CHAPTER - 3

INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL SPACE

Manju Kapur belongs to that period of Indian writing in English when Feminine sensibility is audible in each and every novel of women writers and this is a woman who understands the predicament of a woman well. When she writes about the condition of a woman, she can never be unjustified in portraying her. Manju Kapur who has introduced many female characters in her novels, treated them in past, present and future scenario. Her treatment of women is realistic in the social space. How a woman has been treated as a daughter, a beloved, a daughter-in-law, a wife and a co-wife, it is fully reflected as the plot of the story develops in her all novels. This work is dedicated to three novels of Manju Kapur.

Manju Kapur has chosen her characters from the middle class and the upper-middle class families. But they are drawn with a convincing psychological consistency. These characters are full of life and vitality. They are thoroughly human in their likes and dislikes and are neither saints nor sinners but human beings as ordinary or extraordinary as others are.

The search for an identity and space for her are the threads that run through the whole novels. In all her novels Manju Kapur has stressed on the female characters against a political upheaval of the time. Being a social realist, she has treated her women characters on the practical ground. These Women characters fight individually against the society. For example Virmati the protagonist of the novel 'Difficult Daughters' marries the person of her choice and thus goes
against the wishes of her family and fights for her desire for education.

**Asth**a in 'A Married Woman' develops extra-martial relationship with similar-sex and fills her vaccum of life.

**Nisha**, in the novel 'Home' she first becomes rebellion and falls in love with a boy of low caste but later is let down by the boy at the last minute. She controls herself and finds solutions in commencing her own business. Thus she becomes an empowered woman.

Our scripture which has regarded a woman 'adorable' is ill-treated in every sphere of life for the dawn of civilization. From womb to tomb she is destined to suffer and it is very disgusting when a woman treats a woman badly. In a mother-daughter relationship, it is said that a mother gives everything to her daughter what she gets from her mother and it is very aptly fit to the relation of Kasturi and Virmati in *Difficult Daughters*. It is quite revealing Simon De Beauvoir remarks in this context:

"*Some times a woman tries to impose on the child exactly her own fate. What was good enough for me is good enough for you, I was brought up this way, and you shall share my lot"* *(SS p.1)*

As the story of the novel is set at the time of India’s partition in 1947, Kasturi represents the condition of women in Pre-independence era, Virmati represents the struggling period of independence, and her daughter Ida is the product of post-independence era.

Born in 1940, in Amritsar, Virmati is the main protagonist of the novel. The whole story revolves around her and it is done by her daughter Ida who is determined to re-construct her past "by piecing
together the fragments of memory in search of a woman, she could know and understand."² (DD p.2) Virmati had been very evasive about her past with Ida, and she hoped to fill the critical gap. "The consciousness of the reader shuttles between the present and past along with Ida who visits different places and meets her mother’s relatives and acquaintances to know about Virmati the woman"³ (DD. p.3).

Virmati is the eldest daughter of Kasturi and Suraj Prakash. She is the first child among the eleven children of her parents. Parvati is the youngest one. Virmati is very dominating to her young siblings, Infact she is the second mother of her brothers and sisters. Like a mother she is very conscious of their basic and regular needs such as fooding, dressing, studies and so on. Virmati, herself is very keen to her studies. Amid numerous household works, she spares sometime for her studies.

Due to excess work Virmati always seems tired and harassed. When ever she sits beside her youngest sister mother pushes her away to perform her house hold duties. Soon she gets up to go and does her work. Nobody cares for her own feelings whether she wants to do such work or not as "Kasturi says to Virmati-you are the eldest if you don’t see to things, who will?"⁴ (DD. p.7).

Its reason is that the mother has to look after her kids as she has to do all house hold works, make please to every family members and produce baby after baby.

Infact such type of character is very common in an Indian family where the eldest daughter is expected to do the whole household job like her mother as Asha Choubey says:
"Virmati is expected to treat her studies as a secondary job, the primary one being her doing the house hold chores, and caring for the children"5 (CRAD p.118).

By the time Virmati was sixteen years old; her mother gives birth eleventh times. In spite of her ill-health her reluctance, her great efforts to escape from this—"breeding like cats and dogs, harvest time comes again"6 (DD. p.7).

How ironical is it, the novelist has portrayed the condition of Kasturi. Since the time immemorial a woman is considered a baby-producing machine and she never raises her voice against this. And she accepts her new born as God’s will. In God’s will she realizes her peace but what happens? Her health reaches to its fatal condition. She has no milk to feed her baby. Resultly Hakim, Vaidhya and allopath— all advice. Chotte Baoji i.e. Suraj Prakash send her to a hill station for a change.

Finally she with her kids goes and shifts from Amritsar to Dalhousie to improve her health.

The cottage that her husband Suraj Prakash had rented for her was a pleasant one. It gives complete solace, comfort and peace. There are only three living beings—Kasturi, Virmati and Paro contrary to the big family of Amritsar. They do their ritual acts there.

Virmati, who was very busy in Amritsar, finds too much time here. Her mother rebukes her for idleness. Look at this conversation—Kasturi says:

"Why can't you make yourself useful? There is so much
sewing to be done for the baby. There are sweaters to be made for the other children. It's a shame that your hands are idle."

I'm tired of knitting and sewing, 'flared Virmati. Besides, I'm here to look after you.

I can look after myself.

Why did you bring me if you don't need me, Mati? said Virmati.

What is all this nonsense? In Amritsar you were bad-tempered because you were busy and tired, here you are bad-tempered because you are idle', retorted Kasturi.

Maybe I should go back to Amritsar. Pitaji can take me the next time he comes" (DD. p.12).

In fact we see that there is no flow of affection between the mother and Virmati while Virmati is so much concerned to her mother and little sister—The mother and daughter- relation is not healthy. A daughter who is very close to her mother, finds "saying any thing to her mother so difficult" (DD. p.12). At a time she aspires to go back to Amritsar because of her mother's hard heartedness. On the other hand Lajwanti, her jethani arouses ill feelings against Kasturi to her husband Chandra Prakash and says wrong—right things about Kasturi's children. She decides to go to Dalhousie with Suraj Prakash who visits once in a month.

On her arrival to Dalhousie Kasturi does not mind but Virmati objects by a great show of hospitality. She does not let her take help
from Paro in any way. Lajwanti under stands all this but she does not react.

During her stay, she calls her daughter Shakuntala who lives in Lahore. Both Kasturi and Virmati did not like this. But Shakuntala comes. She looks more attractive than before. She is still unmarried and associated with education department and very happy with her lot and condition. But her mother Lajwanti does not give approval for this. Kasturi too, wishes a good match for her.

We see some modern views about life, marriage and work in shape of Shakuntala. Shakuntala explains to her sister "We travel, entertain ourselves in the evenings, follow each other’s work, read papers, attend seminars. One of them is even going to abroad for higher studies".\(^g\) (DD. p.17)

She looks different to her orthodox family who is so much determined to follow old conventions. Shakuntala is totally different in her eating, in dressing and in living style. First Virmati was not happy to have Shakuntala with them but gradually she gets impressed and motivated by her attitude. She also wants to be like her. She gives a ray of sunshine in the gloom of heavy old conventions and traditions.

"In Virmati’s extended family, her cousin Shakuntala appears from the beginning as the exemplar of the ‘modern’ or ‘libertated’ women. She studies, teaches and takes part in the political-Gandhian movement; even after marriage, she keeps a firm grip on her autonomy and her freedom of action and thought. Shakuntala thus becomes a pole of attraction for Virmati: Virmati listened.........drawn towards Shakuntala,
to one whose responsibilities went beyond a husband and
children"10.(DD. p.17)

Nor she is an entirely a typical or isolated figure. She
shares her 'liberated life style with a group of friends, whose
activities she explains to her cousin: Shakuntala's visit planted
the seeds of aspiration in Virmati. She also wants to study more
and more like her Shaku pehanji. But her mother Kasturi thinks
that her education is practically over11.(DD. p.19)

Viru recalls her schooling at the Arya Kanya Maha Vidyalaya and
her F.A. examination. She is failed. She thinks that it happened due to
her too much work at home. Her mother on the other hand shows no
concern about this and says to stop her education. According to her
there are more important things to do. Ida remarks in this context.

"Kasturi found the fuss Virmati was making about failing
unreasonable. It hardly made a difference to the real business
of her life which was getting married and looking after her own
home"12 (DD. p.22). Infact she grows up with the conditioning that
the duty of every girl "is to get married” and "a woman without
her own home and family is a woman without moorings"13.
(DD. p.111)

Virmati gets disappointed. She wants to study but none is there
to understand her sentiments whereas she is too much concerned to
her mother and her younger brothers and sisters. Her mother plots her
marriage because she is now more than thirteen years old. In those
days it was considered good to get married at this age.

The seed of separation planted by the joint effort of Chander
Prakash and Lajwanti is visible now. They do not want to live together with the family of Kasturi and Suraj Prakash so Lala Diwanchand decides if the separation inevitable, better to do it while he is alive than "to have his sons bicker over his property after his death". *(DD. p.29)*

A new building is being constructed at "Lepel Griffin Road" beside the old one. For this purpose Suraj Prakash calls Somnath from Lahore to look after the whole construction.

In Suraj Prakash’s house Lala Diwanchand secures a place for his sister (buaji) who had become a widow at the age of 14. So one of the rooms in the new house was to be kept exclusively for her.

In this house Suraj Prakash with his large family and buaji shift within a year of the doctor’s recommendation *find it difficult.*

Lajwanti waits for her own dwelling. But she visits every day in Lepel Griffin road.

Somnath at the request of his uncle Suraj Prakash comes back from Lahore to Amritsar. He is a handsome man. He wears rings on his fingers, a hilt of kaajal in his eyes, an application of perfume made of attar of roses and silk pajamas- kurtas with Patiala jootis. Somnath does not want to marry until he settles. He wants to go in for the ICS.

Now in Amritsar totally different life of Lahore, Somnath himself gets busy in the construction of new house. He brings many decorative things to give a different look. Finally every thing is completed and the family finances severely strain. Chandra Prakash.

Lajwanti and Somnath move in. A separate room is designated for the use of the absent Shakuntala.
In the comfortable pokiness of the old city home, there was no possibility of feeing alone but here the silence and emptiness seem eerie. There were no nephews and nieces to shout at, nobody to scold. Her status had gone.

Somnath, without his mother's pre-consent keeps a tenant. The mother arises a big hue and cry but after seeing them she agrees to keep them.

The tenant is a Professor named Harish Chandra Who is England returned. He comes to India at the requested of his friend's father, who is on the board of trustees for teaching English at Arya Sabha College Amritsar. He has his mother, wife, sister and a baby.

After five years Harish Chandra returns to India, his house, mother and wife bringing back as much of England as he could. First to his home in the United Provinces, and then to Lajwanti’s home on Lapel Griffin road.

Now the story takes the turn with the arrival of the professor.

Virmati passes her F.A. examination with marks "that were respectable enough for a girl"\textsuperscript{15} (DD. p.45).

“Though she wants to study further, her parents and in-laws, too, consider it enough to marry a canal Engineer as she is already engaged to a canal Engineer. There was no argument against this. But suddenly the canal Engineer’s father dies and the marriage has been postponed for one year. She enters A.S. College, the bastion of male learning. It has four hundred boys to six girls. Virmati was the seventh. It shows how much poor condition was that time? People were not interested
in girl's education. Even her neighbor's wife is illiterate whose husband is a professor of English. He tries to educate her but she could not find it easy. The intimacy between the two families the family of Virmati and the family of professor increases day by day. Virmati takes professor's wife for a visit to Company Bagh and Darbar Sahib. After visiting these places Virmati takes her to buy bangles but she refuses, for it has become too much time outside from the house. She says that without him (her husband) she ought not to be away from home for so long. She insists Virmati to go back immediately because she knew very well that her husband will be upset which an unmarried woman can not understand.

While buying bangles, the woman tells to Virmati that she does not wear anything blue because her husband does not like this colour. Virmati looks at the woman and thinks that she and her sisters wear whatever colour they please. It gives knowledge us the condition of the women of that time. They were not free even to choose their favorite colour for their dress. One instance also proves the condition of women of that time. They get married at the age of twelve or fourteen. They knew though everything related to the house hold work yet she cannot stand with her husband because of less education as Professor Harish's wife Ganga is unable to give her husband an intellectual company. Now the time is changed. Virmati takes admission in a co-education school which perplexes her mother Kasturi. Her mother takes advice for this to the professor's wife who takes it as a grant for her husband. She convinces Kasturi and then she readily agrees to send Lahore Virmati for further studies.

Thus far, we see the budding of a new woman in Virmati. She
goes to the A.S. College daily, where the chapter of her life begins with the professor. He takes her to the eye-doctor. She needs glasses because of myopia. But by then, the professor’s desire to posses has extended to her heart and mind.

Now the story of the novel turns to the future happenings. We get introduced Ida, the daughter of Virmati and Professor Harish. Ida talks to her mama Kailash Nath. She wants to see her father’s College. Kailash Nath agrees. Infact she comes from Delhi to Amritsar to cherish the memories of her mother that are associated to her mother’s own old house. She wishes brick could speak where her mother must have been slept. Where she studied, where she played with Paro. But now the structure of the house is totally changed due to sub divisions. Where there was a big orchard, there are little suburban plots. The fields where gajjar- mooli grew have been replaced by ugly concrete houses. Everything has changed become smaller and uglier, more developed.

Ida with her mama ji and mami ji go to visit A.S. College, where she feels her Parents giving lectures. The novelist expresses that in the time of Prof. Sahib; students were interested in original books. They read Sainsbury and Dryden. Now they depend on keys and guides. Prof. Sahib had made the library very rich in English Literature but now the college authority afford less and less. Lastly they reach to the room where Ida’s father Prof. Harish used to give his lectures. Students from far and wide came to listen. Ida is so much fascinated to hear all this.

"Now she assumes that here it was the room where her parents must have looked at each other significantly, doomed
love in their eyes"¹⁷ (DD. p.53)

Though her mother was engaged and father was already married. Ida recalls her father mentioning her mother's fiance but never his wife: Virmati plus fiance, the professor plus wife. An invisible quadrangle in a classroom⁸ (DD. p.53).

Now the story begins when the love story of professor and Virmati becomes grave. She is very disturbed due to coming marriage date with canal engineer.

"She is very much confused what to do, what not to do. She knows her feeling very well that she cannot live without Professor Sahib. He insists her to tell the family members about their relation but she finds it impossible. Early marriage and no education? No professor and no love?"¹⁹ (DD. p.54).

Her soul revolts and her sufferings increase day by day. She neither tells her love to his mother nor accepts her fiance. Neither Physical intimacy with professor consoles her nor removes her tension. One day, she finds a letter from her fiance. She reads it and tries to search her importance to him, on the other hand she reads Professor Sahib's letter and becomes more firm about her love for him.

She refuses her marriage to her mother by giving her example of Shakuntala Pehnji. Shaku Pehan ji, who has been her ideal, is still unmarried. Like her, in fact for the first time she thinks that it is possible to be something other than a wife. These burning new ideas and thoughts churning in Virmati's mind coincide with a break in the generation's old joint family. The : "education versus marriage"²⁰ (DD. p.41) argument reiterated many times in the novel shows that
with changing time old values too undergo a sea-change and education
of a woman is a right step to cope up with the changing times. But
her mother screams at this. She grabs her by the hair and bangs her
head against the wall she silently bears the humiliation and furious
treatment of her mother.

Kasturi compares her time to her daughter’s. Though she knows
the value of education but she never went against her parent’s wish.
He thinks how has girls changed so much in just a generation.

Kasturi recalls her childhood age of Sultanpur, West Punjab.
The story goes back in 1904. When she was seven years old and was
catched praying to a picture of Christ at mission school. Her mother
torn the picture and shouted and threatened to marry her off. Then
her uncle intervened and protected her from such a mentality on the
conviction of Swami Dayanand Ji. Her uncle advocates Kasturi’s edu-
cation until she doesn’t get her suitable match. She learned reading,
writing, balancing household accounts and sewing. At the age of twelve
she completes her graduation and stays at home until she marries.

After her graduation, Kasturi’s education continued at the home.
Her mother teaches her everything which would please her in-laws.
Now she was perfect spinster. Soon she gets married with Chandra
Prakash of Amritsar with a traditional Hindu marriage preparation.

Virmati meets Professor in a room of a friend’s house. He kisses
her everywhere. He tries to console—"soon things will be all right.
Then you will see. We will one day be together”21 (DD. p.68)
but she hardly smiles because she is unable to solve the knot of her
marriage and “it was clear to her that she could not depend
up\n

to the Professor to sort out any domestic situation. It was
unto her" (DD. p.68).

The morning after meeting the Prof., Virmati wakes to find ve-
randas washed with blowing winds of rain. Her young sisters & brothers
all are happy & enjoying the rainy season. Her mother is making pa-
koras and her sisters are helping her. She also joins them despite her
heaviness of heart. Every sister & brother make fun of her marriage.
But if they get know about her decision for marrying not with canal
engineer, they, yet will think of her comfort, seva etc. These types of
question arise in her minds and find no solution for them.

The scenes of pakora making, jumping, hoping in the rains, de-
scribe a typical Indian family scene for a glance "some of them were
dancing about on the veranda, making dashes into the pool
below, some of them were darting up and down from the roof.
All were wet. Paro came running up to her" and says; "Pehanji,
come. Mati’s making pakoras in the kitchen. What kind is she
making? she asked Paro, dully ‘Oh, the usual. Onion, potato,
green chilli, spinach, brinjal and pumpkin' (DD. p.68).

The story of the novel which goes parallel to the division of
India and Pakistan, portrays the condition of country fully. The British
finally annexed Punjab after 10 years in 1849. From the 1880’s they
started building canals. Lala Diwanchand has also an oil mill at the
village of Tarsiakka. In his mill, he had planted so many fruit trees
and vegetable plants for their grandsons and daughters. The day af-
ter the rain and pakoras Virmati decides to leave her home for ever.
She does it stealthily but is caught by her younger sister Paro. She
promises her to bring a notebook and colored pencils to let her go. Paro agrees with half heartedly.

Virmati alone reaches Tarsiakka. The bus driver and conductor recognize her and ask her for another companion. But she says that she is going alone. While the traveling she thinks about the Professor, her younger sister Paro and other family members.

It was getting dark when she reaches in Tarsiakka. She takes advantage of darkness of the evening and briskly she walks up to the canal path. By chance the chowkidar steps out from behind the gate to stare thoughtfully at her disappearing figure.

Before one could catch her from being drowned, she is traced by the two people and saved.

On the other hand a suicide note written by Virmati reaches to the Professor Sahib by his own brother Kailash Nath. After reading the note he becomes speechless and utters those words to his wife with most difficulty. His wife conveys her message to Virmati’s family. Hearing this, her mother Kasturi gets fainted and curses her in different ways. Her father and brother, immediately go in search of Virmati. At Tarsiakka Virmati is with her grandfather who says her nothing at her deed. She comes back with her father and brother by a car in the same night. So that world could not aware of this truth.

Virmati was asked for this shameful deed. She discloses that she does not want to get married and is willing to study further but her mother blames her study that promotes her to do such a deed. The result was of all this tamasha, she was locked in a Godown and the marriage has been settled between Indumati and the canal engineer,
Inderjit in place of Virmati. Dr. Ashok Kumar says:

*Virmati burns with anger for the little relevance given to her life. On the one hand, she is aware of Professor’s love for her, but on the other hand, she is not ready to betray her father’s faith in her. Even though she is sure about the professor’s position and status, she had decided to marry him as "he was a successful academic, a writer of books, a connoisseur of culture, disseminator of knowledge. She finds herself lucky to have found a husband "like her father”. Further, the professor too succeeded in strengthening her decision by ingraining into her mind that "co-wives are part of our social traditions"*24 (*WIIWIE* p.107).

Here the flow of exchanging love-letters continues. It becomes possible by her little sister Paro who becomes their correspondent. How beautifully the novelist has described the burning emotions of two lovers and through these emotions, the attitude of the society is fully portrayed.

Amid many positive and negative thinking, they maintain their relationships and they reach to the zenith of their love, though Professor Sahib leaves her Tai’s house and lives in the same area in another house but the distance never comes in between the two. Then suddenly the flow of their love takes a turn with the disclosure of a truth, the truth is that Professor Sahib’s wife becomes pregnant and she tells it to Kasturi with great enthusiasm Virmati also perceives this. From that point she consoles herself with the view of Professor Sahib’s moral responsibility towards her wife Ganga. Though Profes-
sor Harish tells her that it was an act performed mechanically and his soul was not behind this but Virmati does not take it easy. She comes out from her illusionary world of love and thinks that there is no need of further writing letters to each other. "What has happened, has happened for the good. In which world was I living, to be so caught up in the illusion of your love? Just as you must do your duty to your family, and your wife, so do I must do my duty to mine" (DD. p.107). Now she decides to do B.T. in Lahore. Her family member’s gets pleased at her decision.

Virmati goes to Lahore with her mother Kasturi. They do not talk to each other through whole journey. Shakuntala receives them at the railway station. They reach to the railway station. They reach to the premises of R.B.S.L. school and college by a precious tonga as there was a strike of tongawallahs. Both Virmati and Kasturi feel relaxed here. As the daughter wants to a fresh start and mother feels comfort to see the peaceful atmosphere of the college, Kasturi talks to the Principal. The Principal assures her that she has her eye firmly fixed on each one. That gives her a sense of security for her daughter. She takes farewell to her daughter with unmoved by the tears of her daughter’s eyes.

_Virmati’s room mate is Swarna Lata, an ultra committed activist. Like her name she creeps around Virmati. She offers her something to eat but Virmati refuses as she has snacks with her. Virmati is very much pleased to have such a room mate, for she has some resemblance to her life. As Virmati does not want to marry, so Swarna Lata too. Sunita Sinha says—“Swarna lata comes up an assertive character to do something, besides_
getting married. I told my parents, that if they would support me for more years I would be grateful, otherwise I would be forced to offer Satyagraha along with other......But they agreed because they know. I meant what I meant"^{26} (D.D. p.107-108).

After a few days Virmati’s elder sister Shakuntala comes there and enquires of her well being. She also asks for her lover Harish. At this time Virmati gets annoyed but says nothing. They part at the gates. In Amritsar, the Professor Sahib keeps thinking about Virmati day and night. He comes to Lahore and with the help of his friend named Syed Hussain, becomes successful to meet Virmati. After a great effort she agrees to meet him in his friend’s guest house. There they make physical relation. Their meetings continue along these general lines.

Professor Harish gives gift of saree and a lipstick to Virmati. She wears it on Diwali evening. Both Virmati and Harish go to see the electric decoration of the market. Like an idealist Virmati talks over the current issues of Hindu-Muslim unity after seeing a life-sized portrait of two ladies perched on a map of India.

While walking they reached the biggest and the oldest book shop in Lahore. There Professor Sahib orders for the books for his college and talks for future transactions.

Then the condition of the country was very miserable as Satyagrahais are arrested on a daily basis. Various Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs continue to declare the partition scheme fantastic and Un-Nationalistic, while the Muslims league presses on with its demands. Men, money, goods, arms are sent to support the war.

Harish and Viru go to visit an exhibition as that year, the Roerich
exhibition was one of the major culture events of the season. When Professor says to her that "true test of great art is its ability to express the inner realities of life, those realities that do not change accordingly to time and place that have a universal application"^{27} (D.D. p.112) by now they come back to the hostel.

Now (she) Virmati gets involved in completing her B.T. She labours a lot and consequently becomes thin and sick. Her rooms mate Swarna Lata who is very much interested in politics, says that the condition of mess is very poor. Through their conservation one can get knowledge of the politics of that time. The time was the partition of India and Pakistan and the impact of this division is clearly visible even in the college election.

Swarna Lata and Ashrafi once a good friend becomes opponent to each other in the election and they symbolically represent their religions. This agony is clear in this line when Swarna Lata says to Virmati, "for the first time our college was divided among communal lines"^{28} (D.D. p.117) and we were forced to win in the election.

Now the story goes back where it starts. Ida goes to meet Swarna Lata Sondhi with her Mama Gopinath. She tells her about Virmati, for both were good friends at Lahore College, while talking about Virmati Swarna Lata also describes the happenings occurred at that time. "Her voice fluttered and trembled over the division that had ploughed furrows of blood through her generation"^{29} (D.D. p.121). She had to come back to India. Her parents also fled like thousands of others.

Ida also goes to Lahore to recall the memories of her mother
where she studied and taught. She takes photographs of every turn in the staircase, the corridors, the classrooms, outer and inner aspects, knowing she may never be able to come again. In fact As Dr. (Mrs.) B.R. Agarwal thinks "this search is essential to a quest for her own selfhood and identity".\(^{30}\) (ERB p.98)

In the winter season of Lahore, conferences take place fast and furious in the city. Girls from different schools and colleges get together at Lajpat Rai Hall, under the prominent leadership of that time such as Lila Mehta, Mohini Dutta, Sita Rallia, Noor Ahmed and many more. The purpose of such type of meeting to arouse the feelings of independence, equality between rich and poor, Hindu and Muslim, Sikhs and Christians and voice against rising prices and further participation in war. Gandhiji led the Satyagraha movement and called upon every citizen of India to be a part of it. In this political arena Virmati seeks her position and nowhere finds because she is engulfed in the love of Harish. Her world is confined to professor and it’s above nothing. As Dr. (Mrs.) B.R. Agarwal remarks—"her inner self urged her to be like Shakuntala like Swaranlata to do something for the country but her inhibitions failed her."\(^{31}\) (ERB. p.105) Am I free? "questioned Virmati to her and then replied, "I am not like these women".\(^{32}\) (DD. p.142). When inspired by Swarnalata to participate in Satyagrah movement, she thought of doing away with her "useless love and doubtful marriage"\(^{33}\) (DD. p.127) but she was swinging between her passion and dream. "She felt, out to place, an outcast amongst all these women"\(^{34}\) (DD. p.144) and acknowledged that "these larger spaces were not for her"\(^{35}\) (DD. p.144). So She asks Harish to take out from this situation. He says that she should not spoil her valuable degree. But she wants to
marry him that is too difficult for Harish as he is not ready to cop up with this situation. They part with each other at this communication. Swarna Lata consoles Virmati that she should think for herself in a different angle. She gives herself time till her exams were over.

Virmati gets shock to discover her pregnancy. She could not understand what to do or not to do. Former she had discussed this with Harish but he assured her that it would not be happened. She does not disclose this truth before her room mate Swarna. In this mental agony she goes to Amritsar in order to meet Professor Sahib where she finds it difficult to be revealed. Though her mother and aunt’s conversation, she gets know that Harish has gone with his family to his own village to do mundan of his baby. Now Virmati is disturbed more to know about the pregnancy, her daughter Ida who is the narrator, also discloses a truth of her own life to the reader. She was also in a love with a man and gets pregnant and has an abortion and she never conceives after this?

In Amritsar, she tries to convey her message through Kanhaiya—an old student of Harish but nothing happens. She is still with her agony.

One day she asks to her father for a set of gold bangles. As now she is almost a teacher. Her father gives a latest design of bangles before going back to Lahore. Virmati’s Amritsar visit was soon over Indu—her younger sister, mother of a baby, embraced her and Paro insisted on coming to the station.

Now she is with Swarna. She tells her about her mental agony. She consoles her that any how she will solve her problem. She talks
to her Auntie (Miss Datta) and she becomes ready to manage a doctor. Both the girls goes to her home where a male doctor examines her and conforms her pregnancy. The day has been fixed for abortion i.e. the day after tomorrow and in this condition, she gives her B.T. examination and practical. The night before abortion was miserable to her. She could not sleep. Absentmindedly she walks at the corridor. [SPEECH] "She picked up the knife and slowly slashed at the soft skin on her calf. If she could brand her name there, that would mean she could survive the pain of tomorrow"³⁶ (DD. p.172).

Morning at 7a.m. both the girls go to Miss Datta’s guest room by a tonga, after an hour, she drifts back, still on the same bed, legs down alone in the same room. The doctor had left her guilt and sorrow. She feels a deep emptiness inside her. Doctor’s fee had been paid by selling the golden bangles which Virmati’s father had given her with care and affection. Now she is an independent being. Nothing can be happened to her now that she could not bear after going through abortion.

When Harish gets know about all this, he rebukes her but of no use. They part with each other; She is his for life whether he ever marries her or not. Her body is marked by him, she could never look elsewhere.

Now the happiest and most attractive period of Virmati’s, life, beyond no doubt starts in Nahan the capital of Sirmaur the small Himalayan state run by an enlightened maharaja which give her refuse for a while as head mistress of a girl’s school. It is there 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.

Here a deserved respect she has to exercise her responsibilities entirely by herself, in the microstate 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 time, she has her own place to live. She believes she needs a man and she makes the wrong choice, returning to a relationship that her already brought her nothing but suffering. The repeated clandestine visits of the fatal professor lose Virmati her employer’s confidence and she is obliged to quit her school, house and employment. Now she decides not to go back to Amritsar.[SPEECH] 
"**what face did she have left to show there? She would go to Shantineketan**"³⁷ *(DD. p.197).*

She catches the train to Calcutta. 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. She tells her relation with professor to him. He was nonplussed. He appeals to delay her departure for three or four days as he would write to the professor. Virmati reluctantly agrees. She does not think the professor would come.

The professor gets an urgent telegram: *"**come Virmati here on her way to Shantineketan. Urgent: come at once**"*³⁸ *(DD. p.199).* He feels uneasy. Next day he informs his wife Ganga that he is leaving by the night train for some work.

Harish and his poet friend argue and finally, the professor agrees to marry her at his home before a pundit.
Now both are husband and wife and on the way back to Amritsar.

Virmati’s married life with the professor in Amritsar turns out to be a disaster. She wilts under implacable and hostile gaze of Ganga, her husband’s first wife, with whom she has to live. She loses all sense of identity professor’s children call her as a ‘gandy lady’\(^{39}\) \textit{(DD. p.208)}. In the balance of marriage sanskar, one side is Ganga and other is Virmati, former is legal wife and latter is illegal, the first one is neglected, second is selected. But first wife is professor’s only a maid- like who does his work timely and properly, the second wife shares his bed and gives company before his guests. No one is there with whom she can talk except her husband. In such a condition she feels totally isolated neglected unwanted in her husband’s home. Prof. Harish convinces her that co-wives are part of our society. In this connection Suman Bala says:

"Professor Harish Chandra seems to be enjoying the best of both the worlds: in Ganga his first wife, he has a servant who keeps his house tidy and his clothes washed, rears up his children and caters to his mundle needs and simultaneously he has Virmati, who fulfills his need for intellectual companionship which his docile and homely wife cannot offer"\(^{40}\) \textit{(FYIW p.105)}.

She further remarks:

"Virmati’s success in getting married to the professor, after her threats to sunder her relationship with him, does not get her any space in the family. The combined anger and resistance of Ganga and Harish’s mother force Virmati to withdraw into her tight corner in the house, with Harish telling her that she has him and, therefore, should not bother about
other things. It is interesting to note, however, that Virmati, who has acquired high education at a time when very few women were educated, longs to play the role of a traditional housewife. She wants to wash Harish’s dirty clothes which she is not allowed to.\(^{(41)}\) (FLIW p.108).

She also goes to her own mother’s house but there she too finds no space for her in the heart and home of her mother rather gets strokes of chhappal on her back by her mother in a fit of anger. She returns her home with heavy footsteps. Her husband sends her to Lahore for further studies in order to escape from this situation. As Dr. (Mrs.) B.R. Agarwal says:

"lack of love and humiliation from both the families makes her steadfast to uphold her right to self- assertion through education. Probably once again, education is a means to revitalize her"\(^{(42)}\). (IFIE)

She does it but without enthusiasm. As Alka Singh thinks:

"M.A. in philosophy dull abstract and meaningless but studying it was her only means of escape"\(^{(43)}\) (DIWW p.11). She wishes "Harish had thought another subject suitable for her. She also wished it was not such an uphill task, being worthy of him"\(^{(44)}\) (D.D. p.237).

Indeed the treatment of women in Manju Kapur’s first novel 'Difficult Daughters’ is unique in this sense that it creates ‘an intimate world’. As Sunday Times declares it ‘a skillful enticing first novel. Manju Kapur’s sensuous pages re-create an intimate world. After shuffling the whole novel it enlightens us that the
treatment of women which she has depicted, is not new. The condition of a woman in less or more proportion is same still now. "While the novel portrays India of forties, a conservative when women could not assert. But then the two factors which enable the modern woman to assert are, education and economic independence-the latter more so. Therefore, Virmati comes to us as modern woman being both educated and having a job before marriage"\(^45\) (\textit{DD. p.78}). If we see her character, from the very beginning she is marginalized and ill treated by her mother.

Inspite of her great effort to go near to her mother "her pleasures, her pains her pathetic life, as a mistress and then a second wife all remained her private sorrows. She could never share them with her mother. There seems a barrier between them which Virmati fails to pull down"\(^46\) (\textit{DD. p.92}). Ida tells the readers:

"From time to time Virmati glanced furtively at her mother, and the wall. She encountered forbade her from making the attentive gestures that might have made the journey bearable for both"\(^47\) (\textit{DD. p.78}).

Not only Kasturi but her daughter Ida also rejects her. The very first sentence ‘the one thing that I had wanted was not to be like my mother, arises the curiosity to the reader, why Ida does not like to be like her mother? and in this search we find that is not discovery of Virmati as a woman and as a mother but a quest for selfhood and identity for her who is divorced, child less and isolated. Infact this "mother-daughter relationship marches from identification to
alienation. Years later—through Ida marching from alienation to identification" (DD. p.14).

Ida is shown as leading a freer life than her mother in external terms, yet inside her she feels the same anxieties as her mother. Ida, the narrator of the novel, Kapur speaks through her "in Difficult Daughters we do not listen to Virmati’s voice. She could speak out, being certainly situated at the juncture of two operations: colonialism and patriarchy. "what we have is her daughters reconstruction and representation" (DD. p.15). If we look a glance over the whole life of Virmati she is failure but it establishes Virmati as the representative destiny of each Indian women. However, Gur Pyari Jandial correctly points out that it is mistake to devalue. Virmati’s struggle just because she failed, for what mattered was to have made the attempt "to break the patriarchal mould, and for Virmati to have tried to do that in the forties was a great achievement".

Throughout her life Virmati was confined to within these three words—"adjust, compromise and adapt" (DD. p.256). Before marriage in her parents home and after in her husband’s home. She tried adjustments and compromise with professor’s first wife Ganga. Ganga’s character is a round character which does not change from beginning to the end of the novel. She is a perfect, ideal, and caring daughter-in-law as well as wife. She does not let Virmati do any work for the professor and does everything herself—washing clothes, ironing, cooking and other things which are her own way of asserting her right as a socially approved wife. But professor betrays her trust her submissive meekness and traditional modesty by bringing Virmati as a
second wife. But what about Virmati—what is her fault? Day and night she hears the harsh comments by Ganga and her mother-in-law. She is cramped in a corner of her room and is not allowed even to talk to Ganga’s kids. Thus her hardships do not leave her but comes before her always in changed colours.

Torn between duty and desire, loving and knowing, responsibility and restraint, her innate strength and vitality failed to cheer her up. She has been deprived all freedom since her birth and her rebellion against her parents aggravates her sufferings. Even her education fails to take her out of this track, for her education and independence both come with a heavy price.

Thus Manju Kapur displays a mature understanding of treating her women charaters in her novel *Difficult Daughters*. She has presented an authentic picture of a woman in male chauvinistic society, portraying her conflict between tradition and post modernity. And this conflict and 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 the treatment of women is both Indian and universal. Mrs. Manju Kapur’s second novel ‘*A Married Woman*’ (2002) is the story of an educated, upper middle class, working Delhiite 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 Astha absorbed them through her skin, and ever after was drawn to the safe and secure*"52 (AMW. 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 young man 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**”\(^{53}\).**(AMW p.78)**

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.

Asta 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.98).

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 exersion 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 Group 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-freezeed 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 Janam-bhoomi 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.’ 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.’ 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 fundament alism. 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 interfer...but it is my duty to point out that you are going too far”55 (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. Astha goes into familiar distress. As his wife? Is that all she is?”56 (AMW p.34).

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 vulnerable and unprotected and so is their liability. Later her husband and in-laws also make her realize that as a bride, wife and mother she is not independent and any act of her is challengable is family life. All these circumstances force her to make a lesbian relationship with the widow of the man. She loves unconsciously. 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”⁵⁷ (AMW p.112). 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 Saas bahu social dynamics, she does not want only to be heavily sindoored, 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- mental 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.

While entitling her novel Home, Manju Kapur has attempted a detailed study of a large joint family of Karol Bagh in Delhi, involved in a flourishing clothes trade. My endeavour in this article is to probe
into the character of Nisha struggling with her search for identity through love and betrayal. A home is meant to be an environment offering security and happiness. Does the Banwtiri Lal household offer Nisha the proper place for her growth and development in her quest for identity as a person?

Family ties being very important in India, the concept of joint families or many members of a family living under the same roof came into practice largely due to economic considerations. In course of time it became a social norm by which several families shared the same household, kitchen, bathrooms and even professions. Such joint families set up businesses jointly and practiced the same trade for generations. A shared environment in a joint family gave a sense of security to the family members, providing emotional and financial support. Now-a-days due to rapid urbanization joint family system is slowly disappearing due to migration of people from rural areas to cities in search of employment and financial constraints, leading to division of joint and ancestral properties ("Indian Culture" http://www.idiscoverindia.com). In such an environment the men are the sole bread winners of the household taking care of its financial security. The womenfolk share all the household chores. The children have great opportunities to play and grow up together under the guidance of the elders, unlike in a nuclear household. The younger generation lives a disciplined life and financial stability is maintained. It is also noted that there are fewer cases of divorces in a joint family setting, where Patriarchal system is generally followed in India ("Social Culture" http://www.indianmirror.com)58.

Nisha’s birth after a harrowing experience of Yashpal and Sona
after ten years of marriage, was a miracle. Her birth added to the joint-family's human resources. Though Sushila expressed her apparent joy that her son would have a sister, Rupa had assessed her otherwise, as a potential threat to her sister. But when the baby's horoscope was cast, she was found to be a mangli according to the configuration of the planets at her birth. It was believed that such girls will be difficult to marry off unless they found a boy with similar unfortunate stars. Life would be unhappy for a mangli and death inevitable. Yashpal showed no faith in such beliefs and his father took great protective interest in the baby girl. Sona kept all these in her heart secretly hoping that she wouldn't be blamed for the ill-luck brought.

At the naming ceremony on the fortieth day, the pandit chose a long name ‘Anandalakshmi’ to confuse the evil eyes and to ward off ill omen. But the child was known by her short name ‘Nisha’. The grandfather offered a grand celebration, inviting all relatives, so that Yashpal wouldn’t feel that the household spent more money on Pyare Lal’s children. The fictionist focuses on a typical balancing act of a patriarch in a joint family. The gifts that the baby received especially in gold, added to her future dowry.

The basic sense of security and trust should be built up in the child during the early period. Nisha grew up as a secure and confident child seeking out new experiences and new contacts. Her sense of trust very strong in the traditional joint—family being surrounded by elders and relatives who showered love and care. But in her case, the trust was betrayed when Vicky exploited her sexually. But the bitter trauma was hidden by her mother to protect the good name of the family, by sending the girl to be groomed by her sister. Nisha grew up
happily in the new environment. In her case aversion to a girl child was not shown unlike in traditional households where often hostility is shown to a girl child making them feel secondary to other male siblings (Kakar 1988, 122).50

I have attempted to apply Erikson’s ‘psychosocial modalities paraphrasing below the various stages of Nisha’s life, and tracing where her quest for identity ("erikson" http://www.businessballs.com)60.

Sona conceived again in the following year and was blessed with a baby boy. Now at last she could assert herself in the family, mothering a male issue to continue the lineage as Maji claimed, "At last the name of his father and grandfather will continue... Now the older one has a complete family I can die in peace" (H p.78). With the baby boy, Nisha is sidelined.

When Vicky grew to be seventeen, he began to be more close to Nisha who was five. He paid her special attention unlike the other brothers, touching and stroking her. He played snake and ladder games with her on the roof. When they were alone, he would tell her repeatedly that no one loved him. It would end up Nisha telling him, putting her arms around his neck "You have me, Vicky, you have me". But he kept mumbling, "One day I will run away from their house and shop" (H p.114). It became a habit for him while on the roof top to exploit her sexually placing his hands into her panties, upsetting the girl. But he warned her not to reveal it to any one lest she would be beaten. She tried to resist his advances, but her helplessness led to his finding bliss in masturbating. The little girl undergoings
such trauma stopped eating properly as her mouth became dry. She began to have nightmares and remained sleepless for several days thinking of the dirty thing she had done: "*Her hand had touched the filthy black thing. She tried to block it from her mind, but it proliferated, grew large and terrifying*"\textsuperscript{63} (*H* p.*122*). But Sona being worried about her daughter's continuing distress, elicited the truth out of her. When Rupa suggested that she and her husband would look after Nisha, Sona readily agreed. It was a matter of fulfillment for Rupa and Prem Nath in their childlessness.

Nisha grew up happily at her uncle's home. Both Rupa and Prem Nath made sure she felt at home. Since Prem Nath took personal care of her studies, she excelled at school. Sona insisted that she went home to her parents from time to time, to be groomed in the tradition of the Banwari Lal household. The young girl was told to fast for her future husband. When she protested, her mother raged with fury. Even at that tender age of ten, Nisha began to assert her identity as a person, arguing with her mother and resisting superstitious practices:

'How are you going to get married, madam, if you do not make sacrifices?'

'In school nobody does it.'

'They are not manglis.'

.....'So?'

'So?... What kind of wife are you going to make if you can't bear to fast one day a year for your husband?'

'I don't want to marry,'.
Since the girl resisted imposition of fasting, Sona thought of paying some pandit to find a way out by marrying her off to some tree, plant or sun to absorb the evil of the planets. On one occasion when she was at home with her mother, she was made to rise early before dawn. Later she was coaxed to eat breakfast at four in the morning and was told she wouldn’t eat until sun down. She was taken along with the other fasting women to Hanuman Mandir. In the evening, her mother, along with Sushila and Asha, performed puja recounting the story "The Karva Chauth Katha" (H p. 142). The story recounted how a fourteen-year-old girl who couldn't resist hunger while fasting, ate before sun down as her brother lit a torch from a tree-top. Instantly her husband died in the village. Eventually she did pooja and fasting for one whole year and brought her husband back to life. The story proved how a girl's self-disciplining following the elder's teachings, rewarded her with happiness. Hearing the story, Nisha protested that the brothers in the story were responsible for death as they cheated their sister. Such a questioning attitude on the part of Nisha, laughing at illogical social practices, made her affirm her identity and independence. When her mother scolded Nisha saying that the fault was of the girl, who didn’t obey the elders, being independent in her decision to eat, bringing about the tragedy. Nisha was in no mood to listen to her mother’s cooked up story.

Indian traditional society being male oriented, the girl child understand cultural sexism by late childhood when she starts forming her gender identity (Lessinger 137). Nisha’s mother was upset with her sister for not having trained her daughter for eleven years to be traditional woman. Traditionally an adolescent girl is trained to be a submissive and virtuous woman, who is skilled in domestic affairs.
It is the mother’s duty to train her daughter up to be absolute docile daughter-in-law, even going to the extent of sacrificing her own will. Such an attitude towards a girl child hampers her growth as an individual.

When Vicki married Asha, Sona decided to bring her daughter Nisha back home, to be groomed better as she was doing well in her studies. Rupa had lavished all her love on the girl for eleven years, being too protective of her. To her utter amazement. Sona found that at sixteen her daughter had not acquired any cooking and housekeeping skills. She was worried as to how she would ever get training to become a housewife in the future. Nisha was horrified to learn that her mother’s idea of a daughter was one who helped her while everybody ate. But Nisha was quick to retort saying that she needed to study for the time being. Sona wouldn’t accept Rupa’s idea of an education for the girl as she was convinced that it "is the life of a woman: to look after her home, her husband, her children, and give them food she has cooked with her own hands" (H p.145). Nisha merely tolerated her mother, being with her all the time in the kitchen, and laughing behind her for her orthodox ways. She tried to cut ginger as fine as she could to satisfy her mother. But her heart was elsewhere affirming more and more her decision to be herself despite all odds.

Sona was upset that for eleven years her sister had done nothing to groom Nisha to be a traditional woman of her perception. She expressed her annoyance to her sister Rupa for having made her daughter absolutely useless after eleven years of guardianship. Her hurting remarks meant that "she had made the supreme sacrifice of sending away her own blood for eleven years, and the
woman returned a sub-standard female"\(^66\) (\textit{H p.167}). Such a perception spoiled all the plan of education for Nisha, who began to feel more and more out of place at her home, she felt out of place. She longed for her uncle and aunt. Nisha began to question the idea of home in the joint-family system. Home is where one receives true affection as Frost puts in "\textit{The Death of the Hired Man}'' \textit{Home is the place where, when you have to go there. They have to take you in}''\(^67\) (\textit{H. p.112}). Nisha was fed up of her mother taunting all the time in different ways.

Ajay’s wedding an year after the patriarch's death, added to the family's growth.

Nisha’s mother made wedding plans for her as she was already seventeen. This came as a shock when Usha told Prem Nath about it. He felt bad that she would give up her studies. But he realised that they could do nothing in her case as they had merely borrowed her and looked after for eleven years. He lamented that she never belonged to her. But Usha wouldn’t budge and retorted: "\textit{A sister's child is not a borrowed thing... For your own sister's children you are ready to give your life, your money, everything}''\(^68\) (\textit{H. p.114}). Such an argument between the couple reveals the intricacies of relationship in a joint-family under scanner. There is a gradual decline in the relationships between the inmates in the Banwari Lal household.

Growing discontent is shown when the fictionist portrays the attitude of Asha who began to compare her lot to that of Nisha who was the centre of attention all the time. Instead, no one bothered about the neglected life she lived with inferior clothes and a very thin gold chain. When she complained to her husband, Vicky only told
her she was making a fool of herself. But Asha continued to nurture hatred for Nisha.

Finally her parents relented to Nisha's further education. She would be doing her English Honours at the Durga Bali College. It was the ideal college for parents who wanted a paper qualification for their mediocre daughters waiting to be married off.

Marriage for Nisha was a problem as she was a mangli "destined to marry unfortunately, destined for misery, unless a similar manglik could be found, with a similar fate and horoscope"⁶⁹ (H. p. 118). Her life became one of emotional trauma after falling in love with Suresh. It was love at first sight for Suresh who pursued her, though from a poorer caste family. Lovelorn, she began to play truant and roamed around with him, neglecting her studies. He proposed to marry her though he also did badly in his engineering studies. Their going together to cinema and having affairs led to bring the matter to their parents. Meanwhile, Nisha began to skip classes and proved to perform badly in college. She found college life adventurous making her modern and daring in her decisions. It was for the first time that she began to interact with a boy. With the assistance of her friend Pratibha, she visited canteens to meet Suresh. Fresh ideas crept into her mind in her craze to be fashionable. She cut her hair to the utter surprise of her family. The fictionist describes vividly her change of attitude: "To encourage her rebellion she thought of the girls in her class, girls with swishing, open hair, wavy, curly, blow-dried, or hanging straight, framing faces with fringes, flicks, or stray tendrils. She thought of her own, in the thick, rubber-banded plait, never falling free, ugly and
unimaginative"^70 (H. p.119). This is another way of Nisha defining her independence, reacting to her rigorous upbringing at home. She wanted to negate everything her mother stood for. Her mother questioned her; "Who gave you permission to cut your hair, suddenly you have become so independent, you decide things on your own"^71 (H. p.121).

Once, Suresh cleverly took Nisha to a room in the back lane of a gully. He cajoled her to be intimate with him. But she resisted though he began "to caress her all over, and her mind divided, one part on college and parents, one part following his hypnotic touch"^72 (H. p.124). When he began to reach down her kurta, she pushed him away. But when he bemoaned and expressed his passionate love for her, she also expressed her emotional tie with him. The sequence is one of total passionate love for each other, unlike the bitter experience of sexual exploration in the hands of Vicki as a young child. She was so involved in her love for

Due Suresh, her studies began to be on the wane so much that she was not allowed to appear for the examinations due to lack of sufficient attendance.

Since she had fallen deply in love, Nisha took the opportunity to query about love marriages to her aunt Rupa, who showed aversion to it as it meant too many adjustments. But Nisha's passion for Suresh reached a peak when she wanted her parents to arrange their marriage. The household wouldn't agree as he came from a lower caste. She argued with her parents who married the same way. Her father became defensive stating that love marriage was blessed
by their parents. The angry parents immediately stopped her college-going to contain the damage and to maintain the family honour. They were adamantly in their argument and pleading "Nisha, dear daughter, leave all thoughts of this dirty low-caste man, what can he give you compared to what we can arrange for you? Marriage into a family that will enable you and your children to live comfortably for the rest of your life."73 (H. p.129). All their attempt at persuasion was ineffective as Nisha loved the boy deeply. In her asserting her identity, nothing could stop her from her pursuit of happiness with Suresh. Her family went to the extent of intimidating the boy and offering bribe to renounce her. The fictionist makes comparison of the relationship Nisha had with the two males in her life. "Thinking of Vicky she thought of Suresh; thinking of Suresh drove her back to Vicky. If, with Suresh’s arms around her, she could reveal what had happened all those years ago, she would be absolved. No matter what her cousin had done to her, he, Suresh, had touched her in love, theirs was love, nothing else"74 (H. p.131). Her thoughts made her frustrated as she tried to keep her mind on love and purity in her effort to establish her identity in relationship. There is great honesty in her determination to grow in love. She had not sacrificed her virginity to any one and was ready to face any consequence to assert herself as an individual. Nisha began to think of herself a broken hearted woman, never agreeing to any marriage proposals.

Though Nisha remained unmarried, her parents were glad that their younger son Raju marry Pooja as their horoscopes matched. The parents were glad the boy chose to abide by their decision to expand
the household further. It was breaking a sacred tradition that younger brothers should not marry before older sisters, This is a failure in the Banwari Lal household bringing break in familial relationships. When Raju and Pooja began to spend time together in their closed door, Sona began to feel that her power over her son was dwindling. Emotionally it brought about a break in their familial togetherness. When Pooja ignored her daughter Nisha. Sona began to complain to her son. Soon Pooja wanted things her way. She demanded additional newspaper and other facilities never thought of until then. It became a practice for Pooja to go out whenever her mother sent her a car, and returning when Raju picked her up. This was something that Sona resented, bringing tension battles for property. Nisha joined her mother in hating Pooja foreseeing the future troubles. Love and hatred continued to rule their minds despite family ties.

When Nisha began to do business with Nisha's Creations, it was something unheard of in a joint-family set up where women stayed at home while the men were the only bread winners. But her dreams were shattered when they found a widower in his early thirties as a prospective husband. His wife died in an accident. After three years of contemplating to live Suresh, Nisha had to adjust to marry Arvind. She moved to her husband Arvind's home after the wedding, shattering her dream of a happy life. She demanded that she be allowed to continue with her business, showing her assertion of identity. Ten days after the wedding, Nisha expressed her desire to go to her shop as she claimed that sitting at home and doing business wouldn’t suffice. She merely informed her husband to tell her mother-in-law about it. This, again is a sign of asserting herself with her independent thinking
in a joint-family set up.

Soon the happy news came when Nisha was found to be pregnant. She gave birth to twins - a boy and a girl, filling her life with hope of a posterity. It is in her motherhood that her society and culture confines to her status as a renewer of the race and extends to her a respect and consideration which were not accorded to her as a mere wife (Kakar 2002. 79).75

Manju Kapur has dwelt on very serious contemporary issues afflicting a middle class joint-family in Home. Though the story is replete with incidents and situations in the lives of various characters who are confronted by tradition in the backdrop of contemporary trends. Nisha stands out as a woman of determination to break free from the shackles of male domination and patriarchy in asserting her female identity. Through the eye of an omniscient narrator, the fictionist probes into Nisha's relationships with her family and friends. Kapur has been very successful in going into the intricacies of analysing psychological and emotional crisis Nisha undergoes at different stages of her life.
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