions were required before the final structure of the book emerged. It isn’t surprising then to learn that Kapur’s laptop contains dozens of files with multiple drafts of her novels. "I’m very good at cutting," she says, "Fast and ruthless." It all began when one of the many publishers who rejected her first novel Difficult Daughters sent back a note that said, "It meanders too much". Kapur, as she remembers how "that one words, 'meanders’ inspired me to cut 30,000 words from the manuscript!" It was painful initially, she admits, but after eight years of not being published, the pain of cutting was much smaller than the pain of not being published at all. "I chose the lesser pain."

Since Kapur’s work is characterized by a grounded, no-flourishes writing style, I’m surprised to learn that she was quite the experimenter in her early days. "When I first started writing stories and poems", she says: "magic realism was all the rage, thanks in large part to Rushdie. I tried to write like that but in my hands it seemed inauthentic and labored, and so I gave it up. Intuitively, I took the raasta of not standing between the reader and the story - I wanted to make it as transparent and seamless as possible."
Her first book originally had footnotes, a story within a story
"and lots of other stuff I thought was very innovative - but it all had to go eventually!"39

She also has a reputation for being a reticent writer; regulars at the ever-increasing book-launch parties in the capital would have a hard time placing her. Given this, what does she think about the recent developments in Indian publishing, such as the elevation of media-savvy young writers to pop-celebrity status even before their books are out? "It's hard for me to see writing as a social stepping stone", she says: "It's such a solitary activity, whereas being in society means being gregarious. Of course, younger people have more energy, and if they can party and write, good for them. But if it interferes with your writing, I would say just don't do it. As a writer, you have to serve your art, old-fashioned as it may sound – and personally I do this by not meeting anyone!"40

She explains, "And it had become difficult to write and work at the same time"41. Earlier, when she was teaching, the way she wrote was dictated by term time and holiday time. "During holidays I would do the huge revisions, shaping, tightening, and trying to bring together everything in my head. During term time, when my head was full of teaching, I would work on first drafts. You need to put down those words in the first place. That would be easier to do, to come home and just write 500 or 1,000 words that could subsequently be modified. But the fashioning, or making the thing into an artistic coherent whole"42 – she waves her hands around and rises her voice dramatically as she speaks these last four words, aware of how affected they sound – "that could only be done during the holidays"43.
Manju Kapur’s “Home” is a masterful novel of the acts of kindness, compromise, and secrecy that lie at the heart of every family. Home is a story about an Indian family; Manju Kapur weaves universal truths about the complexities of extended families and the pull of tradition against modernity.
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