Chapter – V

Sexual Dysfunction and Marital Incompatibility in
The Immigrant
Manju Kapur’s fourth novel *The Immigrant* was published in the year 2008. *The Immigrant* focuses on the complex nature of man-woman relationship and consequent social disturbances. The prime theme of the novel is a woman’s journey from India to Canada. Manju Kapur is a renowned writer who contributed significantly in the field of Indian writing in English. She always depicts the modern woman as the center of action in her novels. Manju Kapur presents before us a galaxy of women characters. In *Custody*, Shagun and Ishita are the major characters whereas Virmati remains the central figure in *Difficult Daughters*. Astha, the major female character around whom the story is interwoven in *A Married Woman* and the same is about Nisha in *Home* and Nina in *The Immigrant*. Thus, feminist approach and feminine sensibility remains always at the core of her novels. Feminism acquires a prominent place in all her novels.

Feminism is a movement which advocates woman’s rights and support in male dominated society. It also advocates woman’s representation in social, political and economical sectors. Manju Kapur marvelously weaves feminist approach in the characters and theme of her novels and in this way, presents feminist views through her writings. She makes her women characters reveal themselves from the struggle to achieve their identity. *The Immigrant* is not only a story of a man and woman but also a saga of alienation, adjustment and adaptation. The protagonist of the novel has to adjust and adapt a new life style in new setting and so the novel becomes a veritable saga of woman’s epic struggle to establish her identity and recognition. D. Anushiya Devi comments that Manju Kapur represents the case of an NRI marriage where man and woman both approach towards a foreign country for good fortune. As the culture, tradition and people are different, their hope of real peace finally proves futile. The main characters of *The Immigrant* are found alienated and isolated. Anushiya Devi adds that a woman’s struggle for her existence continues in an alien country too.

In this way, the present novel shows us how a woman adapts and adjusts herself in a new world. She finally settles from traditional culture to an alien culture by using her inherent mental strength and stoicism. Manju Kapur always presents woman as a fighter, crusader and self-reliant. Her woman characters are not mere hopeless, dependent and submissive creatures. The major characters, in her novel, are self-governed fighters who fight to regain their identity, individuality and
independence. Thus, bold and brave characters are the hallmark of Kapur’s writings. Her women characters reveal themselves, discarding the garb of culture, caste, society and patriarchal norms. Mrs. T. Sri Devi rightly observes in this connection:

All of her heroines are middle-class educated urban Indian women struggling to establish themselves with their own independent identities in the patriarchal setup of which they are part and parcel. Marriage is one of the tools for a creative writer to depict the cultural ethos representing Indianness. Marriage and motherhood have long defined Indian women’s roles and identities. Men as husbands and fathers have a protean identity and define themselves according to their own convenience. Yet few female like Nina in The Immigrant try their best to maintain the harmony at home but when they feel total injustice and suffocated, they don’t hesitate to walk out of their men. Hence, it is decided to explore how Nina struggles a lot for her self-establishment in a host country, in her personal life and becomes the epitome of emancipation. (896)

Manju Kapur portrays woman character in *The Immigrant* who travels in the realms of reality and successfully establishes herself in an alien land. The novel also proves Manju Kapur’s insight and deep penetration into the human psyche and character. These qualities make Manju Kapur a brilliant and prolific writer of human behavior and manner. Depicting Indian and Eastern value systems, the novel presents before us multiple twists and turns in its pages.

Manju Kapur reveals the mental and physical trauma that an immigrant has to face and suffer. In the novel, we have a minute observation and detailed description of the immigrants’ life and their struggle in an adapted land. Their yearning and longing for motherland is also a prominent theme of the novel. Thus, the novel becomes a diasporic account of a woman’s struggle for survival, identity, existence and independence. Diaspora is a new subject and created lots of discussions among the modern writers. Many great modern writers of India and other countries have attempted diasporic dilemma and life as the subject in their novels. The racial discrimination and diasporic consciousness are well exposed by P. Elizabeth
Kalapana as she comments on Nina’s experience at the immigration counter. She writes:

Bride who gets married to an NRI flies to foreign land with great hope and when the flight takes off many things in her life too takes a different turn which she never expects. Nina too is not an exception of this diasporic case.

It is really not a myth that every easterner is ill-treated in western side. Centuries before Abraham Lincoln fought against the slavery and abolished it. He does not want the southern people to be in slavery and so he fought the civil war and won it. Of course, southern is not in slavery but Indians, the eastern soul is humiliated in western land. The reason for this discrimination may be race, colour, or nationality, but this inequity and injustice continues for generations. In this novel, Nina, the protagonist faces such a situation when she reaches Toronto. An enquiry takes place at the immigration clearance counter, where a number of questions raised on her about her belongings and she was treated in a suspicious manner. She becomes restless and faces great embarrassment feels lonely for the first time having her silent husband by her side. After sometime she asks Ananda, why they don’t treat a European or American like that and why that happens to her alone. Often the diasporic people undergo this repression and bigotry when they start their life in the foreign land. Incidents like this, drives the immigrant to lose their identity just to survive in the new country. (20)

Like all her novels, Manju Kapur deals with the social and parochial issues related to the Indian middle class woman in *The Immigrant*. She projects women characters as a crusader against the conservative and orthodox mind set of Indian society. She also depicts woman as a victimized individual. Her novel, adds a new vision and direction to Indian English fiction with realistic feminine approach and exquisite depiction of human relationship. The subtitle of the novel, ‘A Truly Compelling Portrait of a Marriage’ reflects the depth and width of the theme which the writer explores throughout the pages of the novel. Thus, the novel becomes a diasporic text in which the experience of expatriation and dislocation are depicted
realistically. The gradual disconnection of roots and transplantation in an adopted land becomes the major theme in *The Immigrant*.

*The Immigrant* realistically narrates a woman’s subjugation and frustration in her adopted land. It is a tale of a woman’s displacement, alienation and subsequent revolt. The protagonist of the novel, Nina is quite different form Manju Kapur’s other women protagonists in the sense that she satirizes the Indian social terrain and subjugation. Nina also tries to express and encounter her real identity in the middle of the clash of East-West cultures. In the inception of the novel we have a description of Ananda and his family. The writer depicts how Ananda and his uncle immigrated and their life in Canada. Ananda came to Canada as a dentist and belongs to the second generation of Indian diaspora who migrated abroad as professionals. He has adopted the Canadian way of life and manners. His name was abbreviated as Andy. He lives separately from his uncle in Galler house. He learns western etiquettes and mannerism. Before his marriage with Nina he has developed closeness with Sue, who becomes his sexual mate. The novelist exquisitely depicts the unsuccessful sexual intercourse of Ananda and Sue and also points out Ananda’s physical deformity of premature ejaculation:

She took the initiative, kissing him, unbuttoning his shirt, zipping open his pants, while his hands and tongue followed where they were led. He climaxed before he reached the desire goal, then threw himself face down between her legs so that hopefully she would not hold it against him. (*The Immigrant* 38)

In Canada, Indians enjoys their festivals through the arrangements of India Club. India Club is a kind of social set-up designed to celebrate Indian customs and traditions in Canada. Here, they celebrate Indian festivals like Holi, Diwali, etc. but the writer depicts this kind of celebration as hybrid celebrations because they don’t have any close emotional attachment with these festivities. They have to celebrate it because they want to make their roots alive and fresh. This kind of hybrid celebrations reminds them their Indian past and roots. They no longer visit India but can recreate the Indian experience in Canada through these celebration and festivities.
The novel is a story of a thirty year old woman named Nina. She is an English lecturer in Miranda College, New Delhi. She lives with her widowed mother and tries to make both ends meet for herself. Kapur beautifully presents the middle class life and problems of social survival. She lives in a very small, one room apartment at Jungpura Extension, Delhi. In the inception of the novel, Kapur minutely depicts the physique and social condition of Nina after her failed attempt in love and resultant loneliness.

Her mother considers Nina as a burden and she thinks it her responsibility to get her married. Indirectly, her mother is exercising mental pressure on Nina to get married. To satisfy her mother’s wish and constant urge, she also goes to consult with an astrologer to find out when she will marry. After sometime, she receives a proposal from a boy named Ananda, who is an NRI dentist settled in Canada. Ananda is described as orphaned, handsome, emotional and intelligent young man who earns sufficiently through his practice. Ananda was also eager to make relationship with his Indian roots and so he needed someone who can connect him with India. He wanted a traditional Indian girl who can make their traditions alive in Canada. Nina’s mother was extremely happy and eager to materialize this proposal. They perform marriage ceremony at Arya Samaj Mandir and decide to arrange a reception at the Rose Garden of the Gymkhana.

After her engagement and marriage with Ananda, Nina thought that now she would have a complete family, a good husband who would provide her children. She believed that a competent husband would satisfy her sexually and they would have kids. But her dreams shattered on the very first night with Ananda in the luxurious room. In their honeymoon night, Nina witnesses Ananda’s physical problem of early ejaculation in sex. Her dreams and hopes of marital enjoyment and physical contentment becomes a myth.

Nina settles down in Canada with Ananda and starts a new life. Her new life comes with many problems and issues of alienation and adaptation. After arriving to Canada, she adapts western life-style and manners. Earlier Ananda has transformed himself in western culture, now it was Nina’s turn to transform. Both transform themselves from the strict vegetarianism to an omnivorous diet. To adjust and assimilate herself in new culture, Nina changes her food, dress and habits accordingly.
She gradually starts wearing western outfit instead of salwar kameez. Ananda has presented before herself a rosy picture of western life-style and Nina also changes herself as per his wish. “Then Ananda promised her such a future, laced with choices, edged with beautiful snowflakes that glittered through the distance, promising at the very minimum change, novelty, excitement.” (78) Nina wants to assimilate herself in new culture. She invents new ways to remove her solitude and boredom. She engages herself in shopping, books and sexual pleasure. She makes herself free from Indian ethos and beliefs. There was a time when she suffered a lot of ups and downs in her life. She thought that Ananda is the only remedy and her savior in the world. But now when he has deserted and deprived her, she succeeds in conceiving her own way of life.

Manju Kapur sets his novel in 70’s when the second phase of Indian migration to developed countries took place. Nina and Ananda also belong to the same category. Nina lost her father and financial responsibility comes on her delicate shoulders. Marrying with an NRI groom brings economic stability. This was the prevalent trend in early years of Indian migration. Her mother also firmly believes that a woman must be settled down in her family.

At this stage, we can talk about the title of the novel which exquisitely reflects the writer’s thoughts and sensibility. The title of the novel clearly highlights the theme and basic questions raised by the writer. To be an immigrant, a person has to surrender one’s identity and individuality and then has to relocate oneself in an adopted land. In the novel, Nina is confronting the same situation and has to make certain compromises. She has to discard her job and family. She get husband but she has to compromise certain individual traits of her character. In Halifax, Canada she began to feel lonely and aloof. She is not a passive sufferer and so she goes out of the doors to regain her identity. She wants to mingle with the culture and tries to establish her new image in the new land. She develops her own ways of living. This way, Nina’s character becomes a symbol of struggle for freedom and recognition. Modern women, like Nina and others, are no longer passive and submissive but expressive and active participants. Like every immigrant, Nina feels alienated in Canada and always longs for her motherland. Manju Kapur describes her plight in these words, “I miss
home, I miss a job, I miss doing things. I feel like a shadow. What am I but your wife?’ (The Immigrant 233)

Nina’s feeling of loss takes her to a group of women who work on feminist principles. Her distress resulting from her being without a job in a foreign country and her failure in conceiving makes her wail before Beth. Everything seems very strange to her in Canada. Once she says in a rush that she used to be a teacher and she knows that she has taught for ten years before she comes to Canada and now she does nothing and only being the housewife of a dentist in a foreign country. The major difficulty that she faces is her inability to conceive. She believes that she is locked into stereotypical expectations.

Alienation and displacement become a normal phenomenon in the life of an immigrant. It also happens in the life of Nina. Nina was unsatisfied with her husband due to his physical deformity. At this time, she began to think about her past life in India. So, it becomes unbearable for Nina to adjust herself in Canada without her husband’s support and love. Marriage and motherhood, the age-old concepts and principles of Indian civilization make a vital impact on their relationship. Ashok Kumar writes in this context in “Social Web and Cry of Self”:

The astringent and conical social web constrained women to obliterate her ‘self’, her eccentricity and separate identity. In modern era the self finds it intricate to come to stipulations with the social web because the central values nurtured by the self and the outer social demands are incompatible. This helplessness to formulate the self, familiar with the social web results in the alienation of self. (163)

Nina joined the Sharma family who settled few years back in Canada. Ananda was among the first generation of Indian immigrants in Canada. Ananda was among the second generation professional immigrants who settled in Canada just before seven years. Manju Kapur clearly draws the push and pull factors responsible for an immigrant who leaves his/her country of origin in these words:

Certain Indians become immigrants slowly. They are not among those who have fled persecution, destitution, famine, slavery and death
threats, nor among those for whom the doors of their country slam shut the minute they leave its borders. *(The Immigrant 120)*

Integration, adaptation and assimilation requires for an immigrant for his survival and existence in an adopted land. The writer wants to say that work helps a person to assimilate in new adopted culture and environment. Working and doing a job prevents an immigrant from boredom, exile and alienation. Nina arrived in Canada as a wife not as a professional like Ananda. She doesn’t have any job, service to perform or children. She remains alone and alienated for hours till Ananda arrives from his clinic. Nina fights immensely against oppressive tendencies and norms which were the main causes of her rootlessness and alienation. Her Indian beliefs and customs of motherhood, marriage and life are challenged on western soil. Her Indian ethos slowly crumbles down. She faces almost opposite realities in Canada. Her home and surroundings fail to engage her interest and attention. The writer has captured the sense of loss and loneliness accurately in the following words:

Nina cries, feels homesick, sometimes adventurous, and often forlorn. The minute she gets up she is at a loose end. Languidly she approaches her housework; dishwashing, bed making, cleaning, stretching every task out, slow, and slow. ... *(The Immigrant 122)*

In this period of loneliness and alienation, Nina writes some letters to her mother in India and Zenobia. In reply, her mother advises her to remain calm and contended. On the other side, Ananda believed that he is living a very happy and contended life and everything is going smoothly. He purchases books for Nina to read and his love for Nina increases with the passage of time. They also enjoy sexual pleasure in the form of sex frequently which provides Ananda a sense of love and security in marriage. Though he was suffering from premature ejaculation, he was eager to satisfy Nina physically. But in Ananda’s absence Nina always thought over her future and career. She was just a wife and except that fact her life was empty and barren. One day, an idea to do some job came to her mind. She puts this proposal before Ananda but he rejects it. Instead of giving permission, he promises to have a child and start a family. Nina’s idea of working or doing a job was unacceptable for him. Nina also believes that she has sacrificed her freedom and independence at the
cost of becoming a wife. Individual commitment and personal transparency is the base of marriage in society.

But Ananda’s case was different in the sense that his marriage with Nina was based on secrecy. Ananda was secretly using an anesthetic spray which helps him to keep his penis erected during the intercourse. Their sexual union was solely dependent on the spray which prevents Ananda from premature ejaculation. Without it, he was unable to have a sex. Nina, on the other side, was not aware about Ananda’s sexual inability and she was eagerly expected to be a mother. Manju Kapur’s depiction of sex is neither erotic nor vulgar. She presents before us sex as a predominant factor for strengthening a relationship. Her narration is simple, lucid and descriptive. She also brilliantly uses sex as an important source of the consummation of marriage. She also depicts sex in modern and traditional context.

Nina wants to be a mother that can remove her boredom and loneliness of her grim life. She seems so much eager to be a mother that she consults doctors for this cause and demands that Ananda should also come with her for medical checkup. Even though she is childless, both, Nina and Ananda, pass the medical tests successfully. After each and every intercourse she thinks that she will now be pregnant. Her whole life is centered on Ananda and her wish for a child. Childlessness aggravates her anxiety, loneliness and trauma. Nina feels disgust and hates her own body. She even dislikes her female physical routine like the period, the blood, dry breasts etc. Kapur depicts the barrenness in the following manner: “There was a storm inside her, created by raising the possibility of infertility in front of a group of women and finding her fears were real. Helplessness and lack of confidence in her femininity. That was a sterile woman’s profile.” (The Immigrant 165) Through depiction of Ananda’s character, Kapur highlights the masculine dominance and attitude of Indian society. Ananda wants to enjoy only sexual pleasure with her wife but fails to execute his duty as a husband by taking responsibilities. He enjoys sex, hides his disease and keeps Nina childless. He always thrust his opinion on Nina. For him, personal enjoyment and sexual pleasure were more important than having a baby. After seeing her dreams shattered, Nina decides to work in a library. Bharati Khainar states in this context:

Manju Kapur presents an absorbing study of several psychological factors which contribute to a barren marital relationship between Nina
and Ananda. Intimacy, passion and commitment, which form the bedrock of a successful marital relationship, are conspicuous by their absence in the couple’s relationship as a result of which their marriage runs into troubled waters. (2014)

Nina eagerly wants gratification of her physical needs from her husband. Ananda loves and cares her but fails to produce a child. All her expectations and wishes prove futile and meaningless. Now she spends more time with herself, gazing and admiring her curves in a bathroom mirror. Wearing a lingerie or nightie, she observes her untouched body parts in reflection in the mirror: “In the soft glow of the pink tiled bathroom, she looked dazzling. Her bare skin, the curves of her body, her black hair falling over her shoulders, all were delectable.” (The Immigrant 178) Looking at non-caressed body, she repents for having a husband who is not attached to her physically and mentally.

Slowly and gradually, she realizes the fatal truth of her marriage. She also knows the fact that the disease of her husband’s sexual inability is incurable and is the main cause which prevents her motherhood. Nina’s loneliness reaches to its nadir when Nina sleeps every day without having sexual union with her husband who is ignoring her to conceal his inability: “After dinner when she tried to get cosy with Ananda he would often say, ‘later, I am tired’. And Nina would feel humiliated at what seemed a reversal of gender roles; she the monstrous cornucopia of appetite.” (The Immigrant 179) Nina remains unsatisfied in her sexual life. At every place, in the library, market she searches for sexual contentment. She firmly believes that companionship is the essence of the relationship and in sex it becomes lot more necessary to have it.

Ananda’s sexual complications become the root cause of the ruin the conjugal life of Nina and Ananda. Their sexual dissatisfaction becomes a major hindrance and obstacle which creates a distance between them. Nina understands the problem and tries to pacify herself. She also believes that a husband and wife should have mutual exchange of feelings and sentiments which help them to build their relationship. Sex also is one of the modes of communication where a husband and a wife get proximity to each other. Here, Nina and Ananda fail to achieve such emotional proximity. The writer says: “the cement of children was lacking in this marriage”. (The Immigrant
To fill this void of her life, she joins a self-help group of women and Ananda also chooses sex therapy to cure his problem. In this self-help group, Nina reveals poignantly her pathos and alienation in Canada. In India she has her identity, recognition and value but here she was just a wife, nothing else. She believes that she is a woman who is trapped in her own desires, longings and passions.

On the other side, Ananda cannot control his sexual urge. He develops extra-marital relations with his receptionist Mandy and satisfies his sexual lust. The writer has depicted the amorous scene between Ananda and Mandy with exquisite details:

Ananda found everything about Mandy exciting. He loved her hair, a fine pale gold, darkening slightly towards the roots. Even after he realized that some of its more dazzling effects came from a bottle, he continued to be dazzled. And her skin - unless you made love to a white woman, you did not realize what fair really meant. He was mesmerized by its slightly mottled hue, its blue veins, the pinkness of her nipples, her delicate eye lids, the thinness of her skin.

(The Immigrant 236)

Ananda is attracted towards Mandy, who is white and ten years younger than him. He also compares his sexual experience with both Mandy and Nina in these words, ‘Mandy encouraged him to be wild, free, uninhibited, playful. With Nina he was his mother’s son, his sister’s brother, the good husband’. (The Immigrant 239)

At the same time, Nina joins a library school to get a degree in library science. There she develops relations with a man named Anton. To relive herself from anxiety, Nina quickly jumps into the arms of Anton. Anton also is attracted towards her and believes Nina as an intelligent and gentle woman. A closeness develops between them at a time when Nina was sexually deprived by her husband. In Anton, she sees a potent source of sexual satisfaction. Nina recalls her sexual experience in these words; ‘Anton and she were not into having a relationship; it was purely a meeting of bodies, a healthy give and take.’ (The Immigrant 269) She wants to start a new journey in life and so wants to make herself free from the bonds of incomplete dreams. She wants to put her shattered and broken hopes aside and move forward. She develops temporary sexual relations with Anton and wants to forget her past. She
wants to forget her position as a wife and hoe she was kept deprived and deserted by her husband.

The introspection that goes on in Nina’s mind is beautifully presented by Manju Kapur. She writes:

The words one more time are a fatal drug and, despite the long ago experience with Rahul, Nina was not wary of them. ...All around her she heard of open marriages, of no bonds but the voluntary, of no living according to the rules of others. Her life was her own; she didn’t owe anybody any explanations. If Anton gave her pleasure, if his easy acceptance of her gilded her studies, didn’t she owe it herself to sleep with him? Besides they had all of Library Science it discuss, their colleagues, their assignments, their deadlines, shared concerns, which increased the satisfaction they lay in shared bodies.

(The Immigrant 270)

Both Nina and Ananda develops secret affairs to satisfy their bodily urge which generates more distance between them and both of them forgets their own conviction, responsibilities and commitments to each other. Ashok Kumar rightly observes in “Manju Kapur’s The Immigrant: Dilemma of the Second Sex”:

Compatibility between husband and wife is indispensable. But in the present novel sex overtakes other factors needed for compatibility between husband and wife. Nina and Ananda both want to join the bandwagon of liberal sex. Nina gets a white male partner Anton and Ananda gets a white female body of Mandy. Both deceive each other.

(65)

Sex and sexual contentment proves a central feature of Nina and Ananda’s relationship. They cannot ignore the sexual discontent among each other. Ananda has Sue and Mandy while Nina has Anton to gratify her sexual appetite. Here, Manju Kapur reveals the picture of modern woman who is bold enough to accept a man apart from her husband. Woman remains at the center of Indian society but as a marginalized and inferior race. Men always consider women as weak, inferior and their property. Woman becomes a tool in man’s hand and remains as an object of sex
and pleasure. Man wants to rule over them but is not ready to involve them. Lack of participatory involvement makes women their slave.

Next year, Ananda offers her air ticket to visit India for two months. When Nina asks him to accompany her, he rejects the matter saying that he doesn’t afford two tickets. Nina comes to India and first meets her friend, Alka. Here she pretends as a happy and contended wife. The writer comments here that it is important to behave like that as marriage is a social institution that Nina reminds herself about. A certain amount of pretense is necessary for its successful functioning. In one of the dialogues with Nina, her mother reminds her of the children and family. Her mother’s advice renews her craving and longing to be a mother. After two months, she comes back to Canada and again she reveals her desire to be a mother to her husband. But Ananda rejects it saying that it is not the proper time to have a child. Nina once again fails and feels rejection and humiliation. Kapur draws the psychological anguish and trauma of the protagonist in the following passage:

The following months she hurt more than she had bargained for. She sat alone in the deep purple arm chairs ranged against the big glass windows overlooking the court yard, pretending to study while thinking about her life. Even though she could see that Anton had been using her, she grieved over him. Humiliated by her own longing, she wondered why she was such a sucker. (The Immigrant 298)

Dejected and rejected, Nina cuts his sexual connections with Anton and tries to keep distance with him. But Nina cannot resist Anton’s intention to have a sex with her. He forcefully rapes her. After some time, the news of her mother’s death comes from India. Problems and calamities come over her one by one and she is alone to suffer and fight with these problems. This pathetic condition is poignantly depicted by the writer in the following lines:

Her own existence seemed poor in comparison. With no mother to disappoint, nobody’s expectations to meet, the bonds of her marriage assumed a different field. Her life was now completely her own responsibility, she couldn’t blame no one, turn to no one. She felt adult and bereft at the same time. (The Immigrant 323)
One day, she found a wary blond hair on her bed. She quickly understand Ananda’s affair with Mandy. Nina becomes aware about her husband’s pretense and debauchery. In the end of the novel, Nina receives only loneliness, heartache and rejection. She is like a deprived immigrant in Canada who is not protected and satisfied by her husband. She has lost her individuality, self-sufficiency and recognition after coming to Canada and this place fails to give what she expects. Her life after her mother’s death becomes unbearable and she faces a series of shocks. We can say that Nina’s marriage and resultant struggle is the prime theme of the novel The Immigrant. Manju Kapur raises major issues like identity, sexual barrenness, longing, alienation, frustration and displacement in the novel. The novel is a veritable saga of an immigrant’s life in India and Canada. The novel is also a narration and critique of woman’s problems and issues in foreign land.

It puts before us a realistic picture of a woman who is in search of her motherhood and identity. Sexual satisfaction and being a mother are two important aspects of a woman’s life after marriage. In Nina’s case, unfortunately, both are absent. She neither gets full sexual satisfaction from her husband due to his premature ejaculation nor does she conceive due to unsuccessful sexual intercourse; again due to Anand’s sexual deformity. Y. Kusumakumari beautifully explains Nina’s plight of her deprivation of being a mother. She writes:

It is not easy to understand that deep sense of yearning for a child unless one has a mother’s heart. Ananda’s unsentimental tone, when he says that he is not much after a child, pierces into the core of Nina’s being. At least, he should be empathetic towards his wife under the circumstances. A perceptive reader discerns a nameless rift gradually widening between the man and the wife. Ananda, to be frank, gives expression to certain facts that he is over worked at the hospital standing all through almost to the point of getting back ache and so he needs more rest at home and the implication that he cannot indulge in sex act is too much beyond a particular point. The way he talks to his wife reveals male chauvinism on his part. The denial of passionate love from him leaves her dissatisfied as he refuses to address the issue of
having children. Her sense of isolation keeps growing as she finds her man wanting in understanding her need to mother a child. (119)

The non-fulfillment of sexual desire can completely disturb one’s personal life. It should be noted that Anand himself is secretly engaged with Sue to satisfy the sexual urge and completely neglects Nina’s sexual requirements. He leaves Nina desperate and hungry of sexual appetite. Undoubtedly, it can be the worst experience in a woman’s life who craves eagerly for sexual pleasure but doesn’t get due to her husband’s physical deformity. Nina’s miserable condition is well portrayed by Manju Kapur. Kapur writes:

For years and years Nina had masturbated, hoping the day would come when a loving partner would circumvent the furtive, dissatisfied feeling this left her with, thrice a day on average, and this restraint only due to the fact that she was working. Guilt ridden, she would promise herself, this is the last time, but her restlessness made this impossible.

(The Immigrant 179)

Y. Kusumakumari comments on the sexual relations of Anand and Nina. Anand’s inability to provide sexual satisfaction to his wife is rightly exposed by the writer. Sexual satisfaction from husband is a fundamental right of any woman after marriage and the failure in it only causes misery and deviation towards other partner. She writes:

No woman’s life is more miserably pitiable than the one who is reduced to masturbate herself almost as a habit while the husband is alive and so close to her. Self-pleasure is a physical expression of her frustration caused by sex failure. Nina is tragically deprived of the right of conjugal bliss or happiness because of the animal indifference of her husband who has failed in his duty towards his wife. Primarily, the very purpose of their marriage has been defeated and the rest is hollowness. Nina is disillusioned due to her desperation of not being satisfied with Ananda in her sexual life. (119)

The bondage of conventionality is thrown by the protagonist and Mahnaz Afkhami rightly comments in this context. The writer comments:
Along with the loss of their culture and home comes the loss of the traditional patriarchal structures that limited their lives in their own land. Exile in its disruptiveness resembles a rebirth for the woman. The pain of breaking out of a cultural cocoon brings with it the possibility of an expanded universe and a freer, more independent self. (45)

Manju Kapur reveals the unexplored and hidden meanings of the mind and heart of her characters. We can find generation gap in the relationship of Nina and her mother. She depicts all kinds of women’s roles in a family, a wife, a mother, a daughter-in-law, a lover and sex-partner. Manju Kapur captures her characters and stories in their own surroundings with accurate precision and lifeliness. She presents through the story of Nina that the struggle and process of adaptation becomes much more chaotic due to unhappy married life and loss of identity. Thus, *The Immigrant* is a remarkable work of the quest of woman’s identity and exile. The theme of diasporic consciousness and twice banishment runs deep in the novel. Manju Kapur concludes the novel with Nina’s utterance which poignantly reveals the diasporic anguish and consciousness:

Perhaps that was the ultimate immigrant experience. Not that any one thing was steady enough to attach yourself to the rest of your life, but that you found different ways to belong, ways not necessarily lasting, but ones that made your journey less lonely for a while. When something failed it was a signal to move on. For an immigrant there was no going back.

The continent was full of people escaping unhappy pasts. She too was heading towards fresh territories, a different set of circumstances, a floating resident of the Western world.

When one was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home. Pull up your shallow roots and move. Find a new place, new friends, and a new family. It had been possible once, it would be possible again.

(*The Immigrant* 330)

Dharmendra Singh associates name of a person with one’s culture, roots and traditions. In research article titled, “Cultural Displacement and Double Identity in
Manju Kapur’s *The Immigrant*, Dharmendra Singh discusses the issue of colonizer and colonized. He analyses *The Immigrant* as a text of immigration and focuses on consequent effects of cultural displacement and the double identity that results due to migration. He is of the opinion:

Name is part of human identity and it reflects the culture, tradition, religion, region, race and gender of any person. Lots of things are related with names. It not only gives specific identity to someone but also provides definite recognition within any specific society. Every name is pregnant with lots of meaning and the meanings of names are related to God or some myths of any region. Due to the postcolonial impact on the mind of colonized people, they shortened it or changed it, to mix up in the new society. That new name will have some different meaning which reflects that culture in which it is converted but that man can’t change himself by changing name.

By changing the name, he is cutting his roots and will become rootless. That man loses the identity which was given to him by his native culture. He betrays his culture, tradition, religion and race by changing his name. The new name will be a distracted name and it will give the scattered identity to that man. The changed name can’t change the skin colour and personality, although it gives a man a psychological relief that the new society will not face problems in pronouncing his Westernized name. Changing name shows the colonized mind set of someone in which it’s believed that only Western names are impressive and others’ names are not. Nina brooded over when Ananda told her to call him Andy. (6060-61)

Pratibha Patel comments on the avatar of new woman that is evident in Kapur’s novels. The writer wonderfully explains how with passing of time women have transformed from submissive to assertive of their rights. She examines:

The function of women has undergone a considerable shift in the post-colonial time, as they now have extra power and control over their bodies and autonomy in expressions of choice making. Manju Kapur
strappingly believes this transformation in the images of women has made a powerful impact on Indian womanhood where the tormented but stoic woman ultimately breaks conventional boundaries to carve a position for herself. The development of the adolescent mind into its adulthood is well experimented in the existence of her female characters. (58)

It can be said that every time, in her novel, Manju Kapur presents a different woman and different stories associated with women. With education her protagonists become aware of their self-reliance which rightly present the characteristic feature of new women. Manju Kapur marvelously executes the theme of identity, diasporic consciousness, exile and alienation in the present novel. The consequent impact of globalization, immigration and multi-cultural consciousness on Indian society is artistically displayed with the help of a breath-taking tale.
Works Cited


