CHAPTER - 4

INDIVIDUAL AND DYNAMICS OF FAMILY

The mother-daughter nexus is only one of the manifestations of the Indian woman’s roles. She is a wife, a mother, a daughter-in-law.... Infact there are so many aspects of a woman’s life but the ways which she is treated are same to some extent whether she belongs to ancient period or modern period.

In her first novel ‘Difficult Daughters’ Manju Kapur explores the space of a woman as a daughter in her parents’ house and as a co-wife in her husband’s house and she searches the space for her heroine as a daughter-in-law in her second novel ‘A Married Woman’. In this context the interview of Manju Kapur by Ira Pande is quotable. She asks: “In one sense this book starts where your last one had ended. The story of Virmati in Difficult Daughters ended in some time in the 1960s and this one starts roughly there. Is there a continuum that you are interested in tracing?” (TH p.6)

She replies: “Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that I am exploring the space that women occupy in domestic relationship. It is a world I Know and understand.” (TH p.6)

In our country, our Indian tradition claims, "a woman must defer to her husband in every possible respect. She must make the martial home pleasant for him. She must cook the meals, wash the dishes and take care of the children. She must never enquire about money and she must acquiesce to her husband’s every demand.”(AMW p.1)
Such type of treatment of a woman is well depicted in Manju Kapur’s novel ‘Difficult Daughters’ in which professor Harish’s first wife Ganga does all these works despite her husband’s second marriage. And to some extent Virmati also wants to do to claim herself as a complete wife of Harish but later she raises her voice to escape from this condition. Kapur’s preoccupation with the female revolt against deep-rooted family values and the institution of marriage is followed through her second novel ‘A married woman’. Astha, the protagonist ‘was brought up properly’ as befits a woman with large supplements of fear” (AMW p.7). She is the only child of her parents. They are very anxious about her education her character, her health and her marriage. These are their burdens as they belong to upper middle class. Her father is a government employer and mother named Sita is a housewife. She is very religious minded and believes in the tradition, customs and the old ways of living life and expects her daughter to conform to traditions. The whole family worship daily. Whatever meal Astha’s mother cooks is first offered to the gods before the family eats.

On the other hand Astha’s father believes in the new. He wants that her daughter read too much so that she will get a good job and match for her. Both husband and wife take her everyday for a morning walk to the India Gate. Astha does all this but reluctantly. After coming back from a fresh walk they also do Pranayam together. All this show a life of typical traditional Hindu family.

They have many difficulties but one problem is about their own home. They count their pennies carefully and talk too much about this matter but find no way to tackle this problem as they have less
money to buy a house or a plot.

Amid so much hardships of life the family does not miss to go for a treat on a Sunday to the Bengali Market chaat shop. They enjoy whatever they like. After such an outing they come back home. But still owning a house for themselves hover in their minds day and night.

"Now Astha is sixteen years old. She is preying to inchoate longings desires almost every boy she sees, because she is well trained on a diet of mushy novels and thoughts of marriage“⁵⁵ (AMW p. 78)

Then suddenly Astha meets Bunty who lives in a near by house and is now home for the holidays. He is away in Kharakvasala in the defense academies. After seeing Bunty, Astha is unable to eat, sleep or study. Away from him her eyes feel dull and empty. Her ears only register the sound of his voice. But she finds herself unable to talk to him. So she takes help of her friend Gayatri who suggests her to see a movie with him. Bunty agrees but during the whole movie he does not pay attention to Astha at all, It irritates her. She wishes his holidays would quickly end.

Nursing the illusion of love at first sight, she pens her emotions and sends to Bunty at his boarding school. After an exchange of few letters, it stops after her mother’s visit to his house. As Binod Mishra says:

"Asthā discovered later that the elders of both the families had nipped their relationship in bud. Yet she felt pride in concocting stories about her love in her friend circles. Her mother’s interference in her intimacy tightens her chest with
grief” (ATSHKMW p.19).

Her parents’ dream to buy a house gets fulfilled as they find a land across the Jamuna. Though they do not please to see the surroundings, feel satisfy after all having their own plot.

Now Astha is in college her mother focuses anxiously on their primary parental obligation. Every Sunday she scans “the matrimonial pages meticulously pencil in hand circling ads”7 (ATSMKMW p.21).

The day comes when her mother finds a suitor but Astha rejects him. "She collapsed against the bathroom door, tears falling, crying, crying for Bunty, crying for the lack of love in her barren life, crying because she did not want to see a dull stolid man in the drawing room who advertised for a wife and asked about sports”8 (AMW p.22). Her mother was terribly upset at this. Both had different wave lengths. Astha remains in the bathroom long after the suitor had left. Manju Kapur sarcastically says, "the bathroom represented her future: she had better start getting acquainted with it now”9 (AMW p.24).

One month after this a boy appears whose name is Rohan. She attracts towards him and maintains a physical relation with him. At this point Dr. Binod mishra remarks:

"Asta’s aching heart finds greater relaxation in the luxurious ambience of Rohan whom she met in her college. Permitted by her mother to take exercises in fresh air, Astha makes it a routine to roam freely with Rohan. Under the pretext of exerises she arranges tete-a-tete with her new boy
friend. Rohan’s old Vauxhall car roofs the two and Astha loses no opportunity to ask if he was interested in marrying her. Initially discomfited though, Rohan kindles and fondles her, the impatient youngsters forget all restrictions and help each other culminate in the name of love. Astha longs for such furtive meetings and responds to numberless kisses in the car. Astha is least bothered about public\textsuperscript{10} (SIWWIE p.218) and her romantic fury can be realized in the following lines;

“All she wanted was for him to start so that the world could fall away and she be lost. This is love she told her self no wander they talk much about it”.

“But it, too gets over as Rohan goes abroad for further studies and Astha enrolls in M.A ”bored and unenthusiastic”\textsuperscript{11} (AMW p.31).

As Astha is going to be post graduate a good proposal for her marriage comes. He is an M.B.A. foreign returned belong to a bureaucratic family.

There seem no problems in Astha’s marriage with Hemant as her father says ”their sole interest is the girl, her looks, her education, her qualities” and Astha is fit for all.

Both meet together at Astha’s house and a few weeks later the engagements between Astha and Hemant Vadera is decided upon. Till then both begins to date.

After some time, according to Hindu marriage tradition both unites into one and now Astha becomes Astha Vadera.
They enjoy their honey moon in Kashmir, and conjugal relationship warmly enthusiastically and happily.

After coming back to Delhi Astha submerges herself in the role of daughter-in-law and wife she leads a typical Indian married life of a woman. She does work in the kitchen, washes clothes, arranges them and shops. But she could not deceive herself very long. The mechanical, imbibed emotions give way to reality. It takes just a few months to realize the dullness of life around her:

"Asth a's desire receded. She felt cold, dreary and distanced from him. She had been waiting for him all day, thinking of their being together but nothing of this was reciprocated. He was a criminal destroying her anticipation, ruining her happiness.

Her subservient position struck her. She had no business kneeling, taking off his shoes, pulling off his socks, feeling ecstatic about the smell of his feet."\(^{12}\) (AMW p.52)

Thus her days pass with house hold works and nights with Hemant’s love. But it is noticeable same life routine goes dull and meaningless whether it is very good.

She needs some more work beyond house hold. Her mother suggests her to take a job of teaching. She finds a job at St. Anthony’s school and now she plays twin role – as a housewife and a working woman.

Asth a's father’s retirement is very near. She is very anxious about her parents. But Hemant being a good husband,
a good son- in-law says—"We'll help them all we can"¹³ (AMW p.85).

A斯塔’s parents move to a new flat and pass over a year when one evening after dinner her father complains of a slight chest pain and dies at night.

Now Astha’s mother responsibility falls upon the shoulders of Astha and her husband. They want to take her with their home but she refuses and says:

"It doesn’t look nice"¹⁴ (AMW p.87).

A斯塔 replies with a grieving heart to her mother: "I wish you would not be so stick in the mud, Ma why didn’t you have a son to look after you when you were old, if you cannot take anything from your daughter? Why did you stop with me?"¹⁵ (AMW p.97).

A斯塔 envies Hemant, his straightforward relationship with his parents.

The life of Astha as depicted by Manju Kapur reveals her torrential quest for equality, for considering her an equal being and a worthy member of society. Astha becomes very emotional for the books of her father that express her devastated and outburst anger. When she learns that the books has been donated to a library, she quarrels with Hemant and shouts at her mother:

"Why did you do that, they were mine as well, I loved them"¹⁶ (AMW p.98).

She feels shattered as she was not consulted before taking any
major or minor descions. One more instance is when Asthas’s mother sells her plot and gives the balance to Hemant to manage. We again find that this type of behaviour considering women weak and inferior aggravates her. It is not that Astha wants to take the position as a man. She excepts her duties at home as well wants to be partner in sharing all the undertakings and managements. This aspiration makes her a new women. Her statement testifies it when she says:

"Really ma don’t you think women can be responsible for their own investments?“¹⁷ (AMW p.57).

This urge to be treated as an equal being is fully embibed in each of her remarks. It appers as if Manju Kapur through the medium of Astha demands the niche which is equal to man in a society. Astha sadly finds fault in her father who thought his wife, i.e. her mother inferior in managing money matters. She finds fault in her mother in law who brought off her son “for bringing up Hemant to never regard women as being so to be consulted in their own lives”¹⁸ (SIWWIE p.67).

Hemant, an american return is very caring loving husband. When Astha is pregnant, he himself says to his mother who hopes the child to be a son:

"But ma, I want a daughter. In America there is no difference between boys and girls, how can this country get anywhere if we go on treating our women this way.“¹⁹ (AMW p.68)

This same man who no doubt promoted Astha for teaching
loved her but treated her as an Indiann wife, who is the second being after her husband. He himself later on dircriminates between a boy and girl. When Astha is pregnant second time, mother engages a priest to perform rituals to ensure that she gives birth to a son. "Like every married women, no doubt she has a liking for motherhood but she does not like a sex subjugation of her in laws. She is surprised at the reaction of her family in society when they cy- pheric of Anuradha’s birth but gets an overwhelming approval of motherhood after the birth of Himanshu"\(^{20}\) (FIIW p.246). Not only this but his indian male ego is outpoured when Astha considers her job important. He talks of teaching in derogatory terms:

"Hardly a serious job, you just go, talk to some children about poems and stories, organise a few clubs and come back"\(^{21}\) (FIIW p.189).

Thus Astha is hurt again and again by the male dominated treatment.

With new born baby two changes also occur in their life. They shift in their new house at Vasant Vihar and Hemant thinks to start business of manufacturing TVs... He sets up a factory for this at Noida and with this his business increases day by day. But some how between Anuradha’s birth and Himanshu’s, Hemant changed from being an all American father to being an all Indian one. Now Astha swings between her two children, her husband and her in-laws. As a married woman she becomes an enduring wife and sacrificing mother "Her temperamental incompatibility with her corporate thinking husband compels her to play the role of mother and father for
her children”\(^{22}\) (FIWIW p.70). This denies her self fulfillment and leads to the collapse of the institution of marriage.

As it has been previously felt that Hemant is now changed. When Astha asks for his help in house hold works, He says—"\textbf{It is woman’s work}”\(^{23}\) (FIIW p.74). She should do it herself or hire somebody to help her. If needed, she may quit her job. Now we see that a woman is treated in the same manner any where, anytime.

The increasing sale of TVs. makes Hemant happy. Now he frequently goes to abroad for dealing and comes back with foreign things for every family member. On the other hand with the business of her husband, Astha’s loneliness increases. She becomes more a lady of the world she is also changed. She is not a woman who only wants love. She seeks freedom for herself. So she does not leave her job as "\textbf{there is the pleasure of interacting with minds instead of needs}”\(^{24}\) (AMW p.246).

She is favorite for her principal and her right hand. She is also paid for the extra work which her principal asks to do. There her salary is meant for her daily need which she had to beg from her husband. Thus the job is the need for her. Her small salary gives her economic independence and satisfaction.

She hires a maid named Mala who manages work very skillfully. In the meanwhile Astha suffers from migraine and it occurs again and again. Slowly her life changes to accommodate her headaches. Her mother takes her to a homeopath but her husband does not believe in this pathy. He takes her to an ENT specialist. A surgery is necessary for her nose so she has been admitted in the hospital. Her husband
takes care of her lovingly. She comes back home after her operation but her headaches never leaves her alone till the end of the novel.

Astha starts drawing and writing poetry. Dr. Shalini says—

"Asta finds an escape in her writings and her sketching. Her emotions take wings and pour into poetry but this also futile as the bleakness of the poems was not appreciated by the husband"\textsuperscript{25} (ACPFW p.246). Astha decides to give up her idea of writing poetry. She devotes her full time to drawing.

Asta’s married life suffers pangs not only because of her self-indulgence but also because of the callous treatment given to her by her own people. She understands a married woman’s place in the family to that of an unpaid servant or a slave and thought of divorce brings social and economic death in her Indian status. She realizes for herself that "a willing body at night, a willing pairs of hands and feet in the day and an obedient mouth"\textsuperscript{26} (AMW p.108) are the essential prerequisites of a married woman she contemplates marriage a terrible decision as it puts her in a lot to enjoy bouts of rage, pain and in decision.

Now the main theme of the novel starts. Astha’s school principal invites a street theatre group to hold a workshop to aware the people about their environment especially over the Babri mosque. The principal asks Astha to work with Aijaz Khan—The head of the group. He is a history lecturer but it is his passion to do such type of work. After a long discussion, she agrees to work with Aijaz. Infact "like the blowing of a gentle breeze on a warm humid day, Aijaz Akhtar khan entered into the uneventful and arid life of
At home her husband and children are not pleased at all. Astha motivates her kids to see the drama at the school rather than to go for a trip. They agree to participate in the drama. Aijaz asks her to do research over the history of Babri Masjid. First she refuses, after she starts to work upon. In this matter, she takes help of her daughter Anuradha. They go to the library where they search and collect the matter. She shows those papers to Aijaz. He convinces her that she is doing well. Finally the script is ready to be performed. Her painting also appeals to Aijaz. He likes her drawings and encourages her to go on further. “Aijaz is like Narayan’s Raju (The Guide) who recognizes the hidden sparks which later create holocaust in Astha’s life.”

The day comes when the play entitled—Babri Masjid Fact, Fiction and you is being performed. Hemant also sees this. He meets to Aijaz Khan and after this performance they all come back to their home.

Now Aijaz goes to another place with his beloved Pipeelika Khan, a double M.A. in sociology and Economics and works with an N.G.O named Ujjala, for the very first time Pipee meets with Aijaz at a conference since they meet almost regularly. And want to marry but the religion comes between two as Pipeelika is a Hindu girl and her mother Mrs. Trivedi thinks—"four wives, large families, instant divorce, inter community marriages, the religion of babies from such unions” (AMW p.138). On the other hand, Aijaz thinks that his parents would not also accept this marriage. But in spite of Mrs.
Trivedi’s disapproval and ignorance of Aijaz parents, both Pipee and Aijaz get married in Tees Hajari court.

Both newly wed couple goes to Bangalore as Pipee’s mother lives there at Siksha-Kendra. Mrs. Trivedi feels glad to see her son-in-law which indicates her acceptance of a Muslim son-in-law. They spend ten days there. They move every where in the campus as it was associated with Pipee’s childhood.

Pipee’s mother spends two weeks with them and returned to Bangalore after having a notion that Aijaz is a very good boy.

Now the lives of pipe and Aijaz commence as usual. She tries to be home by the time Aijaz arrives.

It is almost a year after their marriage that Aijaz makes a casual announcement that they have to go to Shahjehanpur- his own parents’ house. They want to see her. They go there and for the very first time, Pipee realizes that she has married a Muslim Everything is strange here the dishes, the food their dress, their pan making and their greeting method. But in spite of all these things Aijaz’s Ammi accepts her as her Bahu; it is the most satisfactory thing.

It is the year 1989, and bricks are being collected for the Ram Mandir and in this upheaval of the country Aijaz and his theatre group go Rajpur 50 km outside Delhi to put up a play.

As Rajpur is a sensitive area, Pipee forbids him not to go there but Aijaz says—“One has to do what one has to do”\(^ {30}\) (AMW p.139). He goes to Rajpur and what happens it is horrible even to think, to write. Aijaz Khan with his seven members of the group “burned Alive in VAN”. It shakes the whole country with its root.
What is harm in that man? He only wanted to do good for the people.

When Astha hears this news, she sobs rocking to and fro with rage and grief, it shakes her. A peaceful procession is being organized. Astha participates it as for a tribute to them. She meets one of Aijaz’s group members. She is a girl named Reshana Singh. She is a classical singer from an old and established family. She wants to meet all those who had worked with Aijaz, Astha is one of them. She expresses her wish to Reshana to see Aijaz’s wife.

Hemant on the other hand is very much worried to see her wife’s such a concern for an activist Aijaz when she cries on his death. He says "why are you crying? What was he to you?"31 (AMW p.78).

A few days after this horrible happening a forum is setup in the memory of the Street Theatre Group by Sampradayak Mukti Munch. It is decided that painters should donate a painting for an exhibition devoted to worker unity and secularism.

Reshana asks Astha for painting. She agrees. Now she makes herself dead busy in paintings, despite her severe headache. Her husband questions her about this but she listens nothing. She continues painting and after a six months’ hard labour, the exhibition is ready to be hold. Her painting costs ten thousand rupees. It proves a good start for Astha.

Now Astha and Reshana are firm to lead the works of Aijaz which he wanted to do. Astha balances her personal life and working life but sometimes it becomes unbearable. One day when she gets late, she remains thinking all the time about her children’s home work, their meal and her husband’s annoyance.
After returning home, her husband does not speak even a single word. How miserable condition of a woman is reflected here, only a woman can understand this.

Asta continues her sketching. Now she does not find much time for household work. It makes her-in- laws annoyed.

After ‘women traveling’ Astha decides to paint an image of Rath Yatra and she finishes it to: this time Rashana prices this painting at 80,000 rupees. Again Reshana proves right. It is sold before the end of the exhibition. Astha feels rich and powerful. She earns thirty thousand rupees by selling two paintings in one year. Hemant congratulates her.

In summer vacation her sister-in-law Sangeeta with her family comes to her maternal house. Astha with her family enjoy the holidays along with Sangeeta and her kids.

The summer is over. They all go back to U.S. Monsoon comes but Astha’s loneliness is still secured which is her only comrade. “Her solitariness not only scourges her but also soothes her” (AMW p.167). She wishes she could share her feelings with someone but “what is one to do with one’s longing”? (AMW p.168)

Hemant brings a surprise for Astha when she enquires about this; he says that we are going to Goa, To hear this. She is not much pleased because Hemant wants to spend her money on this trip and she cannot mention it.

They all go to Goa by air. While shopping Astha chooses a silver box from a shop. It costs 5,000 rupees. Hemant refuses. The tone,
the refusal both hurt her. She is an earning woman when she says this, Hemant snorts. Astha drops the idea of buying it. The children enjoyed the trip and they come home.

Asth a assures herself that "their money spending was decided by him, not by her" (AMW p.169). Dr. Shalini R. Sinha says:

"The convention of a patriarchal society decree that money matters are managed best by men that women do not need to be consulted about anything that men sole decision makers" (ACPIFIW p.218). But Astha’s education gives her wings to question such a system, to want to be treated as an equal by her husband. However her husband slabs down her feebly worded requests vigorously:

"Asth a sat stunned. What kind of fool had she been to expect Hemant? She had a good life but it was because nothing was questioned. This boat cannot be rocked. She can paint that on a canvas and put it up on the wall and stare it day and night, so that its message burnt its way through her brain into her heart. This boat cannot be rocked (AMW p.99).

Asth a starts going her college, meanwhile her daughter Anuradha starts menstruating. Astha consoles her affectionately. One year has passed as it is the time of anniversary of the massacre of the street theatre group. It is also a protest against the Hindu Samaj Andolan’s decision to construct a temple at the site of the Babri masjid.

As it is eve of New Year. Hemant also wants to celebrate it but Astha wants to go to attend the demonstration. When he gets know her intention, he stops her not to go there, Astha in return assures
him that she will be back in time.

Asthagone there and comes back before getting too late. She reaches at home in time. Hemant was there. Both get ready and go to celebrate New Year’s Eve with their style.

Thus the old year went, New Year comes. Astha rises, makes herself a cup of tea and goes out. She thinks to do something new in this New Year. She decides to quit the job of teaching and devote her whole time in painting.

After Aijaz’s death, Pipee confines herself within the four walls. She goes to her-in-laws’ house and sees the traces of Aijaz on every face and finds herself in more tolerable condition. Thus she thinks better to stay back at home Neeraj – her colleague always motivates her to restart her life.

Her mother too wants that she joins again an N.G.O. near her. Her brother Ajay insists her to do Ph.D. which he can sponsor. With these thoughts, in front of the heater, eating her dinner of scrambled egg on toast, Pipee passes into the New Year at her own house in Vasant Vihar.

The wrong of the past have to be righted – with this notion Hinduism is spreading all over India. Its supporters want to demolish Babri Masjid.

The Sampradayakta Mukti Munch is doing what they could in the face of resurgent communalism as the government has been dismissed. They prepare pamphlets organize marches with other left groups and decide to go to the banks of the Saryu to talk directly to the people of Ayodhya to counts the growing rhetoric of religions fanaticism.
Reshana always inspires Astha to be with the Munch and for this purpose she would have to go to Ayodhya. Her mother in law for the very first time advises her not to do such type of work. We see her mother-in-law is right in her perspective and Astha too. She wants to lead her life at her own wish but for a married woman how would it be possible to go another city leaving home, children and family. Her mother-in-law says:

"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. I am glad my daughter-in-law does not feel she has to sit at home. Till I have the use of my hands and feet I will help you but it is my duty to point out that you are going too far" (AMW p.188).

To listen this, Astha was struck dumb. Her mother-in-law had never spoken so openly before. And as usual, she finds herself torn between her desire for freedom and duty towards her family and it is the main theme which the novelist wants to show through Astha.

But this time Astha is firm to go. Neither her husband nor her mother-in-law stops her. Hemant leaves for Bombay and Astha to Ayodhya leaving their children to her-in-laws.

Asta stays in a guest house which Munch has booked for the members the owner of the guest house is a lady. She entertains her, gives food, talks and enlightens her with the history of Ayodhya.

Reshana comes and gives the news about the Babri Masjid that Karsevaks are escorting a fresh lot of bricks into Ayodhya.
A meeting holds near the bank of Saryu. One by one members of the group gives his/her speech. Astha also delivers her speech. The speaker is speaking in terms everybody could understand. A face stares at Astha. She is Pipeelika. She appreciates her speech. Astha thanks her. Both talk together and promise to meet again the next day.

The next day they meet at their appointed place and go forward to visit Ayodhya. They go to see Ram Janmbhumi and Babri Masjid. They talk about this current issue but Astha constantly notices a serene seriousness on her face but says nothing. Both visit the disputed place and its adjacent streets and finally exchange their phone numbers and take separate rickshaws to go to their separate guest houses.

Back in the guest house, Reshnnna informs her that she was Aijaz’s wife whom she was talking with. Astha feels that she would not able to recognize her whom she longs to meet since Aijaz death. In this mental condition, she comes back to Delhi, her children hug her warmly. Hemant too is back from his Bombay tour. Both husband and wife talk warmly and earnestly.

Hemant advises Astha not to involve again in such a rabble Astha who is busy to unpack his suitcase, finds a condom which disturbs her. Many questions arise in her mind. She enquires about this. Hemant clarifies that one of his dealers has offered him with a girl but he rejected, she can check that it is still unused. Astha forces herself to be content with this as it is too dangerous to venture further.

After one week Pipee makes a phone call to Astha. Astha regrets for her behavior that she could not recognize her. Both become friends and start to prepare their future planning for the Munch. Astha shows
her paintings to her and Pipee shows her writing. They begin to meet more often as Pipee’s house is near by. They meet on weekday; evening and weekends are out. Her husband Hemant also catches a whiff of this new interest in his wife’s life. They phone regularly. Hemant calls it as ‘Mind fucking.’ By the time, both the women get closer and maintain a secret relationship between herself and Pipee as the latter is very been to have a similar sex relationship. One day Pipee excites her to do sex with her. Pipee kiss her, hugs her, and comforts her whenever she needs. "Both of them fulfill female bonding in passionate and intense fantasies of love-making with their overwhelmed body and sexy mouth”" (AMW p.188). Astha gloats herself in flirting by justifying lesbianism as a component of larger human urge, as pleasure is an important element in sexual activity. As Anuradha Verma observes elsewhere that their sexual conduct shows.

"That an alternative exists and that is not less enjoyable, that sexuality does not mean pulverization of the female principle and lionization of a dominant male. It proves that sexuality is a pleasure not a power structure." (NPFW p.51)

Asthā spends most of his time with her. Her meetings with Pipee increases "Who is as adventurous and unconventional as Astha is domestically constrained—quickly becomes the focus and delight of Asthā’s life." (AMW p.97)

Besides Asthā plays her role as a mother very honestly. She attends their PTA and talks to their teachers. She discusses her children’s problems and comes back. Anuradha blames her for her poor marks as she needs a tutor and Asthā does not pay attention to this matter. Soon Asthā arranges tuition for her. After all she is a mother
and she cannot escape from her responsibilities.

Asth a is in love with Pipee. Day and night she thinks only about her as she seeks comfort for her loneliness in the company of Pipee in the absence of her husband. Pipee becomes a substitute for her husband.

Asth a tries to disclose her relation as her husband but couldn’t dare.

There is a lesbian film festival. Pipe wants to see those movies with Astha. Astha refuses as her husband will not allow for this. She insists her to take Hemant but Hemant does not respond ultimately Astha, without her husband’s full consent goes to see those movies with Pipeelika.

Asth a is back before time. She is very much worried about her children’s home work and food. At night about the buying of a car is decided and the car comes.

Pipeelika gets busy in her work and does not find much time to spend with Astha. Astha feels her absence every minute.

Ajay, Pipee’s brother inspires her to do Ph.D. now and then. But Pipee does not want to leave Astha at any cost. Infact “Any relationship, even that between a woman and another woman becomes demanding, after a length of time.”41 (AMW p.104)

She wants to live with Astha in a separate house. She compels her to leave her husband and children. Astha too wants to live with her but not on the cost of leaving her husband and children. "She wants to sail in both boats, keeping these two important parts of her life separate from each other.”42 (AMW p.106)
In this mental crisis, the days pass, Hemant is busy in his factory work Anuradha and Himanshu are busy in their studies. Astha is busy in her household work and love with Pipeelika, Pipee is busy in her basti problem. In spite of all these Astha always thinks about Ayodhya issue.

Pipeelika wants more intimacy, therefore she asks Astha to go with Ekta Yatra for three weeks. At first Astha is speechless. She does not understand what to say or not to say. Though she wants to go yet it is impossible to leave children, husband and family.

Hemant could not believe his ears when Astha tells him her wish. Hemant does his best not to go her there but she does not listen anything. She calls her mother to look after her kids. Her mother too, enquires about her tour. She makes realize her that she is doing wrong but it was of no use. When she informs her children that she is leaving them for three weeks, Anuradha seems indifferent but Himanshu, innocently says—"Go Mama, we should learn to be without you" (AMW p.112). How pathetic is the condition. Why Astha does not understand her duties? Why she is so restless? Where she is wrong? Is it her only fault? Who would give the answer of these questions? In every family there is the same condition less or more. Husbands are busy in their business and wives are busy in their job. Who will look after the children? They will lastly adapt themselves at their own will.

Time to time Pipee enquires Astha about their relation. Lastly both manage the whole thing before leaving their houses. Astha takes her kids to a restaurant to have a dinner.

The day comes when Astha leaves for Kanyakumari with her
lover sitting side to side touching the bodies each other. Both enjoy at
the beach of Kanyakumari. They are together, they are happy having
some moments of peace and privacy. "But in the most intimate
moments of that Astha spends with Pipee she cannot help
worrying about her kids"**44 (AMW p.188).**

Next day they would have to walk many Kilometers on foot
for the unity of Hindu and Muslim. One by one, day by day, The Ekta
Rath Yatra moves town to town village to village. Lastly they come to
Bangalore and to Delhi. They spend their trip happily, Cemented by
their nights and words together. After 21 days they are in Pipee’s flat.
Pip has gone to Ujjala, Astha makes bed, dust, clean the cob webs
and cook lunch.

In Pip’s house, she thinks about her kids’ home work, their food
and their routine. Astha comes back to her own house without leaving
any note to Pip. After a few days she falls in jaundice. Pip comes to
visit her. She feels sorry not to inform her. Her children wish her to
get well soon; Hemant also shows his concern warmly. Pip as usual
shows her actual condition in her family that she is still separated in
her own house. She says that she cannot deal with her life, she wants
a safe place, a warm place, and a loved place which in her opinion
Asth a does not has.

Asth a’s mother goes back to Rishikesh and she starts her work
as usual. Astha analyses her relation with Pipee. She feels exhausted,
she feels depressed but she is the only who understand her feelings;
other family members consider it her fragile state of health.

On the other hand her husband is also facing strike problem in
his factory. After a great effort to tackle the situation of strike, factory-workers do not come on work. They threaten the owner. Hemant has to tight the security of his factory. He suffers from chest pain. The doctor diagnoses hypertension and advises him change his food habits, quit smoking, cut down drinking, exercise everyday and avoid anxiety. In fact he needs a change. Therefore he decides to visit his sister Seema in the U.S. Astha is not pleased to hear this. Pipee is also disturbed to hear this news. They go to U.S. and U.K. first they go to London. The novelist has described the foreign visit very graphically. They enjoy with Seema’s family.

Hemant takes advantage of this trip. He wants to come closer to Astha. But she thinks that ‘marriage in not just sex but interest, togetherness and respect which she is lacking in her life with Hemant. Hemant tries to convince her in this way.

During their holidays an undesirable happening happens. The BBC announces the demolition of Babri Masjid, When Astha hears this, She wishes to go home immediately because her political self, her intelligent self functions best there, here she feels isolated, saturated with this rather than thoughts. She thinks about Pipee’s reaction to this occurance. Pipee goes to Ayodhya in such a horrible condition.

Asthagets worried but Pipee says "One can’t always be safe"⁴⁵ (AMW p.189). It is not more dangerous for her than for all those other poor women there. As Pipee is doing Ph.D. so she had to collect the matter also. Astha sees it always with a carved eye as Pipee will leave her and go to near her brother Ajay to do Ph.D.

Asthana and Pipee continue to see each other, but there is now
carefulness between them. Everything Pipee says is a distortion. For Astha everything becomes dull, the grass looks ordinary, the sky looks bleak, the paint on her canvas colourless. Mean while the strike is resolved after six months but Hemant’s health, gradually becomes worse. The whole family is alarmed. As for Astha, a brief survey of the literature on heart disease establishes that permanent changes are required in their living habits.

She changes her family’s way of eating. Hemant is bad tempered about having to give up his favorite foods but he has no choice.

A斯塔 spends a lot of time thinking about herself. Is she a traditional wife as Pipee has alleged? She flinches at the idea, but she is certainly doing what devoted wives do, putting a great deal of effort into protecting their husband’s insides.

The rainy season came and went. Pipee is now determined to do PHD. She has collected much work on her topic as she is very keen to do it, Astha is amazed at how much work, Pipee devoted to applying for a Ph.D. Her admission becomes confirm. She is very happy but Astha is not. She feels pangs of separation very much but she cannot do anything.

By the end of the year, there is plenty of material being generated for Pipee’s thesis. Ayodhya is witnessing the unprecedented influx of thousands of Kar sevaks from all over the country. Religions leaders issue press statements declaring that religion is above politics, above notion, above courts and any restraining orders pass.

By 5 December the city has swelled by 200,000 Kar sevaks In spite of much security and assurance by U.P. government. A Nation’s
shame Babri masjid Demolished. Both Astha and Pipee fall silent, their own lives dwarfed by what is happening around them. Now both have nothing to do. Their efforts go waste, after the demolition, Nationwide and others neighbouring Muslim countries Witness the destruction of temples and masjid and murders in multitude. Pipee ends up making several trips to distressed areas.

Asthा organizes an exhibition for her paintings.

Pipee goes to Shajahanpur to meet her-in-laws. Astha’s exhibition holds at the Tagore Arts centre. Astha has painted her and Pipee’s images. Nobody would be able to understand this as faces of both ladies are hidden. Astha has made her relationship immortal.

The day comes when Pipee has to leave this country for ever. Astha sees her off at the Indira Gandhi International Airport. Pipee gives her last kiss and she goes. Astha returns her home with heavy heart. She does not reply to Hemant’s questions. She says only that she is tired. Her mind, heart and body feel numb. With the departure of Pipeelika Astha is back to her husband, kids and family. She is again lonely, devoted to her duties and obligations. Though she finds a soul mate in Pipee.

"Asthा thought that if Husband and wife are one person the Pipee and she were even more so. She had shared parts of herself she had never shared before. She felt complete with her. Yet such a relationship can continue only between two people who are firm and strong and totally resolved to live together. Astha, however is not a strong woman. She could never be bold enough to leave her marriage and live with Pipee and
so ultimately Pipee leaves for the U.S.A and the relationship breaks up”⁴⁶ (AMW p.178).

In her treatment of women Kapur has emphasized on the real portraiture of a married life of woman but she became the first Indian novelist who highlights women’s desire for homosexuality. The theme of marriage is portrayed with lesbian relationship.

Kapur shows Astha growing and evolving through this relationship.

The narrative by Manju Kapur is straight forward. The author gives free rein to her imagination and brings her characters and situations alive.

Almost all the female characters of Kapur are educated, aspiring individuals cased within the confines of a 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 and develop the awareness of the New Woman. Thus Astha and Pipeelika are her New Women. Like Shashi Deshpande, Dina Mehta, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Manju Kapur expresses her concern for women “with a missionary zeal and seems to suggest that a married women’s job is not complete wifing, child-bearing and house keeping but to do something more. Her Astha appears to be an Ibsenite who raises her voice against the ages old customs and trends”⁴⁷ (TH). In the novel, Kapur has taken writing as a protest, a way of mapping from the point of a woman’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 woman 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 purposes. As a writer of new generation in an atmosphere of the nation’s socio-political flux, Kapur has recorded the truth in her fictive narrative. With a zeal to change the Indian male perception, she describes the traumas of her female protagonists from which they suffer, and perish in for their triumph. She is shocked at the growth of fundamentalism and the rise of religious zealots to uplift and elevate the country by a crusade and establish a paranoia by presenting evil as a historical necessity. Kapur describes this polities of genocide as an important fabric in India’s unique experience of democracy. She is sincere and naive as a sociologist in exposing the bizarre paradox of rationality that underlines a sentiment of antipathy sheltered under political support and social approval. She resonates with her feminine assertion, hatred for violence, blood, death and ill-feeling in the name of God and religion, and her feminine assertions remain untouched by history, politics and human interpretations.

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-asser-
tions. 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 mar-
riage 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" (AMW
p. 177). 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 sindoorred,
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 temperamental 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.

In the midst of a family and its vast minefield of income, expenditure, rights, responsibilities, knowledge, discontent, restlessness and dependency, Astha enjoys the fate of the poorest. She is suffocated with the growing needs of her family and "always adjusting to everybody’s needs" (DD. p.59). Astha understands a married woman’s place in the family to be that of an unpaid servant or a slave and the thought of divorce brings social and economic death in her Indian status. She feels for herself that "A willingly body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day and an obedient mouth" (DD p.66), are the necessary prerequisites of a married woman. She contemplates marriage a terrible decision as it puts her in a lot to enjoy bouts of rage, pain and indecision. Judging the male impression of woman she thinks that a married woman is an object of "mind fucking". She does not think "marriage is just sex" (DD p.78) rather it provides interest, togetherness and respect. Being torn between her duty and responsibility, faith and fact, history and contemporaneity, public ethos and personal ethics she thinks "a tired woman cannot make good wives" (DD. p.67), and struggles for an emotional freedom from the scourge of the nation. She develops psychosomatic symptoms of stress and depression balancing between existing and living. Astha’s slow discovery of her differences with her husband, her change from a tender and hopeful bride to a battered wife and her meeting with Pipeelika Trivedi lead her to realize the other state of woman in their "familiar distress" (DD. p.72). This leads her to an immoral, rather amoral, guilt consciousness of lesbian
love rationalizing her outmoded morality. Being marginalized by the
affluence of her family, vicious social atmosphere, sheer hysteria of
communalism and quarrel of two communities for god over a small
thing, she is disillusioned in the empirical study of man’s nature and
his framing of social values. There is the evolution of a romantic fan-
tasy in her lesbophobic imagination for her definition and self reliance.

Asthा’s marriage to a Pan-American and Pan-Indian husband in
her parents’ choice is a miscalculation. Hemant’s foreign education,
banking profession and money minting addiction do not make Astha
happy for a long time. Hemant’s resignation from the banking job and
joining in T.V. manufacturing business, Astha’s joining as a teacher, her
giving birth to Anuradha and Himanshu bring enough change in her
life. Her impression that "with good job comes independence"54
(DD. p.69) is proved wrong and she "seemed very pedestrian"55
(DD. p.75). By giving birth to a son on the one hand, she proves
herself no "socially inferior" and enjoys the gratitude of her family
members for whom "The family is complete at last"56 (DD. p.85)
and on the other she expresses commitment to her profession. Like
every married woman, no doubt she has a liking for motherhood but
she does not like the sex-subjugation of her in laws. She is surprised
at the reaction of the family and society when they remain cypheric
of Anuradha’s birth but gets an overwhelming approval of motherhood
after the birth of Himanshu. In her feminist assertion Astha does not
appreciate superstition, sex-subjugation and pride and prejudices of
having children just for their discriminated sex in the Indian percep-
tion. Being "caught up in the web of daily life"57 (DD. p.79) she
develops restlessness, anxiety and tension, "the disease of modern
life”\(^{58}\) *(DD. p.82)*, She remembers her mother’s words “woman is earth”\(^{59}\) *(DD. p.92)*, and that, duties, responsibilities and obligations help a married woman to understand the grandeur of Hinduism. Vasudha ev Kutumbkum. She does not believe that only a woman can bring purity, and peace to the family. She becomes serious for man’s ignorance at woman’s suffering and asserts her rights with the knowledge that “*Religion a choice as much as other things*”\(^{60}\) *(DD. p.78)*. She differs from the male perception of woman as a holy cow that must be a secular food. The inhospitable family and hostile social atmosphere due to Babri Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi issue have made her realize the other state of a woman’s life. Pipeelika, a Hindu Brahmin Girl, had married a Muslim Aijaz Akhtar Khan, a sensitive, socially committed history lecturer, painter, theatre activist and founder of Street Theatre Troupe. Astha appreciates them for the ideals of their conjugal life and their secularist vision. Like a modern feminist she appreciates Aijaz’s aesthetic and creative genius and for his working on slum life and sufferings of underage girls. She admires Pipee’s asserting her rights to marry against her mother’s desire and against society’s recommendation.

Asth, like Virmati in *Difficult Daughters*, desires to have a break from “dependence syndrome” and proceeds on the path of full human status that poses a threat to Hemant and his male superiority. She is, not a lesser mortal for her sex and like her male counterpart takes interest in political activism and fundamental issues of human life. Although she finds herself trapped between the pressures of the modern developing society and shackles of ancient biases she sets. Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters*, recipient of the Commonwealth
Writers’ Prize for Best First Book (Eurasia region), is a significant contribution in this direction.

Set around the turbulent years of World War and the Partition of India, Manju Kapur realistically depicts women of three generations, focusing on Virmati, the difficult daughter of the second generation. The opening line of the novel gives a jolt to the reader: "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother" (DD. p.102). This cryptic statement is made by Virmati’s only daughter, Ida, a divorcee and childless perforce. She could not develop an understanding with her mother during her life time and after Virmati’s death this realization engulfs her with guilt. Ida sets out on a journey into her mother’s past by piecing together the fragments of memory in search of a woman she could know and understand. Virmati had been evasive about her past with Ida, and now she hoped to fill the critical gaps. The consciousness of the reader shuttles between the present and the past along with Ida who visits different places and meets her mother’s relatives and acquaintances to know about Virmati, the woman.

Virmati, being the eldest, is burdened with family duties because of her mother’s incessant pregnancies. Belonging to an austere and high minded Punjabi family, she grows up with the conditioning that the duty of every girl is to get married and a woman’s ‘shaan’ is in her home and not in doing a job. She is already engaged to a canal engineer, Inderjeet. However, seeds of aspiration are planted in Virmati when she sees Shakuntala, her cousin, tasting the ‘wine of freedom’. She secretly nurtures the desire of being independent and leading a life of her own she wants to shoulder responsibilities that go beyond a husband and children. She realizes that, It is useless to
look for answers inside the home as the "language of feeling had
never flown" between Virmati and Kasturi, her mother. She had
to look outside .... to education, to freedom and the bright lights of
Lahore College even if "she had to fight her mother who was so
sure that her education was practically over"62 (DD. p.106).
Asserting herself, she not only clears her FA but joins A.S. College,
"the bastion of male learning".

It is here that the Oxford- returned Professor, her neighbour,
notices her particularly, 'flower like, against a back drop of male
students' and forces himself into her mind and heart by spreading
his anguish at her feet. Caught in the whirlpool of misplaced pas-
sion towards the already married Professor, she has the temerity to
spurn marriage, attempts suicide and bears confinement. However,
she does realise the hopelessness of her illicit love when she learns
about the pregnancy of the Professor's wife. How could it be true?
Man professing his love for her on the one hand and making his wife
pregnant on the other. At this juncture, decisively and brusquely she
cuts him saying that "You think you can do what you like so long
as you go on saying you love"63 (DD. p.102) and goes to Lahore
for further studies.

Thus far we see the budding of a "New Woman’ in Virmati
who does not want to be a rubber doll for others to move as
they willed"64 (DD. p.78). Defying patriarchal notions that enforce
a woman towards domesticity, she asserts her individuality and as-
pires self-reliance through education. She is not a silent rebel but
is bold, outspoken, determined and action-oriented. She knows she
can not depend upon the Professor to sort out the domestic situation
and proceeds to tackle it on her own. Later, she very decisively and coolly shuns the Professor, ignoring his plea and keeps the reins in her hand. She display samarvellous strength of mind in overcoming her dejection. She is strong to bear the pain, silently, without anyone knowing’ (DD p.101). The determined and unperturbed manner in which she burns the Professor’s letters show her resolution to close the chapter and look forward to a meaningful life in Lahore.

But does Virmati blossom into a ‘New Woman’ in the real sense? No. Inspite of her initial revolt against the family and firm stand against the Professor, she succumbs to his implorations and passion in Lahore. Loss of virginity pricks her conscience but then she overcomes the guilt by relationalising it as "outmoded morality"\textsuperscript{65} (DD. p.114). She had come to Lahore to broaden her horizons but instead she gets involved in a useless love, doubtful marriage and unwed pregnancy. The initial tenacious and assertive self gradually wanes away into a pawn whom the Professor tells "\textit{just what to look for, what to admire, what to criticize}"\textsuperscript{66} (DD. p.79). She wants to spread her wings like Swarnalata, her roommate, who is committed to "meaningful activities” regarding the freedom movement and women’s emancipation. But her emotional dependence on the Professor who constantly evades the question of marriage, stops her from doing anything that he disapproves "\textit{may be I could be like Swarna from the inside, secretly}”\textsuperscript{67} (DD. p.102). At the Punjab Women’s Student Conference, she is amazed at "how large an area of life women wanted to appropriate for themselves”\textsuperscript{68} (DD. p.114). But these larger spaces are not for her. She wastes her time awaiting the furtive meetings with the Professor in spite of the awareness that
there were "myriad instances of where she felt she had been weak or wronged" (DD. p.129). She is being used and the Professor wants to have the cake and eat it too. He enjoys the best of the two worlds and is not there even at the most crucial time when she undergoes the termination of the pregnancy. Even afterwards when the Professor eventually marries her very reluctantly, she is given a pariah status and faces exclusion from hearth etc. Which is the sole domain of the Professor's first wife, Ganga. Virmati lives in a cramped space and if forced into submission thought in a very subtle manner. Professor Harish's attitude towards her is patronising and demeaning. His interest in her is an extension of sell love ... awakening her intellect and emotions inflates his ego. Undergoing a gradual process of self-effacement, her energies are directed towards pleasing him while she herself remains parched. She finds M.A. in Philosophy dull, abstract and meaningless but studying it was her only means of escape. She wished "Harish had thought another subject suitable for her. She also wished it was not such an uphill task, being worthy of him" (DD. p.15). In fact, she remains 'difficult' only as a daughter towards her grandfather who always championed her cause, her father who was very understanding and allowed her to study further and towards her mother who certainly had Virmati's good at heart. It is ironical that Virmati has to face rejection first at the hands of her mother and later her own daughter. Both deny her their trust and affection. Both feel betrayed. Both live with a deep resentment towards her. Both treat her as an outlaw. In Virmati Ida finds a woman she would never like to be. Harish replaces his longing for beauty and perfection by shifting his gaze on "the model daughter". Conscious
of her history Virmati "tightens her reins" on Ida. As we examine the "socially produced" nature of "subjectivity" (of the conflicting women) it becomes apparent that it is a "constant site of struggle over power".71

Trapped within the bond of a lustreless marriage Damyanti has lived an uninteresting, insipid life. Patriarchy has devised specific rules and a specific code of conduct for her "women who stood at front doors, said Beni Madho (her husband), were women on the look out. For fresh pasture, men he meant"72 (DD. p.92). He firmly resisted her attempts to sing bits of thumri as she did the chores for "singing and those coloured magazines spelt evil for women ... they made their minds languid and intemperate"73 (DD. p.116). Story is full of Virmati’s assertion against her mother and other family members. The story depicts how she passes her whole life only for getting the favour of her lover Professor who physically enjoys her and passes a long period in these types of activities. At the beginning it seems that Virmati, being immature does not ponder over his position and takes his remarks seriously and begins to perceive him her husband. But later on as the story proceeds Professor could not marry for a long time.

This is a simple story, movingly told. Kapur sets the scene in pre partition Amritsar and Lahore, and she recreates that time and the locales beautifully.

The whole novel shows the feminism of Virmati who opposes her all family and continues her study against the wishes of her family. Here the Professor Harish who loves Virmati could marry her due to the social boudnation. But at last Harish’s friend poet performs the
essential marriage rituals.

Thus Harish eventually marries Virmati, installs her in his home (alongside his furious first wife) and helps her towards further studies in Lahore, is a small consolation to her scandalised family or even to Virmati, who finds that the battle for her own independence has created irrevocable lines of partition and pain around her. ‘Difficult Daughters’ is a skilfull, enticing first novel by an Indian writer who prefers reality to magic realism. Manju Kapur’s sensuous pages re-create an intimate world where family groups sleep in the open air on the roof and wash themselves in the yard in the dewy cool of morning, where love-making is furtive and urgent because another wife may be listening, and women’s lives move to a complex choreography of cooking, washing, weaving and mending, growing, picking, chopping and blending.... This book offers a completely imagined, aromatic, complex world, a rare thing in the first novel.

The story begins with Ida’s narration about her mother Virmati who has passed away. Ida recalls her mother’s sayings what she had said before her death that there should not be any ‘shör shaar’ and her eyes, heart, kidneys and other useful organs should be donated. But here Ida observes all rituals contrary to her mother wishes.

"When I die, she said to me, I want my body donated. My eyes, my heart, my kidneys, and organ that can be of use. That way someone will value me after I have gone.

I glared at her, as pain began to gnaw at me.

And, she went on, when I die I want no shör-shaar. I
"But why do you want all this? What is past is past, forget about it. Eat, have another paratha, you are so thin, my relatives gave me one view of my mother, I wanted another"\textsuperscript{74} (DD. p.1).

She was being burnt with her organs intact. On this inauspicious day Ida’s relatives consoles her and makes her realise that how they are only their parents and she should visit them occasionally. Ida decides to visit her birth place and she also has a great desire to know about her mother so she boards in train and reaches without giving any information of her coming. Relatives welcome Ida and Ida tries fully to know each and every aspects of her mother’s life. Now relatives unfold about the life of Virmati and highlights even the minute things about her.

They narrate that being the elderest daughter she had to run the house and look after us. We depended on her although she was only our sister but she acted very bossy. We were scared of her. She was so keen to study bap re. First F.A, then B.A. on the top of that. Even after her marriage she went for an M.A. to Government College, Lahore, she studied more than any other girl in this family and Harish Bhai Shahib – your father – was very particular about education.

"But why do you want all this? What is past is past, forget about it. Eat, have another paratha, you are so thin, my relatives gave me one view of my mother, I wanted another"\textsuperscript{75} (DD. p.5).

All this was narrated by my relatives but I wanted the another view of my mother said Ida. So relatives narrate the whole life aspects before Ida and the real story begins.

Virmati is the elderest daughter of Kasturi and Suraj Prakash, Kasturi has eleven children. The girls Virmati, Indumati, Gunvati,
Hemavati, Vidyawati and Parvati. The boys Kailashnath, Gopinath, Krishanath, Prakashnath and Hiranath.

One after another Kasturi gives birth to children and thus the whole burden of household work increases over Virmati, being the elderest daughter. By the time Virmati was ten, she was as attuned to signs of her mother’s pregnancies as Kasturi herself. At times Virmati yearns for affection but Kasturi gets irritated and pushes her away. Her remarks: "**Have you seen their food, milk, clothes, studies? Arre, you think there is all the time in the world for sitting around, doing nothing?**"

"**I'm just going, protested Virmati finally why can’t Indumati also takes responsibility? Why does it always have to be me?**"

"They don’t listen to her, snapped Kasturi, you are the elderest. If you don’t see things, who will?"76 (DD. p.6).

By the time Virmati was sixteen and Kasturi becomes pregnant. She was worried and unhealthy to give birth so she is sent to Dalhousie. Now Virmati was seventeen and studying for her F.A. exams. She has to go with her mother to look after her & other children. The conversation between Virmati and Kasturi shows Virmati’s assertion.

"**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, with a thick lump in her throat.**’

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

'May be I should go back to Amritsar. Pitaji can take me
the next time he comes'.

The language of feeling had never flowed between
them, and this throat was meant to express all her thwarted
yearnings” (DD. p.p.77-78).

Lajwanti makes a plan to come to Dalhousie and succeeds in
it. She also invites her daughter Shakuntala who has been studying
in Lahore. Virmati is highly influenced by Sakuntala who is having
royal manner and having her own views and wishes to run her own
life. Shakuntala’s visit plants the seeds of aspiration in Virmati. At
Shakuntala’s departure Virmati clungs to her. The present speech
shows the inner planning of Virmati.

"May be I will also one day come to Lahore, Pehnji', she
wept. 'I wish I too could do things, But I am not clever'—

'Arre,' exclaimed her cousin patting her on the back,
'times are changing and women are moving out of the house,
so why not you?'

Why not, indeed, thought Virmati looking at her, almost
breathless with admiration and love” (DD. p.97).

Images of Shakuntala Pehnji floating through her head, Shakun-
tala Pehnji who having done her M.Sc. in Chemistry, has gone about
tasting the wine of freedom. Virmati decides to become like her cousin.
"No, she too is to go to Lahore, even if she had to fight her mother who was so sure that her education was practically over." (DD. p.117)

Living in Dalhousie Virmati finishes her class VIII and has been sent for higher studies to startford college in the civil lines. She takes admission in fine Art degree but due to her home duties she could not do well and fails. The following speech shows the assertion of Virmati 'Mati' she said to her mother that evening, I, ve failed.' I told you it was too much for you', said her mother, busy feeding the young children.

It's not too much for me', protested Virmati, 'Not if I have time to study'.

"Ever since we' ve come back, you have been making difficulties', said Kasturi crossly. 'You had the Kotha storeroom to study in during your exams, and still you fuss, when Shaku used to study there she never complained" (DD. p.118).

Kasturi scolds her saying that leave her studies if it is going to make her so bad tempered with her family. She is forgetting what comes first.

By this time Virmati seventeen, her mother worries about her marriage. The boy is a canal engineer and doing well. Meanwhile Kasturi continues sickly. The temporary respite in her ill health that the hill sojourn has brought about was soon over. Her father-in-law Lala Diwan Chand, could see that Kasturi had not benefited as much as he had hoped and his son is still anxious about his wife. There is a great dispute over the partition of property. Eventually it is decided to shift
on Lepel Griffin Road. Lajwanti observes this as a golden opportunity to detach herself. She demands a separate living quarters ultimately. She succeeds but here she feels lonely and plans for having tenants. Harish Chandra is an ‘English Professor, hires Lajwanti’s home on Lepel Griffin Road. Soon Professor’s wife & Virmati’s family becomes friendly & their hospitably opens the doors of entrance Virmati takes the woman to Darbar Shahib & Company Bagh for visiting these places. Now Virmati passes her F.A. & wants to study further. Although her parents thinks that she has gone far enough & her fiance’s parents thinks that she is already well qualified to be the wife of their son, the canal engineer. They does not want too much education in their daughter-in-law, even though times are changing.

By this time Virmati is serious about her education, and due to the death of the father of canal engineer, marriage is postponed. So Virmati enters AS College but her mother is worried about her daughter’s education & seeks advice of Professor’s wife. She assures her that Virmati’s future is safe in AS College. Professor teaches and is highly impressed by the beauty of Virmati. By then, the Professor’s desire to posses her extended to his heart and mind.

Now Ida asks to Kailashnath Mama about the college where her father used to teach and shows a keen desire to visit there. They do so. Next chapter starts with the decision of Virmati not to marry and wants to continue her education. She has done her B.A. This decision creates a storm in the family and she is beaten and scolded by Kasturi.

Kasturi’s face is purple with fury she says to Virmati.

"Remember you are going to be married next month, if
I have to swallow poison for making you do it".81 (DD. p.87)

But professor insists her on being firm and assures that one day they will be together. Professor arranges a regular meeting in his friend’s home. This process continues and finally she makes up her mind not to marry Inderjeet and becomes mentally disturbed. She could not find any solution and marriage time is gradually coming near. She decides to drown herself in Tarsikka so she leaves home at late afternoon and drown herself but is saved by Lala Diwanchand’s servant and returns at Lepel Griffin Road. Everybody enquires the reason and finally she declares that she does not like the boy and wants to study further. So marriage is settled with Indumati, the second daughter. Virmati is locked in the godown and marriage is performed with Indumati. Virmati and Professor continues their process through letters.

But gradually Virmati thinks that all these activities are nothing except a fraud thing. So she writes him not to write further more after this.

Now family plans to sent Virmati to Lahore for further study. Kasturi has to go with her for getting her admid in RBSL College. As they plan to leave Kasturi remarks :

"When I was your age’, continued Kasturi, 'girls only left their house when they married. And beyond a certain age ...."82 (DD. p.99). Her voice quavered and she stopped, looking at her daughter helplessly.

Virmati noticed the tears in her mother’s voice, but she kept her head turned away. She had made a decision, and there were certain things she would not see.
"God has put you on earth to punish me', concluded Kasturi harshly, disappointment pinching lines around her tense mouth" (Ibid p.107).

They reach there, and Kasturi enquires everything. Principal assures Kasturi that there will be no problem and she has her eye fixed firmly on each one. She admits that her daughter would be all right here. Shakuntala who has been a source of inspiration for Virmati, visits her regularly. Professor's course of meeting Viru has yet not stopped and during this period she becomes pregnant. She becomes restless. She has already forbade Harish not to visit until her exam of BT not finishes. So there is no solution how she sent the news of her pregnancy to Harish. Exams are approaching to her and she involves in such a matter. She remains mentally disturb. So with the help of Swarnlata, her roommate she gets abortion. Now she feels much better than before. While she sits for learning, the words of Professor echo in her mind and she could not concentrate her mind on study. So she could not do well in her exams. After completing B.T. she leaves Lahore and reaches home. Virmati decides that she will never meet Harish.

Virmati is offered the principalship of a college, but Kasturi does not like to sent her.

She is so young, Kasturi had no doubt as to what her daughter should be doing. She should stay at home untill, she had sense enough to get married.

After the Tarsikka episode, the family never forced her against her will.
What kind of kismet is ours that the eldest daughter remain unmarried like this? After Indu, it is now Gunvati’s turn, but still that girl sits there, said Kasturi miserably.

The Diwan Sahib wants an answer before leaving Amritsar and question of Virmati’s future has to be discussed with all the elders of the family. It is decided that Virmati will return to Nahan with him. Kailash will also go along, look things over, settle her in.

Virmati settles there and soon Professor also visits her at night. This is the first time they have spent the whole night together but this visit is discovered by Diwan Sahib, and he calls Virmati ‘Beti’ he started "you know I am like a father to you. Your parents sent you here on my recommendation. I am responsible for you to the Maharani as well as to them"^{84} (DD. p.187).

Now Virmati decides to leave and goes to Shantiniketan. At Delhi, Virmati has to wait seventeen hours before the connecting train to Calcutta. She knew Harish’s friend poet lived in the Civil Lines, and she decides to look him up. He is already aware of their intimate relationship. So he does not let her go and calls Harish immediate. Harish receives his friend’s urgent telegram. He comes and poet performs all the rituals of marriage. Professor with Virmati returns home.

During her conjugal life Virmati feels that it would have been better if she had not been married with Harish. Harish believes that everything will become normal with the passes of time. After sometime Virmati gives birth to a girl named Ida.

The novel ends with the birth of Ida. This girl Ida grows and asks her relatives more & more about her mother. Her relatives espe-
cially her Kailash Mama narrates the whole aspects of Virmati to Ida.

'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.

At the beginning of the story Sona Lal and Rupa Gupta both sisters are childless. Sona is the wife of Yashpal who falls in love while Sona with her mother comes from Meerut to match a blouse in preparation to attend an uncle’s wedding. Sona’s mother considers
that it is necessary for marriageable girls to blossom during such occasions, it being likely that among the guests a boy, or better still his parents, can cast a glance and held it steadily upon her person. With this in mind, the mother with her daughters is shopping in Karol Bagh determines that her daughters should look their best for every function. Yashpal falls in love and enquires all necessary details. Next morning he puts the address on his father’s hand and says he should go and talk to the family without delay. If he could not marry her he would leave the shop and spend the rest of his life celibate, by the bank of the Ganges.

Banwari Lal consults to a holy man, a Baba and settles the matter. Although Sona’s family is not as rich as Yashpal’s family. In marriage they can offer nothing but their daughter whose heart is golden like her name. Their marriage is performed. But her mother-in-law is not pleased and she passes taunts. This makes Sona unhappy but Yashpal consoles her saying that when we have children, mother will forget all this. But unfortunately Sona could not conceive for a long time. By this time Pyare Lal is also married to Sushila who gives birth to a boy within one year of the marriage. Sona feels very bad and thinks that it may be the result of her past Karma, Sona keeps fast but it is of no use. During this period Yashpal’s sister burns herself and dies. As the family receive the news, they leave for Bareilly. Here Sona’s mother-in-law mourns, Sona tries to consols her.

Yashpal feels that Sona is not feeling well so he makes plan to visit a shrine at Chitai, near Almora Though the shrine is small it is famous, the Devi of these hills is said to have miraculous powers. Rupa & Premnath also joins them. After two mothers Sona discovers
that she has conceived. Sona feels it is because of Devi. Later on Sona gives birth to a girl. Nisha is declare as a Mangli. Nisha grows up as a beautiful girl and after Nisha, Sona gives birth to Raju. Now Vickey starts going to shop and there is some relax for Sona. Who does not like Vickey’s activities. By the time Vickey is fifteen and he begins to take interest in Nisha. Nisha cannot understand his intension. Nisha becomes mentally disturbed and nobody could understand why she is not eating, sleeping. So she is sent to Rupa’s Home for a change. Here she has no problem at all. Rupa & her husband Premnath understand all that there is a hand of Vicky behind Nisha’s miserable condition.

Nisha now finds herself in an atmosphere very different from the one she has lived in. As the only child she is the centre of interest, concern and attention. The pattern of Nisha’s next ten years is not set. She passes all week with her aunt and uncle. Premnath teaches her and brings a lot of things. Here Nisha flourishes as the most beautiful girl. On the other hand Vicky passes class X with third Division & Yashpal argues that he should go back to his father. So Banwari Lal with Vickey visits Bareilly but his father refuses to keep him pretending so many reason. Now Banwari Lal thinks about his marriage and performs it with Asha. Soon Asha gives birth to Virat. After a long illness Banwari Lal also dies and the whole burden comes to Yashpal, being the elder one. Nisha also returns her home to accompany her grand mother. Ajay’s marriage takes place a year after his grandfather’s death and after it Vijay Marriage.

The Board results are out Raju in Class X has barely scraped through with a 45 percent overall aggregate. Nisha was a mangli. A mangli, destined to marry unfortunately, destined for misery, unless
a similar mangli could be found, with a similar fate and horoscope. To do this would take time, and during that time perhaps an education? Not too much just a bit & Nisha enters in Durga Bai College for doing English Honours. In College Nisha’s best friend is Pratibha. Soon Nisha meets a boy Suresh who is studying in Khalsa College of Engineering. They become friendly within two or three meetings. Both fall in love and wonder here and there in each other’s company.

The academic session is coming to close. Nisha has had a difficult year and now she feels nervous. Suresh purchases St. Stephen’s tutorials from Daryaganj at Sunday bazaar and gives to Nisha. Nisha with the help of these notes gets success and gets first division. Nisha and Suresh continue their routine in next year also. As for Nisha, her uncle’s training has stood her in good stead. With family wedding, she has still been able to obtain a 70 percent in Humanities. The uncle is thanked profusely for the care he has taken of his niece.

By this time Pyare Lal has two daughter-in-law so he feel uncomfortable in the house where there is no separate bathroom for them. So he consults his brother to reconstruct the home again. Yashpal says nothing at the moment. Her wife also does not like the reconstruction. So they all moves out of the house Hotel Palace Heights in Karol Bagh. By now Nisha in her third year. Nisha enjoys in company of Suresh. He takes her to the room in Vijay Nagar where he tries to make sexual relation with her but could not succeeded.

On the way back Nisha remarks if he is so keen to do all this, why does not he make his parents talk to her parents? Let the whole thing be clear. Towards the end of Nisha’s third year her parents re-
ceives a letter from the college authorities. Their daughter is short of attendance, and will not be allowed to sit for exams. Now parents enquires the reason, but Nisha does not tell directly and sents Suresh to meet at the shop. Now all things become clear & Yashpal enquires all things. Finally he declares him unfit for the girl. All day she remaines in the house, a prisoner of her deed, a prisoner of their words. Once she gets a chance to go with her masi Rupa & arranges to meet him. Here Suresh finally declares that he cannot marry her & leaves her. Nisha’s nights are now ones of restlessness. After three years of thinking that Suresh is her future, Nisha will have adjust to the idea of another man in his place. Later on she badly suffers from eczema. This disease affects her a lot. This period had very important for Nisha’s coming future but it had passed in this fatal eczema.

This condition of Nisha remains same for a long period. Parents have been worrying, daughter getting older by the minute, son’s future blocks because of this, good matches will pass over because of this. One day a proposal comes from a richer branch of Rekha’s family showrooms in Karol Bagh and South Extension. Pyare Lal tells his brother that this type of proposal does not come daily so without any delay he should make up his mind. So they all go to Babaji. Babaji tells.

So marriage is performed and Raju & Pooja go for a honeymoon in Europe. They return after one month and Pooja proves quite opposite. Sona complains to Raju that Pooja is not behaving like a daughter-in-law. Pooja spends no time with the rest of the family, no time with Nisha. Sona thinks that her son has become the slave of his wife and is bent on stabbing his mother in heart. Condition is getting worse day by day and there is a great dispute among the family.
Pooja goes and comes without anyone’s permission. Parents think that it is very bad for Nisha to remain at home all the time. She should join a school so that she feels better. She starts going to school to teach. After seven months of the marriage Raju announces that Pooja is pregnant. Soon she gives birth to a boy. Parents are continuously searching a mangli boy to match for Nisha, but they are not getting success in it. Soon Nisha feds up of the teaching job and plans to start a business.

I will help you in the beginning, but the responsibility, profit and loss all are yours. In teaching no matter what you do, you get your salary. This is different Nisha starts business and it flourishes day by day. Demands of suits increase in the Market. During this period Yeshpal finds a mangli boy for Nisha. soon boy and his mother came to see Nisha and pass her. Although boy is a widow and agrees on Nisha’s condition.

Arvinds lives in Daryaganj and have a business there. He accepts that Nisha need not to stop her business and he will hire a room near Karol Bagh so she will not feel any problem to continue it. Only one thing Arvind wants a registry marriage. All agree and the preparation of marriage begins after a long period. They have an eleven ‘o’ clock appointment with the registrar at Tees Hazari. In evening there will be the reception at the Sartaj Hotel. All family members with Nisha reach at Tees Hazari.

Finally they collect in front of a magistrate in the nicest room. Here Arvind and Nisha sign their names in several places. Pooja takes out a box from her hand bag and unrapes the paper covering to re-
veal fat white squares of cashew barfi. She firmly holds a piece out to Arvind. Their marriage performs happily from the court they drive straight to the Sartaj Hotel in Karol Bagh. Here all family and relatives of both side enjoy the reception and bless the couple.

Next morning Arvind takes Nisha to his home & they pass their time happily. Nisha continues her business and comes regularly to see the work of tailors. This routine does not continue for long due to the pregnancy of Nisha. Her mother in-law advises her not to go daily otherwise it will create big problem so Nisha have to stop it. After ten months she gives birth to twins.

One girl and one boy. Nisha feels that God has shown mercy on her and now her duty is over. Thus novel ends with the naming ceremony of twins and everybody looks happy and satisfied.
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