The second chapter on *Difficult Daughters* (1998) gives a comprehensible insight about the mothers of the past generations and the sufferings of the modern age group daughters. A woman wants her own space and reverence in the society. In the patriarchal society this becomes a pipe dream. The author carefully draws the central character projecting on the sensitive emotions in familial ties. Virmati is well educated and wants to lead a life of her own, but was thrown out of the family as she was not communally accepted by the society. Unlike every mother Virmati’s mother, Kasturi also wants her daughter to grow up and be a ‘good daughter’. As Virmati fails to be a ‘good daughter’ the mother and the society surrounding her, claim her as a *Difficult Daughter*. The mother’s sorrow doesn’t end with Kasturi’s tribulations but the bequest continues as Virmati’s daughter Ida continues to be a ‘Difficult Daughter’ to her mother. So the title is justified.

Feminism in literature, predominantly in Indian English writing is a concomitant of the Western feminist movement. But we cannot totally negate the contribution made by our freedom struggle, independence, spread of education, concern for economic development and stability, employment opportunities and above all the resultant new awareness of our women. As far as feminism is concerned, regional literatures too fall in line with this pattern. The Indian women are caged and trapped in the suffocated walls of tradition and culture. The primary concern of every woman is to form a niche for her own identity. It is not only general ambition of every woman but also the strong aspiration for every woman writer. As a result, she will be the focal point of literature especially in feministic brand of literature.

Feminist literature highlights the basic differences between the two opposite sexes in the changed context of contemporary life. In spite of the variations in minute details, one of the major issues recurrently dealt with by feminist writers is identity crisis. A discrete study of the essays focus on modern Indian English novels as well as works of writers of other common wealth countries, which reveal that the women serve to reflect the writers sense of isolation, fear, bewilderment and emotional vulnerability as a symbol not only of growth, life and fertility, but also withdrawal, regression, decay and death. In the works of these modern novelists, we witness the typical feminist traits-sudden awakening, acute introspection, and a stasis in time and action, and in thought of ending with a definitive decision.
Very often these works do not offer a tangible solution for the feminist. But the experiences rendered through the feminine consciousness invariably point to an inner exhilaration suggesting the beginnings of a fresh awakening, a much sought-after percep of the feminists. Indian English fiction, poetry and drama are replete with the male-female confrontation, problems of adolescence, and coming of age with special reference to women, explicit and latent pleadings for equality, liberty and self-preservation, even risking the normal safeguarding of man and conventional production of hallowed tradition. The dreamy spires of Anita Desai’s characters, the high voltage confessional poetry of Kamala Das, strongly remind us of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath, respectively and stand as striking examples.

Kapur being one of the most talented feminist writers of the Indian English women writings concentrates on what a woman needs and what the society should provide to the women to make her an individual being. Her women are educated but are dominated by men and family. She shows how the women have to struggle under the patriarchal structures between education and tradition. Though the men are aware of the fact that education is must for women, it failed in practice confining them to kitchen rather than reading rooms. Kapur’s women are the women who belong to the post-independence period.

Mary Wollstonecraft deftly asserts her claims about women’s hindrance towards freedom and independence by these two most straightforward sentences in her masterpiece, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). It has been rightly said that this book speaks as much to the problems of women in the twenty-first century as it did to those of the contemporaries of Wollstonecraft during the 18th century. What makes the book so grounded even in this era is the social and economic realities of women’s place in society have barely changed since then. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* voices woman’s right to education.

Wollstonecraft asserts that it is the right of the women to be educated. If a woman fails to be educated the succeeding generations have to live in ignorance. According to her opinion the most perfect education enables the individual to attain such habits of virtue as they help to be independent. Nature has created man and woman as human beings with different biological niceties. Nature has not shown any discrimination between the two sexes apart from their physical distinction. Everything available in nature was equally distributed to both the sexes. The structural inequality
between the men and women can be wiped off by having a judicious socio-economic and cultural construction between the two races.

Freud insists on gender as a social and cultural construction, not as inborn destiny. According to him, maybe we are born with the difference in sex, as a male or a female, but not with the domineering status of male and sub-ordinate status of a female. The meaning of gender from historical times is things we treat differently because of their inherent differences. Lacan also supports the view that gender is created, it is not inborn. An infant enters with a self-identity and later develops to ‘Symbolic Order’. Symbolic order stands on the side of patriarchal powers, constructing its meaning through sets of binary oppositions like man/woman, mind/nature, activity/passivity in which the power of males is dominated. Judith Butler in her book, *Gender Trouble* clearly emphasizes that “Gender is not something one is, it is something one does, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a ‘doing’ rather than a ‘being’” (Butler, 1990, 25).

Simon De Beauvoir’s amazing fact cannot be denied in this context that woman are made but not born. Throughout the decades the eminent educationists like Elaine Showalter, Gilbert and Gubar, Helene Cixous, Kate Millet and Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak have rightly pointed out the injustice to women though it is the key element in human world. The conflict in the minds of the Indian woman between tradition and modernity has to share the weight of the past. She has to confine herself within the norms of society to prove her uniqueness. In literary texts, this anxiety bubbles to identity hunt.

Even though, ‘Feminism’ emerged as a literary movement it raises women related issues such as equality, abuse, autonomy, socio-economic-educational, domestic and traditional activities in every walk of life. The credit goes to Alice Rossin, an American writer who first coined the word feminism in his book, *The Athenaeum* on 27 April 1895. The female writers could identify their potentials that they were at par to male writers in expression and emancipation of their thoughts. *A Room of One’s Own* by Virginia Woolf is an example of the feministic approach. It is seen as a feministic text and puts forward the argument for literal and figural space for women writers, dominated by the patriarchy.

The male domination limits the innovative talent of women, restricting her to the inner parts of the house. R.K.Dhawan viewed that feminism should be used as a
socio-cultural movement to attain complete equality to women at par to men in enjoying the moral, religious, social, political, educational, legal and economic rights. According to Chaman Nahal feminism gives women a complete state of liberation. He strongly felt that women are completely dependent. They depend on men they can be a father, brother, husband or son. Therefore he wanted them to become independent rather than being dependent.

The main objective of the feminist writers view is therefore to give high status to the maximization of freedom of women or minimization of patriarchal domination. The feminist writers enlarge their hard line phallic steles to degrade the courage of women as source of meek sexual object. Feminist writers were seriously influenced by the writings of Margaret Fuller’s *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), Kate Chopin’s *The Story of an Hour*, and Sarah Orne’s *A Country Doctor* to Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929). The close study of gynocentricism points out the writings of women against male chauvinism.

The Indian feminist writers have focused on the identity consciousness, search for self-hood, aver for justice and equality in their writings. The women writers like Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Nargis Dalal, Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapur, Mahasweta Devi, Bharati Mukherjee, Anita Desai, Rama Mehta, Geeta Mehta, Shobha De, and Arundhati Roy delineate the characters of women to show the plight and fight for their rights. The women writers want to show women to men. Globalized education systems and cultures have brought about many changes in the woman’s status, particularly the change from traditional image of ‘wife’ and ‘mother’. Even the great epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* show women as victims and sufferers. The great matha Sita also couldn’t be relieved from sufferings, she had to prove her chastity as she was kidnapped by Ravana. Draupadi in *Mahabharata* had undergone a humiliation in the court and she prays Lord Krishna to save her from the disgrace.

Many feminist writers wanted to prove their woman characters as capable of competing at par with man in all the fields. A woman shouldn’t be blind to her feminine virtues, but should safeguard them. She has to make the society realize that she can perfectly fulfil her duties in different roles. The feminist writers wanted to show their women in different roles satisfying the norms of the society. Manju Kapur shows Virmati in her first novel *Difficult Daughters* as an educationist, surrogate mother, second wife, principal and a real mother. The struggle of the protagonist to
fight between the patriarchal powers and traditional structures makes the readers glued to the novel.

Indian English fiction points out many gradations of feminism – overt and covert, meek and radical. Though Manju Kapur’s arrival to the literary horizon was a bit late, her novels have a gargantuan response at the national and international levels. Manju Kapur’s succeeding novel A Married Woman (2002) is the story of a woman, who suffocates throughout her life between the modern and traditional systems. Astha Vadera, the protagonist of the novel rightly portrays the role of a woman who suffered herself amidst the traditions and current circumstances. Astha was brought up in a middle class family in Delhi. She was fortunate enough to have such parents, whose only concern was their only daughter’s safety.

Astha’s father was concerned about her education, while her mother was concerned about her marriage. Though Astha was sometimes angry at her father’s concern towards her academics, she felt sorry when he shared his feelings of hoping a high potential for his daughter. The words were amiably set by Manju Kapur. He confesses that when he was young, he had no one to guide him. He did not know the value of time, the importance of paying attention to the exams and how to take the life seriously.

Manju Kapur’s second novel naturally raises inquisitiveness in the readers after reading her first novel, which won the International acclaim. She continued to win the hearts of the readers even in the second novel. Being a woman, Manju Kapur’s protagonists are women, who are educated, well brought up, subtle and have the courage to fight themselves for the sake of their self-reliance, individuality and identity. A man or a woman strives for their own identification in the vast continent of competitive human society. It is not rather easy to establish one’s own identity in the cut throat competition of the fast developing world either in the society or in the family.

For the novel A Married Woman (2002), Kapur selects middle class women, who have great prospective but are not able to prove themselves in the stifled environment of Indian families. They are denied to step into the political or intellectual movements as their roles are confined to social teams. Manju Kapur sensibly represented such characters in her novels. Kapur keeps in mind the impact of external forces on Indian women at the two levels; family and society. She has a clear
vision on how a female infant is brought up in India to satisfy the requirements of patriarchal societies. The narration of the novel moves as a protest, a way of mapping from the point of a woman’s experience. Kapur focuses on the terrific incidents that arise from the disorders of the political struggles.

*A Married Woman* deals with the burning issues of the modern world. It is a real story of a young couple, whose married life starts and grows with the seeds of love and understanding. Though the protagonist is dragged into a physical relationship with another educated widow, she turns round the clock and reaches the starting point. The contentious issue of homosexuals is dealt in sensitive terms. In spite of the modern technological developments, all gay and lesbian relationships are far from social realities.

The main theme of the novel revolves round family sentiment, homosexual relationship, gender discrimination and political chaos. This novel shows the author’s protest against woman’s miserable experience. The novel is strikingly, straightforward story set between family and love, country and life. Hence, she permits the readers to frame an idea about the women’s struggle against their opposite gender. Kapur is claimed as a wordsmith, as her narrative skeins together the different strands. Kapur systematically shows a process of development in Astha’s life. Born in an orthodox family, she feels the care of her parents, enjoys her life with her husband, moves far from him, struggles to prove as a painter and a poet, becomes a social activist and develops lesbian relation with a woman.

Women cannot express some feelings which the society opposes. If she tries to put forward such aspirations, she will be labelled as feminist. The irony in Manju Kapur’s heroines is they pay for their rebellion. They try to break out the traditional clutches and create a new path for them. Unfortunately this remains at theoretical levels. In reality after their bold struggle they lack courage and continue to patriarchal supremacy. Kapur’s vision on experimenting on blending two controversial issues, the political turmoil on one hand and a woman’s love for another woman on the other hand are really admirable. She sincerely shows the confession of a woman from a traditional family.

Indian middle class women were well portrayed by Manju Kapur. Their inner turmoil torments and sufferings in the patriarchal culture show how women suffer amidst the metropolitan cultures and globalised educational systems. Although Astha
struggles for independence throughout her journey, ultimately she has to return to her family accepting her defeat. Her teenage love, love after marriage with Aijaz and her love with Pipee all couldn’t bring about happiness in her life and finally she had to accept the reality, her husband and her family. Mithu C. Banerjee said that the lesbian element gives relief to the readers when they are seriously involved in tensions of the country. The novel has a good balance of country’s internal progress covering its strengths and weaknesses parallel to the women’s emotional struggle and unrest.

Two different kinds of marriages were shown. One, an arranged marriage between Astha and Hemant, and the other love marriage between Pipeelika and Aijaz. Both seemed to be alike as far as the families were concerned. Astha had a complete and secured life but she struggled for self-identity and suffered when her husband was away on his business tours. But she was well cared by her family; much importance was given to her by her husband. Economically she was having a secured position. She had in-laws just above the stairs and mother to look after and care about her and her family. She had a job which gave her satisfaction to fulfil her desires as a painter and a writer. Pipee’s mother had many apprehensions about Aijaz but he proved to be a lovable person. She was satisfied with her daughter’s marriage. Even Aijaz’s mother accepted Pipee as their daughter-in-law. They didn’t leave her even after the death of Aijaz. Aijaz and Pipee also had a contended life, though it was for a short time. The author could balance both the marriages with pros and cons attached to the systems imbibed in it.

It’s very difficult to retain the supremacy in the family, especially in Hindu families where the head of the family is male. The male dominated society naturally teaches the sub ordination of the female in the family systems. It was quiet easier for the women of the previous generations to come up with the family systems, which included the domination of the men by limiting the role of women as a dutiful daughter-in-law, mother and a kitchen maid. The women of those days did not think of individualism or liberty or self-reliance as the society which they lived in did not give them such ideas. As education has paved its way into the nook and corners of the society it has drastically brought about a change in the minds of the educated women in liberalizing themselves from the clutches of family tradition. Women are no more considered as aimless dependent women but are considered as women with self-identity and self-recognition.
Many writers like Bharati Mukherjee, Kamala Marakandaya, Manju Kapur have rightly set their path in delineating women characters as independent characters in the social and cultural life of family relations. Manju Kapur explores a totally different aspect of educating a girl in the novel. Like any other woman of her age Sita, Astha’s mother, believed in the age old, traditional ways. She regularly prayed to God that her daughter, Astha should get a good husband. But Astha’s father believed in the modern era.

He feels that it is the duty of every individual to mould their lives according to their wish. When it comes to daughters they need to empower themselves with education. So he always kept himself up dated about Astha’s studies. Every father expects from his child that he or she should be more successful than himself. He also feels proud when the society recognises his/her talent. The best example can be the participation of the youth of today who are working in MNC’s and earning more than their father’s returns. In the same way, he expected Astha to do the best to achieve his pipe dream.

He always encouraged her about her potentials, her flair for painting and her way with the words; he insisted that with a bit of practice in Mathematics, her weak point, she could sit for the competitive exams. Her father feels that a good job can fetch her independence. But the manipulation was another way of finding a good match for his daughter. When he is thinking in this direction, he may find a son-in-law from the same category. Thus, the final destination fixed for their daughter is marriage, only the perspectives in the attitudes of the parents differed. This patriarch, being a pen pusher himself, shrewdly camouflages his real intentions, while encouraging his daughter to study hard. He never thinks beyond the boundary of marriage.

As the opening statement states “Asthā was brought up properly” (1), her parents were included in all the parts of her life giving her good education, good health by taking her to regular walks, making her practice pranayamam, meditation and ultimately a good marital life. Astha’s mother was more observant about her teenage daughter. Astha was crazy about Bunty, a neighbouring boy in her teenage. Bunty was a student of the Defence Academy and when he moved to his academy after the vacation, Astha tries to continue her passion through letters. Bunty, not well
aware of Astha’s love towards him replied her discussing his camps. These letters were caught by Astha’s cautious mother and she had to give up her first love.

When Astha was in college she was once again attracted to Rohan. But unfortunately her second love was also a failure as Rohan was a materialistic man. Astha was well aware of Rohan’s attitude that he didn’t really love her, but only wanted to pass his time with her. As Astha was a good writer and a painter she penned all her feelings in a diary which was found by her mother and she had to escape saying it was a story that she had been writing for a magazine.

Astha’s mother was so keen about her daughter’s marriage. Every Sunday, her duty was to look at the matrimonial columns and enquire about the bride grooms. Astha, who was not interested in arranged marriage, did not respond to the match that her mother had arranged for her without the knowledge of her father. After Astha had joined her post graduation course, she got a proposal from the Vadera’s family for their only son Hemant, a foreign returned M.B.A. Her father gave importance to his daughter’s opinion as she was the one who is going to be with him for the rest of her life.

Her mother was worried about her father’s retirement and she forced her daughter to marry Hemant Vadera. But Astha had already become independent in her thoughts and ideas considered her father as the best reliable person to judge the match. Astha’s prudent father was too conscious of the match. He weighed the pros and cons regarding the family’s history. When he had realized the weight was on the positive side, he didn’t find any reason to object. A good match for typical Indian traditional parents, foreign returned son-in-law, and who works in a bank. Hindus believe that men who love and take care of their parents will certainly love their wife. Even Hemant was proved to be the right match for Astha as he returned from US only for the sake of his parents, which is highly unimaginable in today’s circumstances.

Whatever apprehensions the family had in mind, finally Astha got married in the hot month of June. At last the middle class parents, who wanted their daughter to be well-settled, could fulfil the task. Of course they have successfully completed their duty of their wholesome life. Hemant and Astha was a happy couple, enjoying the pleasures of their life. Though Astha was not at first interested in job, her husband, mother-in-law and mother gave her freedom to fulfil her dreams as her excellent
academic talent needed to be honoured. She started her career as a teacher for the twelfth standard students.

Asta, who was brought up well and sent to a well-reputed family, was well respected even in the school she worked. In spite of her pregnancy she continued her job. After Anuradha, the first child was born they could settle well by building a spacious house of their own before the retirement of her father-in-law. On the other side Astha’s poor parents who were very careful about their future could only buy 280 yards near Trans Jamuna, a not yet established colony. So they had to search for a rented house and within a year after shifting into it, Astha’s father died of cardiac arrest leaving his wife Sita alone to sail in the ocean.

Asta well cared for her mother and wanted her to stay with them. She feels Hemant’s intervention into their family matters would make her mother feel comfortable, but Sita was quite self-respective and did not like to stay with her daughter’s family. She turns to a devotional life transforming into a new Sita leading the rest of her life in tranquillity in Rishikesh. When Astha finds it difficult, her mother consoles her saying it’s not good on her part to stay with her daughter’s family and Astha bursts out saying “I wish you wouldn’t 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 a daughter? Why did you stop with me?” (85)

Asta, a truly loving child concerned about her mother feels worried about her, but later she realizes the intensity of her mother’s words as she could understand Hemant could never become a son but can only be a son-in-law. She feels happy when she visits her mother in Rishikesh, her intention was to relieve her mother from the religious influence but she could finally understand that she was the person who needed to be rescued and saved not her mother, who was happy understanding the real essence of life. Astha’s parents were disciplined and thoughtful throughout their life and could lead a secured and peaceful life without causing any trouble to their only daughter, Astha.

Asta was lucky to receive the affection of her in-laws as well as Hemant. But the time has brought about some changes in Astha’s life. When Anuradha was born Hemant was quite positive about having a female child. When Astha’s mother hopes they should have a son for carrying the name of the Vadera’s, he sardonically remarks with his westernized influence there is no difference between a boy and a girl,
whoever they are to be cared by the parents. In the same he treats his daughter with good care and personal attention.

When Astha conceived for the second time, her husband was so anxious of having a male child and makes his mother to perform some puja everyday, which makes Astha nervous. She doesn’t have any discrimination between a male and a female child for she feels irrespective of the gender they are her own blood. Luckily Himanshu was born relieving the entire family from tension. Otherwise Astha was horrified at his feelings he said to Astha she need not look at these things negatively and spoil her health. As every problem has a solution, may be they can try again for a son.

It was quite natural for Astha to be nervous, as the gender couldn’t be decided by her. A woman is blamed if she cannot bear children, even if she can give birth again the problem arises with the gender as if it is her own mistake. Astha was lucky enough to be got exempted from this problem as she had a complete family, a girl and a boy as everybody wishes. Hemant resigned to his post and started manufacturing T.V sets. He was successful in business, but it was quite natural that he could not balance between his family and business at which Astha grew restless. The love and affection which she received in the beginning of her married life started to vanish. She began to lead a monotonous life which is rather mechanical to every home maker, added to it an extra work teaching. Hemant, who recognized her talents was happy at her potential skills in painting and writing, but was not able to encourage her as he was trying hard to establish their present and future.

Hemant a devoted husband, a dutiful father and adorable son always ran a tight ship to be a successful person. He took care of his wife’s headaches, treated her as a baby, and admired her but his frequent travels and Astha’s pressure as an employee and homemaker created disturbances between them. May be they are so serious in Hemant’s point of view, but Astha could not adjust herself. Hemant feels that he had done everything to his family but Astha lacks her recognition. She likes to spend more time with Hemant which has become impossible to her because of his work pressure and frequent travels. She tries to adjust herself by mollifying that her husband is working for them making their life comfortable.

The responsibilities of Astha in the school sometimes made her to sacrifice her own time at home. When the principal Ms Dubey invited the Street Theatre Group,
she was forced to accept volunteering the students during her holidays. Though she
did not like it she was not having any other alternative other than convincing
Anuradha and Himanshu to take along with her. Hemant had arranged his time to
spend with his family in their vacation which became impossible as Astha had no
choice. It’s a universal problem which is commonly seen in many families, where
husband and wife are busy with their own activities. None would like to compromise
and make their relations worse than ever. At last Hemant had to adjust and finally
Asthā involved herself in the historical street play.

As Manju Kapur is a versatile genius in mixing up the historical facts with the
portrayals of her realistic characters, she brings up the issue of Babri Masjid. Aijaz, a
history lecturer and social reformist attracts Astha by involving her in the historical
aspect of the play, which was neither her subject nor her area of interest. When
Hemant expresses the same, she feels he was humiliating and under estimating her
potentials. She leaves Himanshu in the upstairs and with the help of Anuradha
explores the history of the play. Even after the show Astha could not forget Aijaz,
though she hadn’t heard from him after the play except that he was behind a girl who
was working for the NGO’s.

Asthā was occupied with her own family until one day Hemant showed her in
the paper the brutal assassination of ten social activists who went to perform a stage
art at Rajpur. The head Aijaz Akthar Khan was burnt alive with nine other members
of the troop. Astha could not stop crying as she had worked with Aijaz for sometime,
who was trying to do good for the society. Hemant was annoyed at his wife’s
response and both started arguing about it. He failed to understand the sensitive heart
of a woman. When we witness an accident, the impression settles on our mind for a
long time. Even we do not witness such a barbaric incident; we shall have an
everlasting adverse impact on the mind. So Astha was moved by the incident and
could not control her anguish and excruciating distress.

A husband’s suspicion and a wife’s innocence were clearly shown. Hemant
could not take it a natural way that woman like Astha, who are sensitive enough find
it difficult to digest such things. It’s quite normal that the death of a known person
that too in a barbarous condition makes anyone with humanity shocked. Astha
expressed her distress through tears and Hemant who was not associated with Aijaz
could not feel deeply about it. In this context, Virginia Woolf’s non-fictional work, A
Room on One’s Own analyses the present gender bias prevalent in the society. Her suggestion is relevant to the present situation: “But it is not education only that is needed. It is that women should have liberty of experience, that they should differ from men without fear and express those differences openly…. be encouraged to think, invent, imagine and create as freely as men do” (32-33).

In spite of Hemant’s disapproval, she started involving in all the matters concerned to the death of Aijaz. But Hemant was amicable to her hostile attitude and enquired about the rallies. As Hemant was well aware about the rallies and the involvement of anti-social elements in it, it’s not wrong on his part to warn his wife. But Astha was treating Hemant as a non-humanist and could independently follow her ideals at which Hemant never fought with her. Astha was introduced to Reshana Singh, Aijaz’s intimates and started to take an active part in the socialist movements fighting against the incidents. Here Astha’s talent was recognized and brought up into limelight. Her paintings were exhibited and sold and Astha could realize her potentials. She left her children in the upstairs, leaving them either to the care of servants or in-laws and started actively participating in the activities.

At the same time Hemant had some problems in his factory with the workers strike, but she didn’t give any importance to them. She was trying to establish her own identity amidst the chaos at her home. It is her weakness that she cannot say no to anyone who allots her a work, though she is over burdened. She tries to fulfil her duties as a wife and a self-reliant woman. On the eve of the New Year, she attended a rally at the memory of the ten deceased people and enjoyed with her family parties late night because she didn’t want to discourage Hemant. So it was difficult for her to cope up, but finally she succeeded bearing her regular headaches.

The activist movement called as Sampradayakta Mukti Manch started their actions in the face of resurgent communalism. They did everything they could do and planned to move to Ayodhya to bring awareness among the public in the growing religious fanaticism. Reshana invited Astha to join them and give a five minute speech in Ayodhya. Reshana reminded her about her children and enquired if it would be difficult for her to leave them. Astha either wanted to leave them upstairs or take them with her. As usual she did not listen to Hemant and decided to move. Hemant knew that he cannot stop her.
Even though Hemant was away, she left the children without caring to her mother-in-law’s advice. Astha’s in-laws were good that they never interfered in Astha’s privacy. In spite of her health problems in her old age her mother-in-law was always burdened by Astha’s working as she was always left with the children. They never spoke a word feeling that young people need to have their own individual life. But sometimes as the mother-in-law says it is indispensable to listen to elders as she decided to move to Ayodhya for two days alone, not even accompanied by her husband.

A斯塔 was reluctant to listen to her mother-in-law in spite of her good advice. It is very difficult sometimes to find a mother-in-law who would substitute a mother. Hemant’s mother never interferes in the family matters of her son. At the same time she takes care of her grand children in the absence of their parents. She acts less traditional like the other mother-in-laws in the past. She wants her daughter-in-law to enjoy her life. But she is also conscious about the perils a woman has to face as she needs to travel to a far off place. So naturally the cautious mother-in-law wants her to think of her safety as it is also their duty to protect her.

But would the youngsters care about the elder generations? If Astha could think for a moment about her mother-in-law, where was her independence? Her duty was confined only to her house. She never feels that she was confined to the house while she herself encourages Astha to mingle up with the society. What happens if she aims the same independence as Astha was claiming for? This journey had turned her into a lesbian. She went to Ayodhya and met Pipeelika Khan, Aijaz’s wife and the relation had transformed them into a new world. Pipeelika Khan was brought up by a single parent, her mother in a Shiksha Kendra run by Swaminathan, a philosopher. The school was different from other schools where the children were associated with nature and had freedom to express their ideas. A part from education a strong character of body and mind was naturally built up in the school where Pipeelika had studied. So naturally she developed an individual character and personality. Her brother Ajay, who studied in the same school could understand the disturbances in his family and excelled in his studies, planning his future at abroad.

Pipeelika moved to north to complete her graduation in Sociology and an M.A from Delhi School of Economics. Her brother wanted her to do her PhD in states, but she didn’t agree as she was the only one left over to take care of her mother. Her
ideologies made her to join in NGO, run by three women to deal with street children. She met Aijaz Akhtar Khan in a conference and both of them decided to marry. Pipeelika’s mother couldn’t accept a Muslim as her son-in-law as she had her own apprehensions about Muslims. But Pipeelika, who was already independent and had quickly, gulped the metropolitan culture of Delhi; working with Ujjala could only see her mother, Ms Trivedi’s innocence. It was hardly difficult for her mother to sway her daughter as Pipeelika’s twenty nine years of life had given her enough strength and courage to lead her own life.

She has shown a superior tête-à-tête between the mother and the daughter in a matured way. “My father didn’t want his daughter’s life cluttered up with references to goddesses, and now I am going to live up to his legacy. He married whom he liked, so did you, now it’s my turn” (121). But her mother who had her own anxieties couldn’t agree with her daughter and she makes a trial to change her daughter’s mind. “You all work in your own NGO, and think you don’t have to answer anybody. My child you are swimming in a very small pond.” ‘Small pond! When I’ve been working with women for five years, going to all kinds of slums, seeing all manner of injustices done to people I have actually met. If we help them too overtly we alienate the community, and lose whatever influence we have. It’s so frustrating. Ma, you haven’t even seen a slum” (122).

Pipee was so keen and was also absorbed with her own feelings rather than her mother’s trepidations. She could directly question her mother about her marriage. May be Ms Trivedi’s parents felt the same, now it’s her turn. Pipee has the confidence that Aijaz will be liked by her mother and Ms Trivedi was happy about her son-in-law. But the happiness didn’t last long. Mother’s fate continued in the life of the daughter too. Pipee had become a widow like her mother. The only difference was Ms Trivedi had her children, while Pipee had none and it diverted her to have a lesbian relation.

Pipee’s independence was not disturbed after her marriage. She was more practical, so she could not tolerate when Aijaz said his mother would be the same as her mother if she had known about the marriage. She thought may be her mother was right about a Hindu marrying a Muslim, but immediately she turned her sensible anguish towards him and Aijaz, who was disconcerted till the moment had to propitiate Pipee. He feels sad because he belongs to a joint family and he needs to
care for the emotions of all the members about a Hindu girl. If they knew about his marriage, they would have never allowed him getting married in a simple way as he had a family behind him, who were eagerly waiting for a grand marriage celebration. He didn’t even want to make his wife worried about all these matters.

Pipee’s attitude is rather straightforward. May be her infancy and the schooling had a deep impact on her to be independent and uncomplicated. She hated Reshana Singh and the manch who were in reality against the death of Aijaz. Much of her feelings on the death of her husband were not explained by the author. Her entry in the story begins in the second phase in Ayodhya, where she meets Astha, inspired by her speech. Astha, who wanted to meet Aijaz’s wife at the time of his death could not recognize that Pipee, who was with her for the whole day in Ayodhya was his wife. She was thankful to Pipee when she saved her from the monkey. Pipee and Astha became friends. Pipee, an independent and unfussy character and Astha, an independent but still under the clasps of her family entered a relation, which can be accepted neither by Astha’s family nor Pipee’s family.

The term Lesbian was uprooted from the home-town of a 6th century BCE poet Sappho, Lesbos in Greek Island. Sappho’s proclivity towards girl’s made her to impose on their beauty in her poetry. The documents show that the term Lesbian was used in 1870 to depict erotic relationships between women and the medical literature had given importance to the term in 1925. Medical professionals were not too serious about this problem but sexologists, Richard Von Krafft Ebing from Germany and Havelock Ellis from Britain considered this as a mad affair and neurological disorder. Lesbian-feminists did not consider sexual component as a necessary element to identify and declare a lesbian relation. But historians and biographers had their own convictions to use the term as it was a sensitive affair for the public to accept. A woman may be close to other woman, may have many friends who are of the same sex, or may live with the same sex partner, they are not going to be lesbian relations. So it was necessary for the critics to have an indisputable substantiation of sexual activity between women.

According to British scholars the women in Greece were subordinated as men were westernized and no importance was given to women. The internal life of Greece women specially related to sex was unknown, though historian Rabinowitz argued that there were romantic images of women. There is historical evidence to show the
relationship between two women in Rome, which is a male-dominated society. France was the first country to impose strict laws on homosexuality in 1270, followed by countries like Spain, Italy and Holy Roman Empire, where the lesbian relationship between women was ripped and considered liable to be punished by burning to death.

In order to harm politically the rivals used this as a weapon. Queen Anne and Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough were rumoured to have a relation; later Churchill spread the affairs to others degrading the Queen’s reputation. Although publically the sexual matter was not noticed the female-female relation was fashionable in 17th and 19th centuries and these intimacies were called as Boston marriages. Sentimental friends or Romantic friendships have become popular in the US, Europe and the England. The relations encouraged women to form strong and exclusive bonds as a system alternative to marriage between a man and a woman. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu wrote in her letter to Anne Wortley in 1709 that ‘Nobody was so entirely, so faithfully yours….. I put in your lovers, for I don’t allow. It possible for a man to be as sincere as I am….’

Mary Wollstonecraft, a writer and a philosopher’s intimacy to Fanny was addressed in her first novel Mary: a Fiction. In a letter she addressed to another woman ‘The roses will bloom when there’s peace in the breast, and the prospect of living with my Fanny gladdens my heart – You know not how I love her.’ The up growing educational facilities in 1920 spread the same to colleges, the senior’s intimacy to juniors. Some women who had intimate relation with other women did not like to reveal themselves or didn’t like to be called as lesbians. Natalie Clifford Barney, an American heiress organized a weekly salon in Paris mainly focusing the topic on lesbians. The African people staying in America thought the lesbian relationships as a common affair that can be put up with though not explicitly embraced.

The psychoanalytic theory of Freud influenced the medical practitioners to consider it as a neurosis badly affecting immature women. World War II had given a wide chance to lesbians to emerge into their networks, as most men were involved in war and women had to lead the life without their husbands, which also increased the independence of women leading a free life. In 1952, after the World War, the sex between the same genders was treated as a psychological disturbance and the public and lesbians believed that it was a curable disorder. The lesbian culture uprooted itself
mainly in the working class women of Canada and U.S. In 1950 a book titled *Women’s Barracks* described the lesbian relationship, which the author had witnessed and it sold over 4.5 million copies. More than 2000 books were printed and sold between 1955 and 1969 by using coded words like *Strange, Twilight, Queer* and *Third sex* instead of the term lesbian.

There was an ambiguity among the writers on how the term lesbianism can be defined. Some feminists argued that ‘one cannot be a true feminist without being a lesbian, as the very essence, definition and nature of heterosexuality is men first’. Jane Freedman says, “Lesbianism, in some definitions, may not always involve sexual relationships with women, but just the withdrawal from sexual relationships with men” (Freedman, 2002, 61).

Adrienne Rich, a poet and essayist gave a vast meaning to the term lesbian basing on ‘Women-identified experience’. “I mean the term lesbian continuum to include a range-through each woman’s life and throughout history of woman-identified experience, not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman. If we expand it to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support…” (Rich, 1980, 648). He regarded all the relations between mothers and daughters, women who work together, and women who nurse each other have some lesbian element.

A part from western culture, according to the pen outs of Sharif al-Idrisi, the women who were highly intellectual were lesbians. Iran did not accept the lesbian relations and claimed it as an unforgivable crime, if lesbian desires were found between women. Lesbian element was also identified in various African societies. In Asia, particularly in China an organization called as ‘Golden Orchid Associations’ encouraged and promoted formal marriages between women for adopting children. Some cases were also registered in Japan, India and Korea as a result of westernization. Women who were neglected in their childhood turned out to be lesbians. Works and films were produced on lesbians. Katherine Mansfield, Amy Lowell, Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf published popular works on same-sex relationships. *The Killing of Sister George* in 1968 was the first movie to address lesbianism in depth.
Literature was rather conventional in exploring the concept of lesbianism. Ismat Chughtai’s *Lihaaf* (1942) was written in the pre-independence time. It should have set a new path to the emerging writers. But it didn’t continue. May be when one seriously looks into the reasons, it can easily trace out the influence of patriarchal powers, social pressures and the general background of the country was against the depiction of such stories. *Lihaaf* stands as a good example for subjugation and neglect of woman in the domestic spheres of life. *Lihaaf* is the novel which shows the realities in neglected woman’s life. Begum Jan, who marries the Nawab, was treated only as a lifeless object.

Nawab installs her in the house along with furniture. In spite of the age difference she was forced to marry Nawab as her family wanted to get rid of her. Even after marriage she didn’t receive any love from her husband. To fill the vacuum she read literature but it was of no use as the poetry increased her appetite for life. On the other hand, the Nawab enjoyed himself with homosexuals. Unable to bear the silence in her life, she developed a lesbian relation with her home maidservant Rabbu. Chughtai didn’t want to leave her heroine in desolation and as a comfort she made her to find solace in such relation. In November 1946, Chughtai was summoned to court for the second hearing, as *Lihaaf* was charged as a scandal in her literary outputs.

Kamala Das’s autobiography *My Story* (1976) is a confessional note of the author where she discusses her desire for her friend at a boarding school. Her bold note of lesbianism dragged her to be blamed publicly after her autobiography was published. Kamala Das’s *My Story* originally written in her mother tongue Malayalam was a realistic saga of her life. She confesses her life from all the stages starting from her education at missionary schools, disastrous marriage, life as a writer, birth of her three sons and her sexual relations. She did not hesitate to project the nature of her materialistic husband, who could not satisfy her desires and which ultimately drive her to find solace from her depressed state. She never regrets about writing her autobiography, though she is claimed as India’s most unconventional woman writer. She writes about a lesbian relation, she had seen when she was eight years old in the boarding school. She was startled to observe a lesbian coming and kissing the pillow cases of her admirer. She had an experience with an eighteen year old girl, who spend with her a whole night in the train, separating themselves from a group of professors and students.
Another autobiographical work was *Goja: An Autobiographical Myth* (2000) by Suniti Namjoshi, a lesbian feminist. The author, who was also an IAS, grew up between the rich and the poor, her grandmother Ranisaheba and the servant woman Goja. It’s a confession made by her at the age of 60 years to outpour her agonies and sexual choice experiences. She was labelled by her heterosexual family as a sinner. She says, “I should like to point out to all the queens and princess that ever there were women that no woman is a first-class human being. She’s second class. And anyway I was a lesbian so presumably; I would have been a third-class human being in any society, wherever it was in the wide world” (Namjoshi, 2000, 110).

Abha Dawesar’s *Babyji* (2005) depicts a metropolitan capital city Delhi as a polluted and corrupted city in terms of economy and humanity. Anamika Sharma, a sixteen-year-old budding intellectual born in an orthodox family turns to lesbian. She maintains three simultaneous affairs, one with a divorced woman, a servant woman and an underage woman. An intellectual kid gets bored with the disruptions in school activities due to the protests against the political unrests and moves to the neighbouring house and makes friendship with a widow, Tripta Adhikari. Though the parents were well aware of Tripta’s free style of life they thought it would be a maternal relation. Anamika continued her second relation with her servant maid, Rani who calls her as Babyji. She develops a relation with her friend Sheela. Her lesbian relation is claimed as a thwart for conventional Indian thoughts and values whereas on the contrary she realizes that Indian women are still backward to compete with the developed western countries.

Anita Nair, another Kerala writer’s creation *Ladies Coupe* (2001) also shows a lesbian relation. Akhila the protagonist of the novel, who is from Tamil Brahmin family, gets tired with her duties as a daughter, sister and provider. In search of her life and identity she moves to Kanyakumari. In her journey in the Ladies coupe, she meets five women with different backgrounds. The first lady, Janaki has a blessed life, as she was happy that traditional family systems would protect women, but was unable to tolerate her husband at his excessive domination on their son. The second lady, Margaret Shanti was a chemistry teacher, who was vexed up with the male-domination and developed hatred on her husband. The third one was a fourteen-year-old girl Sheela, who was more matured and could perceive things which others could
not. The fourth one was Prabha Devi, born with a silver spoon and was sent to a blue-blooded family. She was a perfect daughter, daughter-in-law and a wife.

The fifth lady was Marikolanthu, who was exploited on the grounds of poverty. She becomes a mother to an illegitimate son, whom she couldn’t love. Marikolanthu was a servant in Chettiar’s house. She was seduced by Murugsen, Chettiar’s son. She does not even care about her son and left him to the care of his grandmother. She learned about the lesbian relation from her mistresses. “Every night, I watched Missy K leave her room and walk past me…and go into Missy V’s room. In the early hours, she crept back to bed. Why this secrecy, I wondered. If Missy K was afraid to sleep alone, the sensible thing to do would be for them to share a bed. I would have thought nothing of two women sharing a bed. It was the most obvious thing to when men weren’t around. For the women to stick together” (Nair, 2001, 232).

She shared the same to Sujata Akka, Murugsen’s wife. The two ladies share their agonies by developing a lesbian relation between them. But that doesn’t last long. To protect Sujata from her husband’s unwanted love making, she offers herself to the man thinking that she would protect him from going off to another woman. But she is ultimately blamed and sent out of the house. The death of Murugsen relieves her and she takes her son back. In Nair’s Ladies Coupe, though the homosexual desire didn’t survive the fracturing effect of the discourses of caste and class, yet the lesbianism is an example of feminine liberty of choice.

Such lesbianism trait influenced Pipee and Astha. It was Pipee who first dragged Astha into such kind of relation. Astha could not protest her. Astha lost the sensitiveness she had earlier after she entered the relation. She started to tell lies to Hemant, to spend her time with Pipee neglecting her children and their studies. She feels that waiting for her turn in the parent-teachers meeting at her children’s school had killed her time, which was not at all necessary for her to waste on such activity. She worries about the appointment she had given to Pip. They both enjoyed themselves. Hemant could identify the change in his wife’s behaviour but could not sense it out as both were women.

Asthia feels nervous at her behaviour but immediately mollifies herself as she caught Hemant red-handedly after her return from Ayodhya. Though she suspected her husband she was careful not to venture more into the matter. But to her self-satisfaction she always thought as Hemant had his own ways, may be the moments
with Pipee are her own euphoria. Astha struggled between Pipee and her family. She wanted her own family, Hemant and her children at which Pipee did not accept her. When Astha wanted to help Anuradha in her studies, Pipee didn’t agree saying it was father’s duty more than a mother’s duty. Astha fought for a car with the support from Pipee. Hemant as usual did not accept Astha’s deep social contact with Pipee.

As it’s clear that women turn into lesbians, if they were isolated during their childhood days, Pipee had that effect in her life. She lost her father at a young age, mother took them to Shiksha Kendra, a school different from other schools where her individuality had developed much, and her stay in Delhi increased her independence. When she was young she was attracted to one of the girls at Shiksha Kendra, a kind of lesbian element sprouted in her at an early age. Naturally her mother is also of the same sex and it had created a certain kind of fondness towards the same sex. But Astha was attracted to Bunty and Rohan before her marriage, which were of the opposite sex. She was happy with her husband and also enjoyed his love.

May be the pressure in her life turned her to accept such a kind of relation. Pipee was happy in the relation when compared to Astha as she had no family or pressures. She could not sacrifice her family or children because she could not imagine Hemant as a bad husband. Besides, she was a good mother, who adored her children. Her family was the only world for her until she got involved in the Manch movements and met Pipee. Pipee was happy with Astha and she wanted her to be a full time partner. She dominated Astha in all her family matters trying to turn her full attention towards her. Poor Astha was caught up between her family and Pipee. Pipee invited her for a gay and lesbian film festival and Astha thought to take permission from her husband but Pipee recklessly declines the proposal.

Asta was naturally tied up to her family, but Pipee’s careless attitude helped her to escape from her family and move out with Pipee. When Hemant was surprised to hear that Astha was interested to watch homosexual movies, she urges him to accompany to the show. He admiringly said that they would hire a video to watch movies. Astha was not at all interested at his proposal, as her mind was already occupied with the thoughts of Pipee. Astha could not stay in the movie after the break and she left home which annoyed Pipee. But Astha truly missed her family. Pipee was selfish in their relation and wanted Astha to leave her family, children and parents. Astha, who was caught in the trap of Pipee did not think of her husband and family.
and started to a tour organized by the Manch for a long period. They enjoyed the tour, unable to bear the hotness they left the other members and returned to Delhi.

After returning to Delhi, Astha was not allowed to go to her home as Pipee urged her to stay back with her. Astha felt sick to see her children and Hemant. But she could not say no and could go to her house only after they had a big fight. Astha had become sick after the one month tour and took time for recovery. Meanwhile Pipee had understood that Astha cannot be a life-long partner, as Astha and Hemant had their days back in America when they went for a holiday trip. She could not digest the intimacy between the wife and husband and so she accepted the proposal of Ajay and planned to continue her PhD in the states.

Relations between homosexuals are quite rare in a country like India, where the Patriarchal families are more prevalent. Women entered jobs, became entrepreneurs and good home makers. Unfortunately the pressure on them turned them that they were publicly ostracized. When Astha identifies Hemant’s blot, he could cover it as a simple issue. Astha could not trust Hemant as there was a suspicion in her mind but she had no other alternative other than accepting him as her husband. If her lesbian relation was identified by the society or her family she could have become a black sheep. Fortunately as Pipee was a woman, none had doubts about their relation, they were considered as boon companions.

Women may have such relations when they have pressures, depressions and failures in their life. As far as Astha’s life was considered, she had caring parents, loving husband and good in-laws. She had neither any problems with Hemant nor his sisters, Seema and Sangeetha. He had arranged servants to help his wife, took care of her when she had undergone a surgery that the nurse feels jealous of her. What more can a husband do? He planned for their future, took them to tours in and outside India. Astha could acquire more in her life when compared to her childhood as her parents always counted pennies before they spend the money depending on their economic status. She was allowed to go out to work, when her husband was busy with his work, and was also supported by her in-laws. No incidents were recorded that her in-laws were indifferent to her.

Pipeelika, her name suggests an ant. Her life had many similarities like an ant. Like an ant she had to struggle for her existence. As the ant struggles for its food, Pipeelika struggled for an independent survival by staying alone away from her
parents. Pipee’s case was different, brought up by a single parent; lead an unsecured economical life without much change in her married life. May be she was happy only for a few days when she was in love with Aijaz and married him. But unfortunately she lost him entered a lesbian relationship which she broke up after realizing the status of women in patriarchal families. Pipee and Astha were two different typical characters who came under the same roof and shared their individual characters as lesbians. Pipee was used to sufferings right from her childhood. She was bold enough to withstand any problems associated with her relation to Astha. When she found her expectations cannot be fulfilled with Astha she considerately turned away from the relation involving herself in higher studies.

Asthais could also establish herself as a painter after her association with Manch. At least she could satisfy herself and her family that she was talented in arts by organizing and selling her paintings in the exhibitions with the help of her family members. Astha was very lucky to have a daughter like Anuradha and son like Himanshu, who always adored and cared their mother. Generally wives having competent husbands like Hemant will be considered as dependants. So Astha’s mother left the money in his care as she was confident about him because he could succeed in his business without any business background. Astha feels that she cannot assure her mother as Hemant was assuring her that the money would be doubled within a few years of time.

Asthais was protected by her parents before her marriage and after the marriage; the security of her life was transferred to her husband’s care. He worried about his wife when she started participating in rallies, left to Ayodhya alone and planned for a trip from Kanyakumari to Kashmir. Astha could at last realize the horrible incidents which she experienced at the railway station in Ayodhya at the midnight, when she had waited for a long time and two people lost their life in the trip after they returned home from Bangalore. Astha’s love towards her family relieved her from all the tensions.

Asthais was a good wife, when Hemant had a cardiac problem; she changed all his food habits and ate the same diet which was given to Hemant. She was a voracious reader and had acquired good knowledge on various subjects at which her husband felt proud at his wife’s bookish knowledge. Astha always wanted Hemant to recognize her potentials as he had done at the time of their marriage. But Hemant with
his increased tensions could not make Astha happy and this created some mental
disturbances in their family. But when Hemant had settled in life and was relieved
from the tensions in his business, he could again encourage Astha for organizing
painting exhibitions by recognizing her inner potentials.

Manju Kapur intelligently shows the flaws in her protagonists, the
consequences that pushed them to be trapped and pulls them out safely. She makes
the society realize what happens to an individual if they don’t have their own will
power and balance as life is full of challenges and hurdles. Virmati in Difficult
Daughters or Astha in A Married Woman were victims of patriarchal forms of family.
Unfortunately they fall in false traps and ruin their identity instead of gaining
independence.

The characters in the novel were interwoven sharply connecting to the series of
events in the stories. Each character was delineated in such way that they justified
their role to make the novel a vivacious novel. After Astha’s introduction to Aijaz
Khan, the author meticulously introduces the character of Pipeelika Khan, her mother
and then their marriage, Aijaz’s death, Astha’s involvement in the Manch activities,
hers encounter with Pipeelika, and turning into a lesbian relation and at par she
concentrates on Astha’s family, mother settling in Rishikesh after the death of her
father, Hemant’s business prosperity, problems in his business, his travelling, health
and Anuradha and Himanshu’s involvement in the family segment between parents
and grandparents.

The reason for the feminists to show their protagonists have a lesbian relation is
clear that they want them to be free from the inner turmoil of their life. Women in
general are tied up between the male powers and societal conventions. They start
living for their family rather than for themselves. Ismat Chughtai’s Lihaaf written
before pre-independence to Abha Dawesar’s Babyji in post modern days focus on the
consequences that made a woman to lead a life of her own without catering to the
social norms. Ismat Chughtai’s protagonist, Begum Jan craves for the love of her old
aged husband. When she fails to receive she turns to a lesbian. The same happens to
Anita Nair’s Ladies Coupe characters Marikolanthu and Sujatha. The former was
deceived in the hands of her master’s son and the later was the wife of the accused.
Both unable to bear the atrocities develop a relation in which they find solace.
Kamala Das has such a relation with the girls who were allowed to stay in the boarding houses away from their parents. Suniti Namjoshi’s autobiography also puts forward the confession as she was declared as a black sheep by her aristocratic family. She was away from her parents and had to depend on the love of her grandmother and the servant. She develops a relation with the same sex, her servant and is ostracized by her family. Abha Dawesar’s Babyji also points about a sixteen year old intellectual girl, who feels that the country needs to develop to allow having such relations.

Literature of a country includes historical events and traditional ethos. A country’s culture and heritage are promoted and preserved through the writings. Creative novelists and dramatists have inserted them in their writings to safeguard the identity of major historical events. Among the Indian writers the credit goes to Raja Rao, Salman Rushdie, Girish Karnad and Kiran Desai. In recent years P.V.Jaganmohan, a trilingual (Tamil, Hindi and English) writer added the Indian cultural ethos and communal harmony to his novel The Great Indian Inferno (2009). The novel includes the historical event of Ram Janam Bhoomi issue, which rocked the entire country including the political, social and secular structures. His main intention is to make the readers understand the secular and social environs and bear the responsibility to defend the cultural ethos. The novel zooms on the Ram Janam Bhoomi event of the 20th century, succeeding to the Indo-Pak partition.

The novel is about Jahan Shah, an IPS officer, who wanted to bring about a transformation in the attitude of the public. The writer tries to develop the social awareness about the communal and social harmony of NGO’s and government systems. The story revolves round Jahan Shah, a student of Jawaharlal Nehru University. Emotionally and intellectually he was supported by Parvati, an ardent supporter of his life. After he gets selected for IPS, the Academy provides him three rounds of training at different places. In his second round of training at Hyderabad, he was appointed as the assistant SSP of Moradabad, where he proves himself in averting communal rights during Muslim festival Idd. Finally he was appointed as Sp of Faizabad during 1992, where his career started with a challenging issue of Ayodhya. The situation at Ayodhya was uncontrollable and it was difficult to avoid the communal tension of Babri Masjid demolition incident. Though he used all his power and strength to have things under his control, the influence of the political parties and his personal injuries due to a bomb blast makes him bed ridden. He was rather startled
to find out that the administrators remained as mere spectators. He resigns from his post as all his efforts were devastated.

Jahan Shah and Parvati belong to different communities like Aijaz and Pipee. The writer gives importance to registered marriages and inter-caste marriages to develop communal harmony. The writer clearly discusses a handful issues related to politics, religion, love, marriage, anti-social elements etc. The novel throws light on the issues of Babri Masjid-Ram Mandir entanglement only in few chapters like Manju Kapur’s *A Married Woman*. Aijaz lost his life in the political and historical issue whereas Jahan fought for his country surviving from the bomb blast. Both Parvati and Pipee are educated and modern in their thoughts and also helped their partners to sacrifice their life for the burning issue of the 20th century.

Shashi Tharoor’s *Riot* also portrays a stabled communal situation in India. The novel has a pathetic beginning. It was too horrible to hear an American social worker Priscilla Hart was killed in a communal violence related to Babri Masjid issue. The heart-broken parents come to know about the tragic event through an American journalist. In the process of investigation, he comes across a Hindu fundamentalist who supports the construction of Ram Mandir at Ayodhya, a Muslim scholar who tries to defend the minority psyche of the Muslim and a Sikh cop who struggles to control the insurgence. *Riot* is a real story that had happened in Khargone, Madhya Pradesh. The novel creates a new vision apart from being a reflection of social reality.

Randy Diggs, who was looking for a story meets Ram Charan Gupta, who supports the construction of Rama mandir and a Muslim scholar, Mohammed Sarwar who teaches in the Department of History, at Delhi University who supports Muslims and Babri Masjid. Apart from these two, he also meets Gurinder Singh and Lakshman to have a strong impact on the issue of Babri Masjid for his information. He says at point Hindus want to revenge against history. What is history? Is history not the revenge of its own? Shashi Tharoor is very intelligent on focusing the struggle between the communities than the religion. The scene that makes the readers glued to the story is the relationship between Lakshman and Priscilla. Though Priscilla was an American, she spots the pathetic condition of Indian women in her poem *Christmas in Zalilgarh*

“They go back to their little huts

Roll out the chapattis for dinner
Pour the children drink of sewer water
Serve their men first, eat what is left
If they are lucky, and then submit unprotected
To the heaving thrusts of their protectors” (Tharoor, 2001, 15)

An Embassy Spokesman has suggested that the history has not witnessed an alien’s death, though hundreds or thousands of native people have lost their lives. Ms Hart was unfortunately caught in the clutches of communal violence and sacrificed her life. May be Tharoor aptly commented that we might be proud of the rich integrity, honesty and intelligence of our country. But sometimes we have to feel sorry when such incidents shake the entire humanity.

The three novelists who used the Babri Masjid issue have blended the history with love. P.V.Jaganmohan’s The Great Indian Inferno, Shashi Tharoor’s Riot and Manju Kapur’s A Married Woman show the traumas of people amidst the chaos of the political powers. Aijaz Akhtar Khan in A Married Woman and Priscilla in Riot had lost their lives in the prevailing communal disharmony. The three novelists had their focus on the predicaments of the public in such issues but they added a physical love between the characters to make their novels more creative.

Manju Kapur had used the issue of Babri Masjid, a historical event connected to a family, there by producing an everlasting effect on the protagonist. A religious element of Swamiji’s teachings were involved which bring out the essentials of life to be learned by everyone. As in her first novel Difficult Daughters the sensitive elements involved in family matters were focused much. Manju Kapur takes the readers to different places like Disney World, Rishikesh, Ayodhya and some southern states too. The elements of food, various shopping items and other miscellaneous activities were dealt with. All these elements and the writer’s innovative techniques make the novel more attractive.

Manju Kapur shows two main feminist issues in this novel. The first one is Radical feminism and the second one is Marxist feminism. Radical feminism highlights the patriarchal origins of disparity between men and women, especially the domination of men on their opposite sex. It views patriarchy as dividing rights, liberty and supremacy by gender. It combats against the present political and social organization as they are the true blue supporters of patriarchy. It questions the patriarchal dominance. Gerda Lerner summarized radical feminism as a reform and a
legal change. The condition of women would not basically change patriarchy. So the reforms related to these should be integrated in the vast Cultural Revolution to transform patriarchy.

Radical feminism is a new approach which wants to create new methods to understand the various forms of social or biological oppression. Radical feminists strongly believe that women’s oppression is a biological phenomenon. It starts due to weakness caused by childbearing and depending on men for their survival. They feel that there is a need for biological revolution to make women independent. As Firestone expressed that the reason behind woman’s subordination is their role in bearing the child. Children are psychologically affected and this in turn makes them to behave in the same manner when they grow up.

Marxist feminism is sprung from the doctrines of Karl Marx’s well known theory, which is more concentrated on social aspects than the material aspects of life. Since women are considered as machines to produce the offspring’s, they have to depend on the opposite sex for their domestic as well as physical pleasures. If this institution is curbed, it can be wiped out. According to Marxists, the main reason for oppression is from their traditional position in the society. They show the way in which women need to move. As Engles wrote women’s oppression is the problem of the day but has its roots since the inception of the social fabric.

Marxism mainly deals with capitalist system and Marxist feminists argue on the moral rights with reference to the exploitation of wages and labour, which can be an expression of class distinctions. Kapur effectively matches the two types of feminism in motivating action of her female characters relating to Astha. Practically radical feminists are more reactionary than the liberal feminists. Liberal feminists want to relate the principles of liberty, parity and integrity to women. On the other hand, radical feminist are consciousness in bringing about the change in the women’s emancipation without any compromise.

Asthā’s mother, Sita’s conventional ideas are voiced by her daughter. The theory of radical feminism is seen, when Sita strongly feels according to sastras one is send to perform their duties on earth. If she fails to get her daughter married, she will certainly be damned for her deeds. Astha protests against the age old orthodox traditions of her mother by saying it is not necessary to think of such beliefs as she was made of sterner stuff and can assess things on her own. Not only that, Astha
strongly reacts to her mother’s gender discrimination. Sita feels a mother shouldn’t stay in her daughter’s house; a daughter cannot take care of her property on which Astha opposes her mother but of no use.

Marxist feminism is clearly marked when Astha finds fault in the upbringing of Hemant by his parents as he never regards women to be consulted on any issues related to the family. She also finds irritable when he says his mother is very fond of a grandson, when she was carrying for the second time, the whole family have gone crazy for a male child. When Astha was carrying Anuradha his opinion was different. He says it doesn’t matter whether it is a boy or a girl. One can easily guess the admiration in the eyes of the mother and the daughter.

The story of the novel takes a deep and satisfying look at the emotions often felt by women in the traditional families. Women expect a few words of appreciation from their partners. If they fail to get the love they crave for, they easily get attracted to others irrespective of the gender. Hemant, who was busy couldn’t know the inner turmoil of his wife. When Aijaz appreciated her script on Babri Masjid, she feels emotionally, maybe he was interested in her. Accidentally or intentionally he puts his hand on her knee and she wonders why she could not resist. Was she not a married woman? On the other hand for Hemant, her work was a picayune. So he says, “Please, keep to what you know best, the home, children, teaching. All doesn’t suit you” (116).

It was quite normal for a woman to feel excited when her hard work is recognized. For Astha, she was on cloud nine when Aijaz appreciated her work. May be she felt Aijaz was attracted towards her intellectual and physical charm. Though she never met him after the school play, she didn’t forget him and gets deeply disturbed after his death. May be she was more involved in the activities after his death as she had a sensitive approach towards his commitment for the country. Though Hemant failed to understand her feelings, she wanted to support his aim and fight for his death.

Asth’a’s relation with Pip is full of dreams. But as the dreams which come at night cannot be seen in the morning, the dreams and desires of both the women could not continue for a longer time. Astha was quite intelligent to realize the demanding nature of Pipee. She starts to hate her and moves far from her. She finally makes a decision to stay within the strong and safe bonds of her family. She cleverly devotes her time to work to forget the past, “Work was the only place she could forget
everything, where she could become her mind, her hand, and the vision inside her head” (301). At the dawn of Astha’s realization, Pipee also takes her flight to Illinois. Manju Kapur can be claimed as the first Indian feminist to introduce the lesbian love as a valid question to be focused by the advocate of women rights.

Asth and Pip’s episode takes a long way to tell that the relationship between two women is not as bad as the relation between a man and a married woman. There are some traditional laws fixed in the society by the patriarchs. A relation between two women cannot be accepted by many people. Manju Kapur never tries to reveal the fact of lesbian relation to Astha’s family members. Astha feels relieved that even her husband couldn’t smell the rat. She is on the safe side as there are none to question her about her intimate relation with Pip. Otherwise it cannot be imagined by the readers how Hemant and his parents would have reacted if it was out.

It is a well known fact that woman has always been defined with regard to man and are never treated as autonomous beings. Men need to be prepared to shed control of things to settle for equal position with women. John Stuart Mill in his *The Subjection of Women* says, “that the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes… the legal subordination of one sex to the other is wrong itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other” (Mill, 1870, 3).

That may be the reason why women suffer, when they violate the rules of the society. Astha suspects Hemant but never dares to question the matter. She very well knows that even if she tries to question him it’s of no use. Both his parents and her mother would either support him or say her to adjust as he is a man. Even Astha cleverly doesn’t poke her finger into the matter as she knew Hemant was a good husband. Besides, she was a good mother and daughter-in-law. So, she doesn’t want to disturb the peace and harmony in her family.

There are many instances where she tried to compromise and adjust with her husband and family. Her effort to adjust and compromise gave her regular headaches. She was an ideal housewife, who obeyed her husband rather than fighting against him. She silently swallowed her inner burnings in the Goa trip. The tickets for the Goa trip were arranged by her paintings money. She wanted to buy a carved silver box, but Hemant denies her proposal. He says, “You must be out of mind” (165). She
couldn’t understand Hemant’s economic calculations behind it. She could understand the male dominance that it was Hemant who should decide of how the money should be spent.

Asthā fails to understand why her mother has chosen Hemant instead of her to give the money she got from the sale of their plot. When she feels unhappy and questions her mother, she pacifies her daughter by saying, “It was the same with your father, I only did the household account” (97). She was hurt, when she heard that her father’s books were donated to the Library. Neither Hemant nor her mother told her as they felt material possession is a burden. In spite of the emotional disturbances she had in her conjugal life, she didn’t protest and respected the demands of the traditional family systems. Though she was not recognised her presence cannot be denied.

Asthā’s desire to safeguard her father’s books as a memory remained unfulfilled. After marriage her husband’s house becomes her house. When Hemant says there is no separate room for the books, and her mother supports saying that the house belongs to him. She fails to understand then where her house was. Is it that the woman should adjust for everything? Woman’s position is really pitiable. The woman, who serves her family and lives for them doesn’t have space for her own desires. Then where can she get the space? Before marriage, she had to act according to her father’s wish and later the ball was thrown to husband’s court.

Asthā was flinged between two longings, the one her attachment to her family and the other her ‘self’. This eventually disturbs her inner psyche, “Asthā’s mind boggled. What about their school, their routine, their friends in the colony, their grandparents, their father, who whatever his faults, did love his kids?” (242). She was too traditional in her thoughts about her family and children. She has set a standard dynamics for raising the children. She didn’t include that companionship and understanding was regrettable in that dynamics. She presented herself as “a bird pecking at a few leftover crumbs from the feast of life” (242). So she feels a woman should not look for happiness outside the four walls of her home and heart. She could understand that such relationships once established become more and more stipulating. When the family goes for a three week holiday trip to the U.S.A, she realizes that the relation between them was still undisturbed. She naturally surrenders to her family leaving Pipee to decide upon her future.
Asthha is so sensitive that she couldn’t send away Pipee from her life so ruthlessly. She confesses to Pipee without hurting her feelings. Though Pipee feels it difficult to lose such a relation as she has none to share her feelings like Astha, she could understand that leaving a traditional marriage, that for woman like Astha, it wouldn’t be easy. In any family, women are the main sources. A family’s happiness depends on the woman. She cares about each and everyone in the family.

Though the husband is the bread earner of the family, to run it economically and contentedly depends on the wife. One cannot imagine a family without a mother. How old is the mother, the children still need her for protecting and guiding them. The secret of a family’s happiness is the woman. So, whether the relation is between a man and a woman or woman and woman the worst sufferers are the children, because they depend on their mother than their father. Himanshu and Anuradha suffered a lot due to the absence of their mother. Though their father was much concerned about them, he depended on Astha to look after their studies.

As Astha was busy with Pipee, she neglected their studies and Anuradha failed in Maths. She demanded her mother to arrange tuition for her, but Astha couldn’t do it. Anuradha started crying that her mother wanted her to do herself, which was impossible for her. Though she called her Papa, he said mama would take care of it. Poor Anuradha not knowing what to do became helpless. Astha could see the trauma of her children after she had a break up with Pipee. “Her socks lay untidily on the carpet, she was wiggling her toes in front of the heater, the light catching the lurid colours of her nail polish” and “Himanshu laboured over his homework, his note-book getting more and more smudged as he continually rubbed out what he had written, shredding bits of the page” (245). At last there troubles were over, as their mother returned to them. She quickly arranged a tuition master for her daughter, enquiring her daughter’s friends.

The novelist skilfully brought the novel to an end by bringing a married woman back to her home. The inter-twining incursions are the supposed directions that an uneasy mind can take. Women are respectful of their marriage and even though there are some other alternatives they don’t accept them and stick to their family. Kapur seems to bear out to the third wave feminist postmodernist concept of difference. Kapur has subtly narrated the life of a married woman, who is both precise and broad as far as the culture specifies. A married woman can take independence
with herself but not with her family. The last sentence of the novel, “She felt stretched thin, thin across the globe” (307) symbolizes the circular and meandering route of independence within the prescribed limits of independence.

Sex between two women could be better because of the more equal relationship possible. Hite survey said that ‘Sex with a man is often the beginning of a political education, sex with a woman means independence from man’. As said by Psychiatrists only a woman can understand another woman. May be that was the reason why she shares everything to Pip and finds solace in her company. She feels more comfortable in Pip’s presence than her mother. Her mother’s intentions are too difficult for her to swallow. When the family feels Hemant needs rest from his tensions and plans for the US trip, her mother expresses her happiness and writes to her daughter, Hemant needs a break from all his troubles. As a wife it is her duty to see that he is relieved from all work tensions. But her mother feels she is neglecting her duties and concentrating more on unnecessary things. So she says her for a woman taking care of husband and children are primarily essential and everything is secondary. A man has to bear the internal as well as the external pressures. So it is the wife’s duty to make him feel free from all the pressures. For a man, a lot is to be explored as a lot is always left.

Kapur’s realistic depiction of Astha’s emotions and predicaments are really appreciable. When a women reader goes through the book, she finds a number of incidents related to her. Like all husbands do not allow their wives to interfere in the financial or family matters, he didn’t give much importance to her personal and professional achievements. Even mother’s like Sita, who do not trust their daughter’s and give more importance to their son in-laws’s as they feel their daughter’s are not capable of holding the responsibilities. When Astha asks for a separate room for her paintings, her mother supports Hemant’s decision supporting him that it is his sister’s property. In spite of all the hurdles in life every woman should carry on the charade of a happy married life just for the sake of her children, family and society.

The relation between Astha and Pipee are artistically described by the author. She gave a vivid picture of why a woman needs another woman for her solace. Manju Kapur beautifully shows the relation between a wife and a husband. Astha early married days are really amazing. The love between the wife and husband makes the novel really amusing. Even when she was pregnant, Hemant feels, “My wife is
becoming a woman before my very eyes” (57). He appreciated his wife’s knowledge when she says about colostrums. He helped his wife to look after their baby. “Hemant poured a little into his palm and began carefully rubbing it on his daughter, her bath part of his Sunday morning ritual” (60).

Kapur also shows a good relation in Hemant’s family. How the family planned for a house, took care of their daughter-in-law and grand children. They enjoyed a successful and happy life with the son’s family. They were ardent supporters to their son’s family. They never interfered in Astha’s personal life. They have celebrated the birth of Himanshu more than that of Anuradha, as they felt he was the carrier of the line. Though the family had a little gender discrimination in their mind, they had treated their daughters, daughter-in-law, Anuradha and Himanshu at par.

The author highlights all the aspects, but she does not show a strong relation between Astha and her mother. Maybe Sita’s too much of care and cultural input into the daughter’s mind made them to maintain a weak relation. Her interference in Astha’s life after her marriage was limited. Though Astha was the only daughter to her, she does not rely on Astha and had moved far from her daughter’s family. She helps her in times of need, when she becomes sick. On the other hand, Hemant’s bondage with his parents was strong that one can easily make out that his strength was his parents. Whatever were the emotional struggles in her traditional and social commitments, Astha at last had a happy family.

Kapur’s two novels *Difficult Daughters* and *A Married Woman* show the way on how modern woman want to be. They are stuck with social taboos and want to free themselves. But it becomes very difficult for them as they have many social commitments, which they have to fulfil. A body is not the physical appearance we see but it has many emotions which cannot be seen. Whether we may like or unlike a person, feeling or a thing it is the emotional level that gets disturbed rather than our body. So it is very important to have control on the emotional levels which is the deciding factor of all the other things. Kapur clearly shows the impact of the sentimental disturbances of her protagonists on themselves and how they strive to have control over their passion levels to adjust with their life compromising, but finally lead life in high spirits which will be discussed in the following chapter at length.