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MATRIMONIAL DISCOURSES PERTAINING TO THE IDENTITY OF WOMAN IN MANJU  
KAPUR'S *THE IMMIGRANT*

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the impact of matrimonial discourses in the formation of the identity of women particularly in the traditional societies like India. The marital status, divorce, motherhood, wifehood, age factor, financial situation, physical attributes like the colour of skin, family background, and all other factors pertain to the identity of the protagonist Nina in *The Immigrant* by Manju Kapur. Nina's passing age and her unmarried status are the matter of concern for everybody around her, and after marriage the duties of wifehood and motherhood are considered imperative in a woman's life. Women are always expected to fit into the predetermined roles by neglecting their identity and independence. They are always expected to surrender themselves to their husband and family.

**Keywords:** Matrimonial discourses, female identity, migration.

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INTRODUCTION

In India, women are under domination since ages. They are kept under the authority of men. A woman is never regarded as an autonomous being. She has been always assigned subordinate and relative positions. The Hindu moral code known as "The Laws of Manu" denies woman's existence apart from her husband and Indian woman is generally portrayed as long-suffering wife or mother silenced by patriarchy (Mahajan). In patriarchal societies like India, the husband is considered God, however, brutal or apathetic he may be. Women had been taught since ages that she has to obey her husband and family and, no chance is offered to her to think about her identity. She is always controlled and subjugated by the patriarchal system.

The text highlights various matrimonial discourses prevalent in the traditional societies, particularly in India, which plays a significant role in the construction of female identity. The role of marriage, husband and children is considered very significant in a woman's life. The text also highlights how the duties of wifehood and motherhood pertain to the identity of woman. Traditional Indian societies consider marriage as the most essential and significant part of a person's life. A person is considered deficient and incomplete if he or she does not marry at the so-called right age of marriage. According to Vanaja Dhruvarajan, "Socio-cultural discourses perpetuate gender scripts by defining 'appropriate' behaviour for the male and female." Marriage in India is believed to be a sacred institution and also mandatory at least for every female as it is always told

that they cannot lead their life on their own, and they will always need a man to fulfil all their needs and desires in life.

In the modern world, women are caught between the traditional and modern ways of living life; they are caught between the demands of family and their individual desires. Generally in conventional societies a woman is recognised by her father's or husband's name rather than by her own name and designation. She has to leave her home, her parents, her friends and everything related to her old life after marriage. She has to change and discard her old identity. Marriage is regarded as the social insurance for a woman against all the social evils. But in reality it is not so.

Manju Kapur in *The Immigrant* has highlighted very precisely and accurately the complications and difficulties of a middle-aged and middle-class unmarried woman. The novel highlights some of the stereotypes and discourses related to marriage. There are various issues in the text which helps in the transformation of the central character of the novel, Nina, from being a traditional Indian woman into becoming a modern, bold and assertive woman by discarding the marital bond and the institute of arranged marriage. The traditional belief that a girl's ultimate goal is marriage overpowers Nina's thinking and makes her feel empty. The novel begins with the description of the mundane life of Nina, who seems to have lost all opportunities of marital bliss. Her unmarried status is the main concern of everybody around her including her mother, her friend, her colleagues and even her neighbours. She is an independent woman but still her unmarried status overpowers all other virtues of her character. In traditional societies, everybody is conditioned to fit in the pre-determined roles and social structures formed by the society and patriarchal system. If somebody does not fit into the pre-structured roles or breaks them, then that person is considered misfit in the society and treated lesser from the rest of the people.

Simon De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* rightly comments that "Man can think of himself without a woman. She cannot think of herself without a man. And she is simply what man decrees.....she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him, she is sex.....absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental the inessential as opposed to the essential" (197). Nina and her mother become the victim of this type of attitude made prevalent by the patriarchy in the society. So, on the first page of the novel, Kapur describes Nina's longing for marriage, "And her womb, her ovaries, her uterus, the unfertilised eggs that were expelled every month, what about them? They were busy marking every passing second of her life" (1). All parts of her body are constantly reminding her of her unmarried status. She is succumbed to the demands of orthodox and traditional culture. Marriage is given so much worth in a woman's life that if she is not married than her body is regarded as incomplete and her life as hopeless and worthless. Those women who swim with the tide are treated as righteous, and those go against convention are treated as flawed.

After marriage, the next important task assigned to women is to rear children and become an obeying wife of her husband. Children and husband are regarded as a necessary part of a woman's life which makes her life worth living in this judgemental world. Women are always taught to obey and do the duties of only wifehood and motherhood. This eventually suffocates them, and they begin to feel torn between their individual demands and demands of the society that contradict with each other. The question of identity and 'self' automatically rises in their mind. In this regard, Ashok Kumar in *Novels of Manju Kapur: A Feministic Study* puts in that,

The astringent and canonical social web constrained women to obliterate her 'self', her eccentricity and separate identity. In the 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 alienation of the self. (163-164)

Women are caught in the social web, and this leads to her alienation. The demands of the self and the society contradict with each other, and this leads to an identity crisis. The institution of marriage is always glorified, and women are always taught to take pride in being a wife and submissive.

Linda L. Lindsey in "Gendered Love, Marriage, and Emerging Lifestyles", writes that, "Historically, failure to marry was linked to perceptions or social deficiencies. For women the stigma was, "She was never asked" and for men, "He's probably a gay" (204). Spinsterhood is regarded as depressing and lonely; marriage is considered necessary for a woman to be happy and cheerful. Nina is surrounded by all the females in her life—her colleagues, her mother, her friends and students. She is anxious and worried to spend her life as a spinster like some of her colleagues in the college, "Academics was full of spinsters, minatory signposts to depressing, lonely futures" (3). But she thinks that education for her, is a gift, and she does not want to replace the life of the intellect for any monotonous of marriage. If she was going to settle, she would have settled long ago with one of the men her mother kept dredging up with anxious hope from marriage advertisements. She wished her mother's satisfaction were not so much dependent on her, but her mother has no one in her life except Nina,

The major topic of conversation in the last eight years had been Nina's marriage—who, when, where, how? The hopes each conversation generated gradually lost their lustre as the years went by, and nothing changed. From where could fresh possibilities be unearthed on the eve of her thirtieth birthday? (3)

From last eight years, the marriage of Nina has become an important issue; everybody is concerned about her wedding. Her happiness, her life, her career, her hopes and her choices are less significant than her marital status. For the sake of her mother's happiness and in order to avoid all social and cultural pressure, Nina start bothering and become anxious about her own marriage, otherwise education meant blessing for her which she do not want to exchange at any price.

Patriarchy fixes gender roles that confine woman's life to domesticity. Women are not considered capable of anything outside the threshold of the home. Women's respect in society is generally attached to the presence of men in their lives. If there is an absence of men in the lives of women, then they are treated weak, and their existence remains unnoticed. They do not get respect and treated defectively. They are only seen as somebody's mother, sister, daughter and wife. Nina and her mother's dream are shaken after the death of Mr Gupta. The father used to believe in the future and dreamt of many things, but he died leaving his dependents. Her mother believed that to get a dream house and happiness in life, her daughter must get married. But Nina always refuses to agree to any groom advertisement because of her bitter love experiences of the past. After that, she chose loneliness. Now the only men in her life are long dead authors.

In Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, mother of Virmati suggest her to get married because, "A woman without her home and family is a woman without moorings" (102). For Virmati, "Marriage for her is a means of freeing from the harsh societal treatment with which, she can refrain herself from insecurity and uncertainty" (Sharma 2). The conditioning of the patriarchal societies made women think that the presence of men in their lives is mandatory. Nina's mother is the best example of it, according to her, both of them are fated to live a live devoid of men. The only thing which her mother is looking forward to is Nina's marriage. Marriage is always considered good news but Nina does not think so. Her views on marriage are different from her mother. Her friend Zenobia abandoned marriage. She urges Nina to go abroad and study there and also to find a decent guy there to marry. She comments on Indian men, "...Indian men were mother obsessed, infantile, chauvinistic bastards" (8). But Nina fails to apply for Ph.D. due to her poor financial condition. There is always a worry about money and daily and hourly weighing of cost and benefit. In their life, every celebration is tinged with sorrow. Her mother thinks that marriage will make her daughter's life contented, she even thinks of marrying her daughter to an NRI. Nina feels infuriated and thinks that her mother is a tool of patriarchy,

Her mother was such a vehicle of patriarchy, why was her concern for her daughter always expressed the worry about Ananda's well-being? As for a child, both of them thought they could still wait a bit; she wasn't that old after all. Besides, if it didn't happen, it wasn't the end of the world. (243)

Her mother's expectations from marriage are very high, and she thinks that only marriage will bring happiness in her daughter's life.

According to Katherine Miller marriage is like a social exchange theory and she believes that, "Individuals evaluate relationships in a relatively rational manner akin to an economic analysis" (Miller, 170). People are treated as commodities in the marriage market and the best features of the commodity are highlighted in the market to increase its value. In marriages, it is necessary to show-off and exhibit. People generally hide their real side and try to show what they are not. Nina's mother and Alka are the best examples of such type of people. When Alka decides to visit Nina's place for the very first time to see Nina and to talk about marriage, her mother gets very nervous. She becomes anxious and cleans the whole house; she makes extra efforts to please and satisfy Alka by making various dishes for the girl so that they will agree to the marriage. But Nina is against this kind of attitude of her mother and tells her mother that, "We have to be taken as we are, surely that is what marriage is all about" (52). Nina does not like the fact that her mother is trying to impress Alka and her family so that they can agree to marry her, but her mother's desperation and anxiety is letting her do all this. Nina feels very much degraded by all the customs and traditions which are made only for women and she feels as if she is being slaved on such occasions. For Nina marriage is like a bought and sold market where a girl's family has to take extra pain to get their daughter married and if the girl is a bit aged then she becomes more vulnerable and pitiable. Her mother's last wish is to see her daughter married, "After you marry, I can die happy" (54). And she has been praying and fasting for the last ten years to see her daughter married. On the contrary, when Nina and her mother visit Ananda's place for the very first time her mother notices that they have not bothered to make any extra efforts to gratify them. Her mother thinks Nina is so stubborn by refusing to realise how lucky she is by getting a chance to marry at thirty. According to her mother, Nina should be grateful to Ananda and his sister. Nina does not like to become a showpiece when her mother insists her to dress up nicely to meet Ananda. For her, it is very disgraceful and appalling. She does not like her mother's desperation for her marriage. She did not like the idea of being on display in marriages where everybody stares at you as if you are a showpiece or some antique piece to be stared at.

Nina is not a submissive woman who accepts whatever comes in her way in order to be socially acceptable. She questions her mother's beliefs and also doubts that even after living in abroad for about seven years why he is looking for an Indian wife? But her mother gives her the reason that probably he wants one of his own kinds. The major reasons for this delay which are specified to Nina by her mother are his father's death, then immigration, then dental school, then settling down. For Nina, marriage is a question of luck and compatibility. She is forced to think that the offer of marriage from Ananda is an opportunity for her. So she must consider it seriously. Generally, marriage is considered as an opportunity for women to construct a successful life and bereft of it life is not regarded as worth living. Nina also desires to experience love in the security of marriage. Marriage is considered to be a safety cover which gives a sense of protection otherwise nothing is secure whether they are relationships, love, care, financial security or any other thing. People generally think that marriage provides security to a girl, but practically that is not true at all. Women get exploited, molested, and tortured even after marriages.

Marriage has different aspects, good as well as bad. It has its own limitations. But people generally build up wrong expectations based solely on their imagination. They forget the reality and practicality of the marriage. So, when their imagination contradicts reality, they feel frustrated and disappointed. Same happens in the case of Nina and Ananda. Initially, Nina enjoys all the love and car given by Ananda, and she thinks that she should marry because, "She wanted a family, she wanted children, and she wanted to make her mother happy" (70). The major reason for Nina's agreement to marriage is the external factors which force her to agree rather than her inner urge or wish to get married. She convinces herself that millions of women marry for such reasons. Ananda is dominated by her sister for marriage, and Nina's mother is paranoid about her daughter's marriage. Both are forced to take decisions about their marriage by outer factors.

Marriage brings drastic changes in women's life. Marriage is a question of adjustment; it is a give and take relationship. Her mother feels that her daughter does not understand the importance of the presence of man in life who can protect her from all the vicissitudes of life. Her mother attaches the concept of safety with the existence of man in life. Nina is uncertain about her decision of marrying an NRI because it will result in the

loss of her old identity. But finally she agrees and joins the group of women who cross the seas to marry a man living in the foreign land. She feels happy with the fact that marriage, sex and family will be her soon. But Nina's imagination of being happily married forever shatters soon. Ananda becomes busy in his professional life, and it makes Nina alone which she is not expecting after marriage. In her imagination, she perceived that coming of Ananda in her life will remove all the loneliness and negativity from her life but all her dream shatters soon. Her mother then suggests her that things take time in an arranged marriage, and patience and love can help her to achieve all happiness in her new life. After the wedding, she eventually realises that her life has struck between marriage and husband. Togetherness and mutuality are very much needed to make family or marriage successful. After marriage the demands and expectations from each other begins. But when she feels dissatisfied on the very first night of their marriage she thinks that her husband is already giving her the best by bringing her abroad and giving her all the facilities and comfort so it will not be reasonable on her part to demand satisfaction in sexuality so early. Women are always expected to be thankful for whatever is given to them. It is not considered good if they demand and ask things on their own. Initially, Nina also thinks the same, in spite of being educated and independent she is unable to break the chains of social and cultural traps. She feels that it is her duty now to think of Ananda's happiness as well besides her own happiness and needs. She wants to become a submissive and obedient wife by neglecting her individuality.

Marriage is believed to be a union of not only two bodies, but it is the union of two persons on physical, emotional, and mental level too. Marriage is not only related to physical pleasures or sex. It is more than that. It is a bond of togetherness, respect, understanding and love. But Ananda is unable to provide her all the emotional and mental support. So, Nina's loneliness after marriage has made her think all the while of a child, "Every time she has sex she imagines her eggs fertilised, and every time she has her period she wonders whether this is a miscarriage; the bleeding is so plentiful, the pain so intense. Her childlessness is reinforced daily" (160). She is made to think that after getting married the next step in life is to have children and make a complete family like every girl from a conventional, and orthodox society is made to believe. But Ananda is not ready for this yet, and he utters that we are not married for that long so we can wait for some more time. But for her not perceiving is making her guilty of her barrenness. She visits a doctor for help who informs her that infertility is not always woman's problem. Her fertility is in question, and she begins to hate her body. The cement of children lacks in their marriage. Firstly, it was her unmarried status which made her feel worthless and insignificant and now her not conceiving makes her feel empty and hollow. Woman in old-fashioned societies is conditioned to get married first and then to produce children. Their life is always imagined around their husband and children. She realises that Ananda's needs are different, and she cannot impose anything on him. Ananda feels offended by Nina's remarks on his sexuality when she suggests him for taking some sexual therapy. For him, arranged marriage has not proven as the perfect solution for his sexual problem. Before marriage, he imagined that marriage to an Indian woman will help him in catering his sexual difficulties.

Gradually, distance grows between them. Nina begins to feel that there are other things besides sex and children in marriage. She informs Ananda that it is only her anxiety about her growing age that drove her to find solutions. Ananda's refusals for taking up a sexual therapy made Nina doubt him, "Suddenly the unpleasant thought came that this might be the reason that he came home to look for a bride. Was this kind of a man he was. Passing off shoddy goods to the innocent East" (183). Rather than consulting Nina, he on his own starts exploring the possibilities of sexual therapy and that with the help of a surrogate without informing Nina. He is only concerned about his own desires and feelings; he does not bother much about Nina. Although Nina decides that she must find her feet in this country. She cannot always rely on Ananda for everything. She realises that all the expectations from women are bound up only in motherhood and wifehood.

C. M. Anderson in *Flying Solo; Single Women in Midlife*, writes, "Motherhood is usually identified as an essential part of being a woman, to an extent that woman without children is usually portrayed as unfulfilled and incomplete" (42). Motherhood is regarded as an important part of a woman's life. In the absence of it, women are made to feel deficient. Similarly, the cement of children is missing in their marriage, and that makes Nina feel worthless. Adrienne Rich in *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* focuses on the importance of motherhood and states, "Motherhood is not only a core human

relationship but a political institution, a keystone to the domination in every sphere of women by men" (112). It is regarded as the sole duty of a woman to be a mother. She becomes hopeless and feels disoriented and excluded bereft of it. Asha Saharan in, "Treatment of Infidelity and Infertility in Manju Kapur's *Custody*" writes about infertility that, "Infertility is culturally and socially constructed in such a way that even though it affects a couple it is the woman who bears the burden. Women's social status, the direction of life, economic achievement, well-being and the very meaning of marital life hinges on their ability to give birth and rear children"(66). She blames herself for all the nuances of her life. She feels that due to the family pressure and social sanction she married a man whom she hardly knew. She left everything for marriage and her husband, but now all she has are complaints and disappointments. She comes out her dream world and faces the reality of marriage. She is now less enthusiastic for a child and become more focused on her own life and dreams. She realises that security within marriage does not give happiness which her mother taught her earlier. Her future still remains blurred as it was before her marriage to Ananda. She realises that "We are conditioned to think a woman's fulfilment lies in birth and motherhood, just as we are conditioned to feel failures if we do not marry" (230). Marriage, husband and children are considered as inevitable part of a woman's life. She now realises that she has to trim down the pressure of becoming only wife and mother.

Nina wants to become independent. Joining the Library School is her first step towards autonomy. Gradually, Nina notices that her status is rising both in her peer and in her place of work. She slowly becomes a respectable member of the Canadian society, and it will lead to the reshaping of her Canadian identity. She meets Anton in the Library School with whom she indulges in an extra-marital relationship. The relationship changes Nina, "She felt daring. It was easy here, drinking, smoking, and asserting something, probably sexuality" (258). Anton condemns the idea of confining yourself to only one person for the whole of your life. He wants adventure in his life and encourages her also. He helps her in overcoming her loneliness, and she feels, "For the first time she had a sense of her own self, entirely separate from other people, autonomous, independent. So strange that sex did not make her feel guilty, not beyond the initial shock. Easy, she was amazed it was that easy" (260). Asha Saharan writes, "Infidelity reflects and defend women's right to desiring, and the pursuit of the fulfilment of female sexual desire is a metaphor for women's equality politics. Autonomously decided, infidelity permits women to experience their own sexuality as a pleasurable one as they control their gender, their sexuality and their reproductive potential and it challenges the male domination and patriarchal mechanisms of surveillance and control over women bodies" (66). Women can also desire sex with more than one partner like men.

Marriage is a societal institution in which facade is necessary for its smooth functioning. Nina realises this, "Marriage was a social institution, she reminded herself. A certain amount of pretence was necessary for its successful functioning" (285). Her friend Zenobia suggests her that, "It sounds totally schizophrenic—the life you are leading. You will have to do something about it, leave Ananda or confront Anton. That man is getting the best of both the worlds" (290). Zenobia suggests her not lead a dual life. After coming back to Canada from a small visit to India, she decides that from now onwards she will devote her life only to Ananda, "I'm going to try really hard from now on; this marriage is the main thing in my life, she vowed as the quick one got over" (295). She wants permanence in her life. She also realises that it is not necessary that the husband will fulfil all her wishes. "In India husbands were not expected to meet one's entire needs. Here it was all man-woman-relationship-love-fulfilment..." (296), the Indian husbands are almost treated like gods. She longs for a true companion, somebody with whom she can share her joys and sorrows. But Ananda is unable to provide her all the warmth and love she is longing for. The sense of autonomy and freedom which she had felt when she slept with Anton for the very first time dissolves in the air on the recognition that she is being used by Anton.

Women always try to fix and mend broken things in marriage, unlike men who mostly become ignorant and try to run away from the situations instead of facing them. Nina tries her best to save her relationship with Ananda. But when she discovers a blonde hair on the bed she realises that, "The hair explained much—the distance, the silence, the ticket for two months in India, his strange indifference interspersed with tenderness, the shifty look that skittered about her. She didn't blame him. His body spoke

when his tongue could not" (324). She realises that her husband is having an affair with a white woman. She realises that,

So marriage was based on more than one person's lies. Discovering this made it worse. Her transgressions had been against a faithful person husband, her constant understanding that any exposure would cause ruin and grief. The yellow hair put paid to all that. (325)

She knows that he committed adultery only to prove his sexuality. She now realises that she has to be her own anchor. She does not confront him for his betrayal and lies because then she has to confront her own.

Along with Ananda's and Anton's betrayal, Nina is shattered by her mother's death and realises that, "Her life was now completely her own responsibility, she could blame no one, turn to no one. She felt adult and bereft at the same time" (323). She is now graduated and applies for a job everywhere. This country has helped her to free herself from the bondage of matrimony and social sanction. Finally Nina, "Looked down the path on which there would be no husband and saw the difficulties, the pain, the solitude...I need to be myself" (329). She leaves Ananda, and she gets a job. There is nothing left in her life which will now stop her or tie her down.

Nina realises that when something fails it is a signal to move on. She thinks of reinventing herself and giving her life a fresh start by freeing herself from the humdrum and complications of marriage, husband and children. Now she has grown up into a more matured and strong woman who can take care of herself. She transforms from being a traditional Indian woman into bold, assertive and independent woman. She breaks all the societal norms related to the importance of husband and children in the construction of female identity and discards all the discourses about marriage which deviate women from her path to independence and liberty. She realises that women can lead a happy and contented life irrespective of the presence of men in their lives. They can create their own identity without depending on men or other outer forces. She discards the institution of marriage and moves out of it.

#### **Alka's views on Marriage:**

Accompanying Nina and her mother, another remarkable woman character in the novel is Alka whose views on marriage are notable and who is also a tool of patriarchy like Nina's mother. Arpita Ghosh in "Women, Education and the Indian Scenario: A Study of Manju Kapur's Novels", writes that "In spite of being educated, Alka makes it clear that marriage is the ultimate destiny in the life of a girl. When Nina suggests for higher education in Canada for both Ila and Ishaan, Alka declined the offer for Ila" (20). Alka tells Nina that, "Ila, of course, would have to stay in India, there was the question of her marriage, but Ishaan, yes for him Dalhousie could be an option" (289). She is unfair towards her daughter and does not want to send her abroad for higher studies. But she has no problem in sending her son abroad. She is an agent of patriarchy that prefers and favours her son over daughter inspite of herself being a woman. Alka takes responsibility of his brother's marriage after the death of their parents. She thinks that Ananda is an eligible candidate for marriage as he is well-settled and there will be no in-laws in the life of his would-be wife. Alka marrying to an IAS cadre from UP is an excellent decision on her part because it is believed that choosing a suitable life partner can make your life good and vice-versa. She worries about Ananda's marriage as he is around thirty and still a bachelor. From time to time Alka brings to the forefront her poor lonely brother's need of a wife. She is desperate to marry her brother to an Indian woman. So that she can help him in getting settle there.

Alka praises Ananda for agreeing to marry an Indian girl instead of a Canadian and that proves to her that at heart he is still an Indian, with Indian values. Alka thinks that the girl, Nina and her mother should be very grateful to them because Ananda is marrying her inspite of her being thirty but Ananda tells him that if gratitude is what he wants from marriage then he should better marry a beggar. She reduces the whole thing of marriage into an economic exchange by repeatedly indicating on the poor financial condition of Nina and her mother. Her mindset is of an orthodox Indian woman for whom money play a central role in arranged marriages. For her marriage is about showing off all the money and material comforts one acquire and who does not possess all these things must feel pathetic and pitiable. Being a woman Alka's taunting remark on Nina is very disgraceful, "...lucky things, a chance to marry at thirty, and live like a queen in Canada" (69). For

her marrying his brother to Nina, is like doing a favour to her for which Nina must be grateful for the rest of her life.

Alka, instead of being a woman herself, does not respect Nina and her mother. According to her, marriage is a social institution which is based more on economic exchange rather than love and compatibility. She wants an Indian wife for her brother who can take care of him and who can help him in getting settled abroad by serving him. She wants a submissive and traditional woman for her brother.

**Ananda's contradictory character and his role in the transformation of Nina's identity:**

Ananda's views on marriage are very conflicting. On one hand, he wants to become a modern man and tries everything to become Canadian in the true sense. On the contrary, his hidden patriarchal side comes to the forefront with the turn of the events in the novel. When his sister suggests him to marry, he becomes confused whether he should marry a white woman or a woman from his homeland. His failed relationship with Sue, the first white woman in his life, made him believe that he had never actually left India. He is still faithful to the notions of purity instilled in him by his parents. But he thinks that if he marries an Indian woman then it will become harder for him to escape from the reminiscences of his homeland. He is confused about the choice of a woman for marriage. He worries about his sexual difficulties and wonders whether the breakthrough moment would come through marriage or not.

When Ananda's sister shows him a picture of Nina, at that moment Ananda's reaction is noteworthy, "How can I decide with just a photo? What about compatibility, taste, her ability to live here" (47). According to Ananda compatibility and taste, must be similar to a happy married life. Ananda did not like her sister's idea of marrying him to an Indian girl because by doing this his sister is trying to pull him back into his old life. Later, he agrees by thinking that it might help him in overcoming his sexual difficulties.

Initially, Ananda presents himself as an eligible, well-settled, honest, upright citizen, a man who understands women and who cares and respect them, someone, whom Nina would never regret in choosing. But he doubts Nina when he comes to know that she is thirty and still not married. On one hand, he thinks of himself as a modern and Canadian man but on the contrary he doubts her for not being married at thirty. This shows his insularity. Ananda experiences a sense of achievement when Nina agrees to marry him. Like a typical Indian man, he feels proud of possessing Nina. He is an inconsistent person. Contrastingly, before marriage he worries about the expenses of marriage from Nina's side. And he made sure that none of the traditional demands of money and gifts will be made from the bride's side. The cost of all the formalities of paper work for the visa and all the air ticket charges are paid by Ananda. But after marriage he shows up his real side. He taunts her when she buys an expensive dress. E Samuel in, "Dowry and Dowry Harassment in India: An assessment Based on Modified Capitalist Patriarchy" writes in favour of his action and puts that Ananda does not ask for any dowry for the wedding and takes cares of most of the expenses, thus implying that he is a modern man and a western man who has not succumbed to the Indian oppressive tradition of the dowry. He initially treats Nina with respect and affection and ensures that she is comfortable in the new place. However, as the story unfolds, a subtle patriarchal side to Ananda emerges as he tries to control Nina's dressing, eating habits, sexual practices, and even her desire to have children. It is due to his struggle for equality in the new society, his need to maintain power and control over his wife and their life together pacifies their yearning to be totally accepted by the Canadian society.

Desiree Lydia Gomes in "Transnational Habitus and Patriarchy in Indian Immigrants Fiction: and analysis of The Immigrant by Manju Kapur", writes that his need to control Nina's Indian ways of life is perhaps not just patriarchal action, but it is how he tries to hide his struggle against a white classist western society (41). Contradictorily, Ananda wants to be totally assimilated into the Canadian society, and at the same time he is proud to marry Nina because according to him, "She was the perfect mix of East and West. According to Ananda, her devotion to her mother and her willingness to consider an arranged introduction proved her Indian values, while her tastes, reading, thoughts, manner of speech and lack of sexual inhibitions all revealed Western influences" (85). On one hand, Ananda wants to be a complete Canadian citizen but for marriage he wants a perfect mixture of both the worlds that show that somehow he is not able to completely forget his country. He dwindle between the tradition of his homeland as well as the modernity of the Canadian society.

Like a traditional Indian husband, who believes that their wife is respected and acknowledged by society because of them, Ananda also feels the same. He loves his wife, but he did not want to limit his sexuality only to Nina. He imagines an alternative sexual scenario in marriage which is unfeasible to think after marriage in the traditional societies. He thinks he is lucky to have Nina as his wife who never complains. On one hand he praises his wife's passive nature and, on the contrary, he believes that to get pregnant as soon as you get married is a very backward thing to do. With the passage of time, Ananda feels that marriage has violated his privacy and if children were so much important for her than she should have suggested a fertility test before engagement. According to him, they should know each other well first and then they can plan for a baby. He tells Nina that he has still not recovered from the expenses of marriage so he cannot think of anything else now. Rather than considering her opinion and discussing the matter with maturity, he straightaway declares his decision. He ignores her concern and need totally.

There is a major transformation in the Ananda's character. Earlier who used to scold his sister for her degrading remarks on Nina and her financial condition is now betraying her. Ananda shouts at her for buying an expensive coat, "Three hundred dollars! You spent three hundred dollars on your clothes? Why, my most expensive suit is a hundred and fifty...you go alone and loses your head" (273). Ananda does not like his wife spending so much money on her own needs. He boasts that he is the one who owns everything, and she is just sitting idle and enjoying life because of him. It shows that he is like a typical man who brags all the time thinking that it is because of them woman live and survive on this earth. He feels very glad when Nina plans a trip to India for two months and thinks that "One woman is a prison, many contained the variety of the world" (280). Ananda even insults Nina in front of Mandy, his new receptionist with whom he has an affair by telling her that, "...her father died, she wanted to emigrate, so I married her. It was to help her really...I'm a nice guy" (238). He made her believe that it was a marriage of convenience only, nothing more than that. He becomes unfaithful in marriage and still expects Nina to be devoted and submissive. Ananda even refuses to accompany Nina when she decides to visit India for two months by giving the trivial excuse of money, "...two tickets to India are more than I can afford...as usual the spectre of money silenced her" (281). He is an orthodox Indian man who tries to dominate woman.

In the end, Ananda realises his mistake and thinks that "Marriage had been the most significant step in the remaking of his old self...After he married everything changed, his heart, his mind, his penis. In this change, his wife had been left far behind" (329). He realises that he has not done well to her. When Nina decides to leave him and break the marital bond, in his heart he feels pain, which he was not expecting at all. He feels bad for whatever happened, but he does not do or think of doing anything to save the relationship.

Nina's marriage to Ananda and his alteration helps Nina in becoming an assertive and bold woman. Before marriage, she was independent and single, but at that time her singlehood was because of her bitter experiences in the past. She chose to remain single, and that made her feel depressed and lonely. She was an independent woman, but her growing age and her unmarried status made her feel appalling. After marriage, she loses her identity of being an independent and single woman. Her marriage and her migration help her in transformation. She again becomes an independent and single woman by moving out of the marital bond. But now the situation is different, she chose this path now by discarding all the societal and cultural bonds. Her marriage to Ananda and his indifferent attitude has made her a confident and mature woman.

#### **Subjugation of Women in Marriage due to her Economic Reliance on Husband:**

The marriage system in traditional societies is considered a burden on girl's family. When a girl is born to a family, her parents from her birth onwards, start worrying about her marriage and save money for her marriage. The dowry system in countries like India is very oppressing. Firstly, girls become a burden on their fathers. And after marriage, their husband considers them their responsibility. They start thinking that their wives are dependent on them so they can do whatever they want to do with them. They mistreat them and consider them as their slave who is available for their service all the time. But with the change of the century and with the advent of technological development and globalisation, women no longer depend exclusively on their husband or in-laws financially. Women now have become independent and bear their own responsibility.

Linda L. Lindsay writes that "Mate selection is highly structured and based on homogamy. People choose partners based on age, socio economic status, race, and attractiveness" (205). One of the major reasons for the subjugation of women in the society and after marriage is her economic dependence on men. The financial dependency of woman authorises a male to dominate his wife and subject her to physical and mental torture. Woman's identity and her individuality are always depicted as dependent on a man, and it is believed that she cannot prove anything on her own. Arranged marriages are fixed on the basis of socialisation and expectations. The status and background of both the bridegroom and bride is taken into consideration before marriage. Same happens with Nina, the financial inequalities between both families are somehow oppressing Nina. Ananda and Nina want a court marriage. For them, court marriage is less expensive, and there is less trouble in it. At the same time, Nina does not wish to start married life based on charity or Ananda's favours. So, she applies for a loan to bear all the expenses of marriage. Nina is not in the favour of tradition in which only the bride's side pay all the expenses of marriage and *baraatis*. It is difficult for Nina to afford all the useless expenses of marriage. The Indian tradition of paying utmost hospitality to guests is neither liked by Ananda. According to them, this should be avoided and there must be togetherness and mutual cooperation in all the expenses of marriage.

#### **Age Factor in Marriage**

Age is a major factor in fixing marriages, along with financial status, physical attributes, occupation, and stereotypical personal traits. The growing age, particularly of a woman becomes a major concern for many in the society. Women are always objectified and treated like commodities. A woman should be young and beautiful otherwise she is not considered worthy of marrying. All females are expected to be married at the so-called right age of the marriage fixed by the society. In the novel also, the age factor becomes a major concern for Nina. Nina's twenty-ninth year was ebbing away. Nina becomes hopeless of any brightness and happiness coming in her life. Nina's passing age disturbs her mother and according to her mother marriage is the only important thing left in her daughter's life. Her mother is so desperate that she prays and frequently visits astrologer and says, "I will pay him myself, one hundred rupees, plus donate another hundred at the Katyayani mandir the day you get married" (51). According to the norms set by the patriarchal society, a woman should be young, beautiful, fair, in order to get a good match. Otherwise, she becomes pitiable and worthless. Apart from these factors, she must be passive, subservient, obedient, caring and motherly. These factors decide her worth in the market of marriage.

#### **Erroneous Notions about Indian Arranged Marriages in the West**

Through Nina's narrative, the novel accentuate, not only the arranged marriage scheme but it also shows the clashes between Western and Eastern culture's notion about arranged marriage. Ananda's friend Sue believes that Indian believes in arranged marriages, and they are quite successful there because women expect less in such marriages. She believes that this can be the reason of Ananda marrying an Indian woman. Nina also notices that "People here probably had archaic notions about arranged marriages" (148). Ananda's another friend Gary also thinks that Indian marriages are barbarically arranged in which strangers are forced to cohabit. He has a stereotypical notion about Indian marriages as cruel and brutal. Nina's friend Beth also have wrong notion about arrange marriages, she remark that "But to decide to spend your whole life with someone you don't even know, it is so weird" (219). Nina then tells Beth that unlike West the basis of marriage in Eastern countries like India is not love or chemistry but "...taking into account family background, likes, dislikes, income, everything" (219). Nina then tells her that, "She hadn't wanted arranged marriage, had only entered into one when she had no other choice, and after a long courtship, her marriage – arranged by herself? Fate? Circumstances? Alka? Her mother? Her age?" (221). She mentions all her reasons for this kind of marriage. Otherwise, she is not interested in the institution of arranged marriage. Not only Beth, Sue and Gary, even Nina does not favour the tradition of arranged marriage. She finds it autocratic and domineering.

Ananda uncle's views on marriage are also worth mentioning. His uncle is very proud of his Canadian way of life. He is full of the superiority complex of being a Canadian. He also wants Ananda to adapt the culture of the hostland completely. It is very surprising and shocking for him when he hears about the arranged marriage of Ananda. His uncle married a white woman in order to be fully assimilated in the hostland

culture, so he is expecting the same from Ananda. For him, the idea of arrange marriage is very Indian and backward. He totally discards it and believes in the idea of love marriage where love, understanding and compatibility becomes the basis of marriage rather than social, economic and cultural factors.

In a nutshell, it can be said that the matrimonial discourses which prevail in the traditional societies results in the subjugation and oppression of women. The identity of women is based and formed on the basis of her marital status. Husband and children also play a significant role in determining her identity, bereft of it women is considered incomplete and defective. There are various factors like age, financial status, outlook, and profession on the basis of which a woman is picked up for the marriage. Her identity and life are always related to her husband and children. Her identity is nothing other than being a wife and a mother. But with the change of the era, these notions are questioned and challenged by women. They defy all the pre-determined and pre-conceived roles constructed by the society. They have started living their lives on their own terms by rejecting the institution of marriage.

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