CHAPTER – 1

Introduction
History is a witness to how male writers create their female characters from the standpoint of their own secured and protected existence in a patriarchal society. It has been a widely accepted fact that male writers have subjugated women and have used them as a tool in order to promote certain approaches, ideas or philosophies which formulates their dominance. This is not the case of one or two centuries, somehow, the similar process is apparent all over the centuries. Feminist critics and writers consider that the epochs of masculine 'distortion' of women has propelled the feminine essence into oblivion. The distortion of the image of women has resulted in a befuddled and skewed representation of women to such an extent that it seemed irredeemable even for female writers who seek to rectify it. As Keith M. May in her book Characters of Women in Narrative Literature cites, “Even the greatly talented women writers had failed to bring this psyche into the light of day. Being obliged to use a masculine structure, such as the conventional novel, and an orderly, logical syntax created by men, they too had manufactured false models of femininity.” (129) Keith M. May aptly quotes Virginia Woolf’s monumental work A Room of One’s Own to describe the complexities encountered by women writers in the depiction of women characters.

They have been hindered not simply by domestic exigencies but also by the problems of presenting, or even acknowledging, a female vision. Fictional women created by authors of both sexes are misrepresentations. Down to the eighteenth century almost all authors were men and 'a man is terribly hampered and partial in his knowledge of women'. Since that time authoresses have been obliged to wrestle with a man-made and therefore alien culture. (May 128)
Virginia Woolf showed that feminist study of literature demands for a double perspective. The first is gender, as gender construct the social reality for both women and men so the expression of women’s experience in literature is gendered and the second, the depiction of an actual woman might disrupt the traditional symbolic system of patriarchy. She further stated that what is termed as ‘hysteria’ is not a syndrome but an indication of loneliness and lack of traditional space for a woman writer that produced half-finished sentences and emotional outpouring.

It is not surprising, therefore, women writers attack patriarchy through their writing. One of Kapur's paramount aims as a writer of fiction is to demonstrate the feminine consciousness, psyche and mind and also to proclaim to her readers that what they have confronted in male writers is a fabrication and distortion of image of women. Though, some prominent female writers could not venture out of the influence and shades forged by men, to Kapur, that was the time to come out from the shadow of the male writers and their languages.

This thesis concentrates on the study of the women characters in the first five novels of Kapur. It examines the issues that have been formative in the construction of women characters that resembles the issues raised during the women’s movement. The study also focuses on the women relationships with society. This study is an attempt to explore the condition of women who despite being well educated and having no economic crisis in their life, still suffer in patriarchal set up and to investigate that the women characters carry dominant and active roles but in reality they are given subordinate status and passive roles to play.

The study will contribute to the improvement of understanding of women characters not only of Kapur but also of other women writers with the hope that this
research will encourage the scholars to study the characters from the point of view of
the issues that form the core of the concern and effect women. Feminist criticism of
third world novelists is an amalgamation of a dynamic and versified engagement with
ideas from First and Third worlds. (Humm, 179)

Statement of the Thesis:

The research statement is entitled as “Women Characters in the Novels of Manju
Kapur: A Critical Study”. Characters are developed to address certain issues so it is a
study of issues to understand the women characters.

Aims and Objectives of the Research:

The addition to the existing knowledge is the aim of any researches. This research aims
at demonstrating a critical understanding of Manju Kapur’s women characters in a new
light.

The objectives of this research work are as follows:

1. To find how the novelist has presented her women characters.

2. To point out and analyse the issues that have been formative in the formation of
   the characters.

3. To unearth the pathetic condition of the middle class women who belong to well
to do families.

4. To see how the women voice their misery and objection.

5. To explore whether there have been any changes in the approaches and
techniques in voicing the beleaguered women in women writers’ novels.

6. To formulate a structure to understand the characters with objective viewpoint.
Scope and Limitation of the Study:

1. It concentrates on the first five novels of Manju Kapur.

2. It examines the influence of the theories and issues that have emerge out of the feminist movement on various areas of culture. Keeping the fact in mind that feminism is not just a European or an American marvel, it has comprised the analysis of the arguments and emancipating possibilities evoked in the translation of feminism into a non-Western context, basically Indian.

3. The issues and questions related to women have been altered with the progress of the society. The journey of difference between earlier and present feminists is very vast. It started with the demand for education and political rights and reached a stage where it questions everything. The difference in Indian context has been summarized by Maitrayee Chaudhuri:

   Earlier feminists fought for legal reform, for a legally equal position in society; the struggle were, essentially, outside the home and the family. Today, feminists have gone beyond mere legal reform to end discrimination; they are working towards the emancipation of women. Feminism therefore now includes the struggle against women’s subordination to the male within the home; against their exploitation by the family; against their continuing low status at work, in society and in the culture and religion of the country; against their double burden in production and reproduction. In addition, feminism challenges the very notions of femininity and masculinity as mutually exclusive, biologically determined categories. (Chaudhuri 5)
4. The concept of equality, which is a core issue in the field of feminism, in relation with individual’s liberty is an alien idea to Indian society due to the very complex hierarchical structure of society. Equality in itself is defined as an absence of inequality. The very definition of it is negative when contextualize in different context. The application of the term varies as per the culture, tradition, society, custom and sometimes countries also.

The several hierarchies within the family (of age, sex, ordinal position, affinal and consanguineal kinship relationship) or within the community (particularly caste, but also lineage, learning, wealth, occupation and relationship with the ruling power) have been maintained and integrated by means of a complex combination of custom, functionality and religious belief. The harshness and oppressiveness of all these hierarchies is somewhat relieved by a strong sense of deference to superiors, a sense of mutuality, a series of behavioural codes which bend to superiors to fulfil their obligations to their inferiors and, above all, by a philosophy of self-denial and the cultural emphasis on sublimating the ego. (Chaudhuri 11)

Research method and methodology:

The research is based on feminist criticism of the texts or feminist approaches explores and challenges the politics between the researcher and the researched. It is done with politically driven purposes to bring equality in society that demands for inclusion of women experience to model the whole research method.
The research is founded on the textual analysis and close reading of the texts. When meditating over which aspect in the novels this thesis should commence with; core women issues are taken into consideration in the first place as for their basic function of portrayal of women characters. Furthermore, potential reasons influencing the author’s technique in revealing female characters will also be discoursed.

The research methodology would focus on the sources available in library and on internet. Primary source materials are used aptly, such as creative works of Kapur, which have been written before the commencement of the study. Secondary sources examine textbook articles, publications and criticism, that synopsis the preceding findings of the study.

In fiction and drama, characters are essential components. But, it is not always true as Ray Bradbury’s *August 2026: There Will Come Soft Rains* was technically a story without characters, at least any human characters and Herman Melville *Moby-Dick*, a tale without any woman character. Characters could be found in poetry, like Prufrock and Duke, in T. S. Eliot’s ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ or Robert Browning’s ‘My Last Duchess’ respectively.

An analysis of character demands to describe the physical appearance of the character, his/her background history, the use of language by him/her, the relationship of character with others and what other character thinks about him/her or say about him/her and the last to understand the psychology of the character, a critical analysis of his/her action.

There is another point to consider that characters are direct creation of the writer’s imagination, although some are imitated from the real world. After all, characters, generally, are humans. It could be fruitful to begin evaluating them as one
might evaluate a real person. While one can start with one's own response to a character which might be emotional as depends upon liking and disliking or sympathising with characters. But, to evaluate literary characters critically, one needs to return to the formal aspects of the text and evaluate how the author has drawn the characters.

To explore the value of human experience, invention of character is essential for a writer. Even if a writer wants to raise an issue or to tell a story, character is a very important component. But as E. M. Forster stated that characters are not real people but they are like real people. Accepting the character as real in life happens with what Coleridge called ‘Willing suspension of disbelief' because time and space given to characters' lives and for their daily activities is comparatively less than real life. Sometimes, some characters seem more real than real people as the great writers take a tour to the inner world of characters and present the emotional aspect of that.

Understanding someone in common life is more complex than characters but it is possible with the help of the writer, as he explores the inner as well as the outer life of a character. It can be assumed that he understands someone perfectly but perfect knowledge is illusion. It is quite impossible to know someone perfectly in novels.

E. M. Forster divided the characters, in *The Aspects of Novel*, and coined the terms ‘flatcharacters’ and ‘roundcharacters’. Flat characters ‘are constructed around a single idea or quality' as they represent a particular concept or idea, they are static and one-dimensional. In contrast, round characters ‘are capable of surprise, contradiction, and change; they are representations of human beings in all of their complexity’. They are fully drawn and much more realistic characters that change and develop over the course of a work.
The analysis of the characters, to develop a strategic critical evaluation, could be done on the basis of the given patterns. The characters are flat or round; The elements that lead to the conclusion; The socio-political condition in that the author has drawn characters; How the development of the character affects the meaning of the work; the techniques used by the author to develop characters; words uttered by the characters or other characters’ assessments of him/her; the author’s uses of an omniscient or limited omniscient narrator to give access to the workings of the characters’ minds; the help of narrative technique in the development of the characterization; The narrator is a character or an omnipresent one; the trustworthiness of the opinions and assessments of the narrator and the evaluation of the character’s relationship with nature etc.

The idea of the connection between fictional characters and the development of character in day to day existence appears to be underestimated instead of completely examined, yet the subject is neither straightforward nor insignificant. Confronted with this inquiry many individuals are probably going to call attention to those novelists who in their works offer elucidation of people they have met in person, or create composites of observed qualities as per their thinking or, on the other hand, unwitting purposes. As it were, the principal suspicion would be that an art of writing duplicates life.

The inaccuracy, it will be stated, is expected in the primary example of the minor need and capacity of art: to arrange a life which is in a state of chaos in itself. In this way, even the most completely created character, as Joyce's Leopold Bloom stated, has more shape than a real individual. At that point, well beyond this essential prerequisite of craftsmanship, is the creator's craving to make a life specifically arranged, to express himself through characters and their actions? The question demands elaborations now. The writer must work inside a tradition, as T.S. Eliot
mentioned in his article ‘Tradition and Individual Talent’, the tradition itself manages, or at all occasions constraints, the range and nature of character depicted. In addition, literary characters themselves frequently have antecedents or descendants, so that once a character has been exhibited to the world numerous consequent characters developed on the line of different events encountered by a writer in his/her life.

It is generally believed that the foundation of a character, in life and writing, comprises the socio-historical conditions in which the character grows up. Evidently, there are constantly goal-oriented women, desirous women, and brave women et cetera, who have been created by Indian women novelists. The social conditions are the germs which have been generating the real aspect of the character to demonstrate realistic representation of characters. In this way, while they have been addressing women, no period before the Independence delivered the types of perplexity which unfurled the character of ‘New Women’.

In any case, the character does not evolve voluntarily from particular socio-politico environments. Its development is crafted by craftsmen of some sort, chiefly authors. The author does not choose from or mutilate character, experienced simply in light of a legitimate concern for his/her personal vision. Normally, certain methods of experience and thought are mixed in the arrangement of events to capture a couple of individuals that tell a story. The fiction writers have the ability to raise a notion to full consciousness even to those characters who are in minority or rare in day to day life. It is not that they fundamentally demonstrate themselves on the identity, however, they discover the qualities of the identity suitable, and join them, with alterations, into their own attitudes and conduct. Along these lines, novelists to some extent mirror and to some extent generate a genuine character.
This thesis is centred on the characterization of women in the novels of Kapur. If novelists are figured somewhat as crafters there will be a little allurement to stress over reality, or, on the other hand, to put down the impact, of their characters of women. It will be comprehended that fictional characters, regardless of whether they are naturalistic or astounding, regardless of whether they are exhibited as illustrative or prescriptive, demonstrate some kind of praiseworthy impact.

Kapur’s novels are rooted in urban India and centred on the educated middle-class women and their struggle inside and outside of their marriages. Within such a limited dramatic scope, she managed to work with various themes like the socio-economic condition of women, public/private space, class, marriage and social status of Indian women.

In Kapur’s works, women's social status and the limitations that govern their lives are clearly depicted. The middle-class women only manipulated to be wives, which is an accepted tradition in India, are elucidated in all of her novels. To these educated women, marriage do not provide shelter. Most of her protagonists walked out of a marriage that posts an ambivalence as an institution and a practice.

This was a correct accentuation since it guided our regard for pretty much responsible inquiries and battles off suppositions that a few novelists impartially depict ‘New Women' while others, maybe no less skilled, simply promote their propaganda. Qualifications of this kind can and will be drawn after critical assessment. One can't critically separate a collection of real-life characters and coxed them into a term called 'New Women'. Readers frequently favour that, they had such a paradigm. All things considered as they have were a mix-up of perceptions, socio-cultural models, dreams, and partialities furthermore, powerful image of daughter-mother. In any occasion, the
authenticity of a woman character in writing does not rely upon how intently she is related with either one's understanding or one’s previously established inclinations.

Literature, basically novel is a likely source of positive representation of a woman that gives women a sense of individuality and collective significance. The Indian women novelists have focused on the collective significance of women as Indian give preference to society over the individual. Individualism was a European concept, used by Indian novelists to depict their characters.

The novel became the best medium as it conventionally been regarded as a women’s genre since novel writing offered the only professional career. They used it to share their experiences as second wave feminists believed in “the premise that women’s experience mattered and, that it mattered to literature” (Humm 3). The textual affirmation of women’s experience, despite using the patriarchal language, created a literature that, “challenges patriarchy by creating new role models and new patterns of living.” (Humm 3).

In other words, an analysis of the representation of women in literature is needed so in this thesis the contemporary novelists and their women characters have been surveyed for a better understanding of women characters of Kapur and other women novelists.

As such, how and to what extent women have been depicted in the Indian English writing, in very brief, will be discussed since the start of writing in English in India. Surprisingly, there has been reason and support for the women characters of certain kinds they should be. Writers representation unconsciously influenced social being. Contemporary women characters are in some degree a result of past convictions about the distorted notion of women. On the off chance that a modem women defies her legacy, advancing not without a doubt "reality" but rather her own model, she does as
such with a cognizance significantly framed by her legacy. So, we are confronted with the typical oddity of authentic exercises: the endeavour to see the past with eyes that the past has to a degree made. By the by, in the event that anything stands separated from the transformative procedure we should be thinking about the deliberate state of mind included in attempting to follow the periods of such development.

Since this thesis is concerned about the women characters of a woman novelist, there is no harm to have a look, albeit briefly, the major characters in Kapur’s contemporaries and fellow female writers.

Kamla Markandaya has given preference to cultural identity over religious and ethnic communities. She focused on how the liberation of the Indian women has been intentionally hindered by the falsification and disparity in the socio-politico-economical order. In her novels, the women characters have evolved around a notion called ‘Sisterhood of Women’. The expedition for feminine independence forwarded her to the nurturance of warm bonding, which in response developed into an intimate compassion for social being. Elizabeth Jackson in her book, *Feminism and Contemporary India Women’s Writing* cited, “Almost without any exception, her Indian characters are Hindu and her western characters are English, and the clash of values between these two groups is a recurring theme in her novels. (Jackson 22) Markandaya’s novels were concerned with economic oppression over gender oppression. The economic hardship became the theme of her novels like *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) and *A Handful of Rice* (1966). Rukmani and Kali in *Nectar in a Sieve* and Nalini in *A Handful of Rice* suffered because of it.

Nayantara Sahgal portrayed the images of aristocratic women who entered into politics. She depicts the desires, ambitions of these women. She problematized social
issues to promote individual women’s liberation and protest against the gender stereotype. Female characters of Sehgal preferred individual freedom over submitting to male domination. As she offered an inclination towards individual freedom over social values and tradition. The liberation from the institution of marriage, which is an institution of patriarchy, worked as a theme in her novels which Manju Kapur followed. Rashmi in *This Time of Morning* (1965), Saroj in *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* (1971) and Mother in *Mistaken Identity* (1988) all walk out of their union of souls, and Sonali in *Rich Like Us* (1985) deliberately remained single because of the restrictions marriage imposes upon women in India.

Anita Desai portrayed the suppressed and oppressed women who are the victims of social misbeliefs and taboos. She discovered the psychotic subconscious of the Indian women. Her women character attempted to make an equilibrium between physical desires and intellectual ambition. Profoundly shattered by this trapeze performance, they were more befuddled when the existential incongruity of life uncovered before them. At the time they confront isolation and dearth of communication and commonality. All such brought them into a psychological calamity; masculine and traditional compressions were additional to aggravate that more.

Her novels delineates an individual identity which is against the traditional Hindu identity that is communal. The complexities of Indian women was shown by the characters who were keen, sensitive and individualistic. The characters were conscious enough to save their individuality from the clutches of tradition while facing the harsh reality of the society.

One characteristic where Manju Kapur and Anita Desai find common ground is the importance their texts lay on class consciousness. Both novelists are devoted to
portraying the issues of upper class, more or less financially stable women with a set of problems that are specific to their class. Some issues that their characters face are those of identity crisis and most importantly, the place of women in society. Some examples from Desai’s texts would be *Fasting Feasting* (1999), *Ithaca* (1995) and *Cry, the peacock* (1983).

Desai, though, does something different here, she manages to write a largely different work, that is, *In Custody* (1984). In the aforementioned novel, she deals with the life of a lower middle class government employee (a lecturer) and a poor but aristocratic Urdu poet of Chandni Chowk! Also, her protagonist in the novel is a middle aged man by the name of Deven, not a woman. The custody in the novel is both, man’s life in custody and bearing the cross of being the custodian of poetry. The way the issue of Urdu language and poetry is dealt with here is a masterstroke on the part of the author. In this novel Desai takes a break from tradition in order to discover and discuss newer issues. This is something that we do not find in Kapur’s work. A common thread of ideas can be perceived through her texts, the themes she works upon are not as experimental as her contemporary’s.

Shashi Deshpande’s major apprehension was to portray the agony and battle of the modern educated woman who was trapped between patriarchy and convention; additionally individualism, and liberation for the womanhood. Her fiction reconnoitered the issues that could determine the status of women as women, not holding the conventional powerful image of daughter and mother. Her issues build up as her women characters were evolving. Her women characters- Indu in *Roots and Shadows*, Saruin *The Dark Holds No Terror*, Jaya in *That Long Silence*, Urmila in *The Binding Vine*, Sumi in *A Matter of Time*, were depicted to be in a dilemma, a dichotomy at the
beginning but, gradually as the stories moved forward, they all went through the self-observation, self-actualization and self-analysis. By the end of the novels, they are pictured as more empowered, self-reliant new women.

Githa Harihariharan painted the marriage of middle class women who could not be gratified to find their roles as mother or wife in patriarchy. The women of Githa Hariharan were insistently engrossed with the embryonic questions of the women identity. They recognized that they were not more than the body for men, although they were conscious of the reality that escape was not possible for them. They had to victimize and endure themselves to live with the men. Their efforts were turning into negativity and conventional women were familiar with that. They were in a pursuit of the eternal and existing revelation of life. They were exasperating to realize the new enduring belief, relatively inspiring and gratifying human values.

Githa Hariharan’s formation of unconventional women characters and the enterprise of an intrigue around their progressive choices personified a practice of lettering nearer to sensual difference theories and their quest for women’s elucidations and primaries. Most of the characters were sensing hostility at being out-of-place and distorted by the confinement of their milieu and consequently, after the consciousness of oppression.

Githa Hariharan offered a strong portrait of women’s consciousness who were aware of their imprisoned life and they had to overcome their difficulties in their particular endeavors. Her novels are filled with her women who are in quest of actual sense and their worth in the world. Her protagonists like Devi, Sita, Shahrzad, Dunyazad, Meena, Mala, and Sara were in the hold of collective hostility. They wage a fight against it by finally realize that sickness was universal. Githa Hariharan’s women
are ambitious for their emancipation from the bonds of their suppression under merciless, numbing and despicable surroundings, absent from the life of inner health, practically drenched in gross covetousness. They courageously offered resistance and, in the process, lost themselves.

In Kiran Desai’s novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, a protagonist named Sai, who became an epitome of the ‘New Woman’ initiated her forte which is Western cultural enrichment, assimilated through the Anglicized learning. She was awfully captivated in her contemplations of solitude and banishment and being an urchin, she pursued solace in books and nature. Sai Mistry, being a creation of the postcolonial condition, found the wreckages of the colonial past sprinkled all over.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s radical method was to a certain extent altered from the other diasporic novelists. She, in cultural context, exemplified the different appearance of an Indian woman and her downgrading. Her female characters were not imperilled to any financial mistreatment by the patriarchy. She had given prominence to diasporic women who were struck in cultural dichotomy. She showed the implications of patriarchy on the lives of women.

Shobha De one of the contemporary Indian women novelists posed the sorrows and suffering of modern women throughout her writings. Her protagonists are from well to do families and independent. They do not hesitate in making sexual encounters outside the marriages. They practice a totally unrestricted life without any restraints. These characteristics duplicate an image a new woman as from Shobha De’s point of view. The woman characters are trapped in the procedure of restructuring and reviving their roles and status in society. She portrays the contemporary Indian woman who
object, discard and pursue self-determination from the traps of traditional customs and values.

This thesis is an attempt to analyze Kapur’s texts to get answers to the questions like; has she created characters without feminine traits? Is she able to put aside socially and culturally constructed notions of guilt and shame on womanhood and sex? Is she able to venture out of the stereotypical representation of women as found in the writing of male writers? Such kind of analysis demands an overview of prominent Indian male writers' women characters and characterization. Uniquely, men have a big role in Indian women movements. Arnab Bhattacharya outlines it.

Despite patriarchic dominance, what is most noticeable in the Indian context is that it was man who initiated social reform movements against various social evils. They launched crusades against the hierarchies within overarching patriarchic structures… The polytheistic Hindu pantheon provides revered images of women as unique and yet complementary to those of male deities. (Bhattacharya V)

The introduction of male writers was given by M.K. Naik in A History of Indian English Literature as followed: “The most significant event in the history of Indian English fiction in the nineteen thirties was the appearance on the scene of its major trio: Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao.” (Naik 162)

Mulk Raj Anand’s portrayal of women characters could be considered more realistic than those represented by his contemporary writers like Narayan and Raja Rao. In Untouchable, The character of Sohini was miserably so tragic that she was the emblem of subjugation. She was a tool to demonstrate caste abuse as well as sex abuse as a priest tried to molest her when she went to clean the toilet in the temple. Her feminine
qualities were demonstrated and elaborated as she was portrayed very beautifully, but she did not have adequate clothes to protect her beauty and she became the object of sexual abuse.

Two women characters Gujri and Biwi Uttamkour, in Coolie, were showed exploiting Munoo, the protagonist. Another woman character Parbati was shown as a pathetic character who wore all stereotypical feminine qualities like being caring and dutiful and demonstrated compassion and friendliness to Munoo. She showed holding a heart of the woman as she wept when her husband was sent to the police station.

The wretched condition of women under the British rule was illustrated by Mulk Raj Anand in *Two Leaves and a Bud*. Sajani, a wife of the protagonist Gangu, characterized as a common village woman whose whole life had been spent in doing household chores and serving her husband, Gangu. She got diseased with malaria and expired. A stereotypical presentation of a woman. Another woman, Leila, Sajani’s daughter, who was shown just as a body to fulfil other persons need like, Hunt, the Assistant Plant Manager, who attempted to molest her in the tea garden.

R. K. Narayan, in a witty way, introduced a wider range of feminine traits in his fictional world. The revolution of the characters from traditional timid Savitri into lively Rosie and Daisy staged vivacious characters to work on to Indian fiction and Indian womanhood. Daisy, whose mind, dynamism and desire demonstrated the peak of Indian fictional woman character, brought an overall new power dynamics between men and women. She, probably, remained the focal point for studies on the woman character in Indian fiction.

R. K Narayan being a male writer was sceptical about the advancement of feminism, that he showed by negatively portraying her personal fulfilment outside of
marriage and domesticity which supposed to give solace to women in the patriarchal world.

Raja Rao, who belonged to a Brahmanic family, strengthened the powerful image of mother and daughter through the characters like Savitri, Shantha and Madeleine who were tranquil, kind hearted and polite with an optimism that empowered them to overcome their karma. He drew them on the line of intense mysticism and tried to propose a personal solution to the intricate status of the Indian women.

A woman's need for reliable self-hood, for the achievement of vividness through individual choices, comes up against the doubt that a woman longing for self-hood targets is by definition biased. She has no identity of her own and her identity is joined to that of her loved ones.

In any case, when educated women, because of socio-economic crisis left the house, her general environment, made her aware of her potential outcomes other than cooking and housekeeping. This new woman comprehend her new home and position in the family and society in a new way and is made mindful of her own individuality. This new woman has been endeavouring to discover her rights as an individual and seems, by all accounts, planning to fight to earn back equality in treatment with men. Women who are conscious of their desire are gaining ground toward self-confidence, expelling the present traditions and social set up searching for a more liberal and capricious way of life.

The term ‘New Woman’ has appeared in association with women’s demand to get equal status and position in society. Her individuality has been produced by the
introduction of education. Keith M. May found the emergence of New Women in the work of Russian writer Turgenev:

[T]he emergence of women in search of a destiny that should transcend, though not necessarily replace, the domestic round.

Such a woman was dissatisfied with ordinary society and was reluctant to become or to remain a mere wife, but she did not hanker after a position in the market-place. The dissatisfaction was neither capricious nor, at that period, remotely fashionable. It was connected with a belief that man-made values and explanations were faltering (May 105).

The New Woman's fight for her own identity was delineated well in the novel of Kapur. Her agency was described in terms of the space she acquired and the voice she used to protest and speak for herself. The impact of the women Movement was colossal to the point that the portrayal of a woman in the post-liberation Indian novel exhibited a distinguishable move towards new representation. Authenticity, validity, force, vivacity, straightforwardness and extreme attestation were a bit of the quality related to the new identification. The term fortifying of women had progressed toward becoming related to women's fight for social value and adjust. That was fundamentally a more broad thought announcing a move from out of line to just, subservient to productive, idle to dynamic limit and component for women. The reinforcing of departure from conventionality seemed to challenge the subordination and change the structure which acts against women.

Logically, Kapur as an audacious and enthusiastic Indian woman writer exposed the whole enchilada that responsively vindicated them as a devoted lot to unique presentation into the agonies and depressions of the Indian women. The dilemma of
women was realistically embodied by the Indian women writers in the modern world. The depiction of women almost not appeared to be praiseworthy enough to merit the universally recognized hallmark of flawless and complete women in Indian English fiction. To them, women are basically destined to bear the agony till death.

Women were depicted, in conventional writing, completely to display even the necessitating consciousness that made them comprehend that without education there could be no consciousness. That fundamentally initiated arrival of an educated woman who must demonstrate a strong dissent and construct a courageous combat against all sorts of miseries of the patriarchal society. Her revolt against her being marginalized by patriarch was of no benefit, since she did not enjoy economic independence. To overcome that Kapur had given her heroines a certain economic independence so they could raise voice for themselves.

The psychoanalytic criticism focuses on writers’ motivations to explore the meaning in texts that traces towards the autobiographical elements in the texts as Kapur duplicated her protagonists in the teacher as she herself was.

Autobiographical novels most usually describe a journey to selfhood. In some senses, a fictional representation of positive female development risk conservatism, if only because they suggest that individual woman can triumph over social obstacles. However, such journey is often hugely appealing to women readers because readers and characters can share experience in common- sexual abuse, reproductive difficulties, social discrimination. (Humm 4)
Kapur’s novels formulized the issues in this way. The novels have many elements of being autobiographical and that asserted by feminist critics. As Maggie Humm explained about Agnes Smedley’s *Daughters of Earth*, applies on *Difficult Daughters*.

The depiction of heroine strong in will and physique, a quasi-conventional form full of conversations engaging with a reader; an emphasis on socio/psychological constraints; and a belief in individual self-development. (Humm 4)

Kapur affirmed “second wave feminism’s belief that women’s writing should draw on personal and historical perspective.” (Humm 4) the personal perspective has been already discussed in the above paragraph in the form of autobiography. The historical perspective means a sense of history and historical events that had been found missing in women writing and Jane Austin was criticized for it. Manju Kapur had an acute sense of historical events as she webbed her characters in relation to events. *Difficult Daughters* with the partition of India; *A Married Woman* with Ram-Janambhumi; *Home* with riots; *The Immigrants* with Emergency and *Custody* with economic liberalization.

Kapur along with her contemporary novelists claims to represent the other side of the representation of women in literature. The question arises do they succeed in their attempt? In doing so, did they justify their women characters? These were some questions that raised against the women novelists. This thesis is an attempt to search answers to such questions.

*Difficult Daughters* demonstrated a strange kind of relationship among the three generation of women. The relationship had been shown on another space that had been hidden from conventional acceptance. The daughters didn't want to replicate their
mothers and denied to accept their identities. Mother and daughter shared a great bond with Second wave critics

[S]uggest that woman writers replicate their own mother-daughter bonding in development and realization of female characters' identities. Women writers frequently describe female identity as rooted in early and continual connection with a mother or a mother substitute figure.” (Humm 75)

But here these women had challenged such ideas and believes to break the traditional representation of women even by a woman novelists. What Kapur did achieve was to place novels in historical and social setup; questioned the gendered and sexist features of these structures. The writing of texts on social conventions was as misogynist as the traditional literary representation. In this context, Kapur set out the whole new agenda for criticism by suggesting, through her writing affinities between social and literary discourse.

The literary reflections of historical, social and economic issues were depicted and were better demonstrated by pointing on the ways in which, a mirror of life was provided by novels' scenes and vocabulary. Difficult Daughters depicted the urban and rural life of pre and post-independent India was intensely detailed and represented the historical condition of partition and independence by using vocabulary and historical accuracy of events and their effects on characters. The similarity between historical events and characters condition was a unique feature of Kapur’s writing.

Kapur started writing in post LPG era that witnessed vigorous challenge. The common issues were questioning the authority, demands for political engagement and an attention to marginalized groups as well as women. Kapur in her writing resembled
the second wave feminist issues as feminist critics "talked about self-realization for not as an individualistic politics but as a collective and crucial challenge to the years of feminist mystique." (Humm 1) She created women characters that demonstrate women’s individual experience with a wider framework. She along with her contemporary novelists tried to give new meaning to gender politics.

The resistance to patriarchy was a part to convert the gender politics through focusing on women's sexuality that governs the life of every woman. Sexuality that is socially and culturally constructed had been a medium to subjugate women for generations. Kapur tried to subvert that constructed notion through her characters. Almost every female protagonist had fallen in love in an early phase of her life basically in college life and given the detailed description of their romance. This point could be strengthened by Baym’s argument as used by Maggie Humm in her book *Practicing Feminist Criticism*, "women writers often placed journey to self-fulfilment in forms such as romance in order to accomplish moderate and feasible resistances to patriarchy. (Humm 8)

The study of female characters could be more clear or complete with a better understanding of the complex problem of femininity. Femininity is a socially and culturally constructed concept that gets a prominent place in the writing of male authors. In fact, male authors’ representation or characterization of women had been just manifestation or elaboration of womanliness, feminineness, womanhood, womanly qualities, and feminine qualities. The representation of women in literature is the study of feminine traits, as feminine traits also regarded as characteristics of women in its conceptualized form create female characters, prominently in male writings.
Patriarchy with the help of society controls women’s lives, productivity and labour, reproduction, sexuality, mobility, property and other economic resources and social, cultural and political institutions. Kamla Bhasin in her book *Understanding Gender* throws light on patriarchal control:

An analysis of the main institutions in society- the family, religion, law, political, educational and economic institutions, media, knowledge systems- demonstrates quite clearly that they are all patriarchal in nature, and are the pillars of a patriarchal structure. This well-knit and deep rooted system makes patriarchy seem invincible; it also makes it seem natural. (Bhasin 21)

Women writers through their writing have been trying to challenge the metanarratives. The metanarratives are the product of dominant culture and perceived as a universal truth and presumably have acceptance across the globe. Such grand narratives subjugate and marginalise the other narratives that belong to cultures of third world or the culture of colour people. They labelled other culture’s narrative and discourse as a regional and partial in representation of human value. On the other hand, the promoters of grand narratives demonstrate that universal human values reflects in the action of their protagonist who are working as the saviour of the world. Such views are applicable in terms of men and women. Man’s action and words are perceived as they hold the universal human value and woman’s view is considered as they hold no values in her action and words. The grand ideologies control the individual. Women writers are merging their experience in the formation of characters. The existing knowledge lack women’s experience. In this context, Lyotard’s view aptly applies on contemporary
women writers as with the help of their women characters they have challenged the patriarchal grand narratives.

Their representation of women never ventured out of stereotypical images of women that was made up by society. Despite that male writers strengthen it with their writings. To counter such feminine characterization, one needs to create characters who can counter the same. But the most prominent question stood up; how to develop a woman without feminine traits as most of the feminist critics cited that feminine traits are socially constructed. Is it possible to hypothetically construct a character who faces a question of realistic representation; or to produce a character who is the outcome of an imagined utopia, far away from reality?


