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**THEMATIC TRADITIONS AND ITS PROJECTION IN THE WORKS OF MAJOR INDIAN
WOMEN NOVELISTS IN ENGLISH**

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ABSTRACT

Literature truly depicts life and society to tell stories of the real world and its truth. Both male and female writers are free to imagine things and idea to create any story and portray its characters. Men and women both conform to the traditional gender roles assigned by society. These stereotyped roles are practiced for ages. Traditionally, historically and socially women are given weaker position in society. Even in today's global world women are deprived of their due right and they are still being oppressed. Feminists and gender theorists are raising their voice against women discrimination. Many Indian women novelists try to explore female subjectivity in order to establish an identity that is not imposed by a patriarchal society. The stereo typed vision of women has undergone a great change and female characters are now present as strong and active being rather than passive sidekicks. The most striking feature of the contemporary Indian English fiction has been the emergence of feminist literature- feminist in the sense of being written by women novelists as well as in sense of giving voice to the suffering, aspiration and assertions of women in traditionally male dominated world. In the present paper an attempt is made to study the thematic similarities in some of the novels of major women writers, at the same time highlighting their individual perceptions. The paper also focus on the condition of the women their sense and sensibilities, responses and reactions in the Indian social milieu and arrive at the possible trends of the coming era.

Keywords : Feminism; Identity; Patriarchy; Marginalization; Tradition; Discrimination.

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In literary world modernism strikingly sounds both the conviction and practice that is to be modern, at least displaying novelty in such a unique way, that it must differ from anyone who ever lived before? Indeed this greatly signifies that man's way of looking at himself has obviously been transformed that seems definitely new. It is this ultra-modern motive and interpretation of human life, particularly in Indian English fiction, that superbly caters to "elementary human needs and hopes common to all." (Dubbe 28)Later, this guiding doctrine further led to all the five fundamental factors involving in man-woman relationship-biology, experiences,

discourse, the unconscious, social and economic conditions-what appear to be almost like the things of prime concern for the Indo-English writers today.

Indo-English literature like any other growth area has created its own vested interests which have sometimes tried to project it as the most significant Indian literature on the ground that this is the only one which is not limited to a particular Indian state or region and is widely accessible to audiences in India and abroad. This argument is advanced to assert the representativeness of Indo-English Literature, highlighting its capacity to pull together the various levels of linguistic and cultural tradition in the country. The years between 1980 and 1990 have been very prolific ones, for Indo-English literature. More novels and collections of short stories have been published in this decade than ever before in the history of Indian English writing. In this decade, not only have new writers appeared, but older writers like R.K.Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand have also produced significant new work. In his "Over view" of the Indian English novel of 80s G.D.Devy, has considered the questions of marginality and social consciousness of Indian English writing. He has argued that this Literature is peripheral literature, as it does not concern itself with the vast majority of Indians. In sharp contrast to this view, some critics focus on the socio-political commitment of Indian writers. Another interesting aspect of Indian English fiction of 80s and onwards is that of expatriate writers and women writers. In this early year of Indian English writing, its philosophical content was much stressed. This was supposed to portray the essential Indianness of Indian English fiction.

It is now a literature of self-definition and assimilation in the Indian ethos. The analysis provided here cannot however be taken as definitive. Thirty years back one rarely spoke of Indian English fiction. In comparison the quantity and variety, fiction published during the recent years are very impressive. Writers like Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandey,R.P.Jhabvala, Manju Kapoor etc have made it possible to speak of women's Indian English fiction. One of the major international movements of the last few decades was the Feminist literature movement. The English speaking Indian women found the new ideology of subversion is very attractive. That they did so feel was in itself a desirable event. But since most of them have little interest in activism at the grass root levels in Indian society, they found it liberating to imitate American and French feminism and produce fiction giving their ego-graphs. The motivation of the fiction of the 80s creates some aberrations in the perception of these bodies of literature. Surely a fire brand of women novelists beginning with R.P.Jhabvala,Kamala Markandaya, Anita desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Das and many others-highlights the growth of the novels as an art from which exactly constitutes the hallmark of Indo-English writing. They greatly succeeded in bringing freshness to their works. What appeals to the reader most that they could daringly speak out about a woman's frustrations and reactions in their novels. In 90s, we fortunately find yet another advanced copy of the distinguished woman novelists in the field of Indo-English fiction who remarkably portrayed women in their creations purely basing upon the very matrix of modern feminism and exceptionally excelled in producing the much desired impression of "rationalized sensation" (Gillie 156). Indian women novelists can be said to be highly conscious of the women's liberation movement. By and large they have portrayed women and their stories with consciousness of the injustice being meted out to women by society. These novels have a feminist undercurrent. Usually these novels have a woman as the central character. If we look at these fictional female characters, a large number of them rebel against the existing social set up. They discard the idea of being submissive, suffering and sacrificing. Rebellion is not an easy process. It demands determination and a will to stand by the cause of rebellion at any cost. These heroines in the novels of Indian women novelists have often come up to paying the prize of their rebellion rather than submitting and dying through suffocation.

Awareness on the writers' part of the individual needs of women like self-fulfillment and identity formation have resulted in these novels in patterns of alienation, communication gap, broken relationship and identity crises. Women in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal are liberal and conventional. "Saroj in storm in Chandigarh refuses to succumb to socially acceptable norms of feminine behavior. She cares to establish as an individual where as for her husband Inder, she is man wife. A woman's longing for love and understanding is beautifully depicted in the novel. Similarly, in sahgal's The Day in shadow, it is the heroine; smiriti's yearning

for a free communication of ideas with her husband" (Bai 623) that proves disastrous. An egoist that is, he fails in listening and sharing his wife's ideals and values,

Sahgal's women seek to establish a new order with changed standard where women can be their true selves where there is no need for hypocrisy and where character is judged by the purity of heart.(Tiwari 20)

Her novels trace the convulsive moments in the growth of modern, secular India towards a democratic and human society. They further give creative release to feminine sensibility articulate the birth- pangs of a new socio- political order. With Rich like us and Plans for departure, Nayantara Sahgal Shows how there is a growing concern in her with the novel as expressing the collective fate of a nation releasing itself from subjugation. She observes in an article in span that no living literature can claim immunity from the social and political consequences and influences around it.

Fiction cannot be written as in the past. A story must have some implication for the collective fat, and be meaningless..... The success of the mix can ultimately be judged only by the final test of any work of art its power, and the reverberations this produces long after it is seen, heard or read, sometimes from generation to generation. (Sahgal 11)

In spite of what her training in " liberation humanist" education has taught her to value in literature, Nayantara Sahgal shows how what has been taught to her as universal and eternal is in fact the creation of the particular historical time and place as well as race, sex and class. No doubt the novels of Nayantara Sahgal trace the convulsive moments in the growth of modern, secular India towards a democratic and human Society. Her novels give creative release to feminine sensibility and articulate the birth pangs of a new socio-political order. Thus an interesting aspect of the modern Indian enlightenment is illuminated in Sehgal writing which response dominance is culminating in the great movement of decolonization that happened all across the Third world.

Among the women novelists Kamala Markandaya deserves a special mention because she is gifted with extraordinary vision of life. In her novel, she depicts race conflicts, temperamental disparities, cultural conflicts and sexual personas factors working in the form of barrier of communication. As a writer she has the practical experience of life in rural areas as well as urban areas. Her first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve* made her a lovable writer of great fiction in theme and technique, matter and manner. The novel deals with the realistic picture of the Indian villagers, their custom and cultures, rites and traditions. *Nectar in a Sieve* run in the first person narration told by protagonist –narrator Rukhmani a peasant woman suffering almost all the time with in the duration of narrative. Her family consists of her husband Nathan, a poor tenant farmer, a daughter, Ira, and six sons. Although poverty- strike, they are happy and mutually compromise with the conditions they are happy and mutually compromise with the conditions they are put into by fate. But the establishment of the tannery initiates miseries for them. Capriciousness of nature accompanied by cruel dealings of their landlord being their apparent peace to disaster. The unwelcome entry of industrialization not only "invaded our village with clutter and din, had taken from us the maiden where our children played and made the bazaar prices too high for us" (Markandaya 31-32) but also intruded the complete innate atmosphere and the village economy causing devastating social calamity. Rukhmani stands in thorough to even a thought of tannery, since according to her it has been tempting the simple village folk into greed and immoral acts. Her fears come true as not merely the society, but her own family gets dislocated, initially with two of her sons joining the tannery as workers and thus disappointing their father's much awaited desire of farming. However, this separation brings in a thin layer of happiness- perhaps the best period in their lives to the family and temporarily they get rid of perceptual fear of starvation until both the brother are dispelled from the tannery and go to Ceylon as laborers, never to return. Apart from the man-made misfortunes, the family suffers at the pitiless hands of nature which was never merciful to them.

The delineation of the theme of hunger is obviously one of the remarkable features of *Nectar in a sieve*, chiefly due to Markandaya's first hand dealing with what she offers. She has been an independent onlooker who witnessed the socio-economic values of village life during her stay in south India. This fact

evidently assigns the book to be a vital record of poverty and starvation caused by inhuman exploitation. Markandaya repeats the theme of hunger in *A Handful of rice*. But this time hunger raises its head in an urban perspective. Representing the new proletariat of India, Ravi migrates to the city of Madras to escape rural poverty and hunger but is confronted by hostile force. Economic hardships force him to suppress his inner urge from freedom and submit to dependence by accepting Apu's offer of tailoring. The angry protester in Ravi faces a moral dilemma of choosing between his penurious, but honest life and luxurious, immoral ways of accomplice Damodar. However, Ravi evinces his traditional integrity by refraining from crime and violence, even at the most testing hours of his life. Ravi's plight is a delineation of the tremendous enduring capacity of the poor on the one hand, and the hostility of the socio-economic system on the other. Ravi's wife Nalini epitomizes the astonishing power of patient endurance displayed by her literary predecessor Rukmani in *Nectar in Sieve*. Destitution and privation remain at the core of *Nectar in Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice* in the artistic world of Markandaya. Although poverty and other economic disparities do figure in some of her novels too, but these preoccupation remain peripheral in the rest of the fictional design and do not occupy pivotal attention of the novelist. Since the economic hardship of the rural poor evoke passionately intense response from the novelist and assume a graver dimension in *Nectar in Sieve* in comparison with *A Handful of Rice*, it is judicious to begin our discussion with this novel.

In *The coffer Dam* too Markandaya refers to the despairing scene of the mute tribesmen although destitution is not the central issue of the novel. But their penury has left them thoroughly helpless and vulnerable to the rough jolts of natural calamities beyond their reach. The humble foundation of these hill men is rooted in nature. Their unadorned bamboo hut set-up in the middle of the forest is testimonials of their primordial existence. Like the hapless farmer of Rukmani's village, these simple tribal too are treated like disposable commodities when they are evacuated from their disposable commodities when they are evacuated from their traditional shelters in order to make the land available for their English Masters. It is their indigence which forbids them to raise even a whimpering sound in protest, and rather urges them to accept destitution and privation as their fated lot in the rhythm of Nathan and Rukmani.

Markandaya's artistic imagination soars a new height in her historical novel *The Golden Honeycomb*. Even while recreating the history of colonial India from the end of the nineteenth century of the attainment of independence, she also analyses intercultural relationship. Inter-cultural relationship presents one more hue of human emotion when individuals from different culture group are drawn together but fail to convert their union into a cordial bond of love. The relationship either snaps before developing into happiness due to claim of love which is shallow and superficial and gilded in hypocrisy on their side. In this novel relationship based on shallow attraction ends before progressing into marital union. As S.C. Harrex observes there are "different predicaments of identity" in Markandaya's novels each of them is "affected by east-west clash of codes that is part of modern India" (245). *The Golden Honeycomb* serves as a glaring example of the "predicament of identity" as Bawajiraj III remains "blissfully ignorant about and shamefully insensitive to problem of his true identity under the mask of Maharajah" (Rao 23).

Kamal Markandaya delineates the Indian scene in a nostalgic manner which shows that despite her marriage to westerner India remains her true home. Her intimate awareness of the complex problems India has been grappling with results in a deep concern for the vast masses who struggle hard to keep pace with other cultures of the world. The predominant themes of Markandaya are, East-West relations, conflicts arising in family and society as a result of the changes brought in by modernization, dichotomy between spiritualism and materialism, and poverty, hunger and affluence. She treats these themes with abundant clarity and rare insight, bestowed upon them by her twin cultural contact.

While Kamala Markandaya deals with the diverse contemporary problem-social, cultural, politics in which the novelist grows up. Anita Desai is satisfied to dive deep into the inner working of the protagonists and brings into the hidden depth of human psyche. Most of Anita Desai's characters can be characterized as introverts. Many of her novels are subjective wherein the stage is set in the mind, and the method of communication adopted in language of the interior. She says "by writing novels that are purely subjective. I

have been left free to employ, simply the language of the interior" (Dhawan 22). Her first two novels, *Cry, the Peacock* and *Voice in the City* are said to have ushered in the psychological novel in Indian English fiction. Her characters are intense, self absorbed, even morbidly so, possessed by a conscience that never allow them peace of mind, constantly analyzing, probing and questioning, merciless in its passion for introspection. *Cry, the Peacock* is the tragic story of Maya who is haunted by the astrological prediction of the death of either wife or husband. In other words, she is victim of an uncannily oppressive sense of fatality. To crown the effect, she has no children and thus this leads to Maya's isolation. She is so much segregated by society and astrological dilemma that in a fit of insane fury, she kills her own husband. The symbolism of dead dog and the peacock's fighting before mating are highly suggestive. She uses peacocks, who are said to fight before they mate- "living they are aware of death Dying, they are in love with life" to throw light on Maya's conflict with her husband.

In her first novel Anita Desai explores the consciousness of a single character; she undertakes the more ambitious task of presenting the consciousness of three characters, Nirode and his two sisters, Monisha and Amla, against the immense background of the city of Calcutta, in her next novel *Voices in the City*. The novel is set in Calcutta, the city of Kali-Goddess of Death. Desai makes the mother of Nirode and these two sisters also like Kali who unleashes her evil powers. Monisha kills herself because she cannot bear the strain of her marriage to Jiban. The greater, part of the novel is devoted in Nirode's move from failure to failure. Amla, who has not been in Calcutta for long resists the city's influence. In this novel Anita Desai capture eloquently the voice of the spiritual quest of three young people in the city of death, Calcutta. Sensitive, educated and excessively self-conscious, plagued by the absence of goals in their life as well as the strong-willed mother, Nirode, Monisha and Amla wither and waste away their inner potential. All the three major characters in the novel feel alienated against the background of Calcutta, the city that puts to a severe test the inner resources of its denizens. Monisha reduced to an object to be tested and discussed, feels lonely in her crowded joint family. Nirode is afraid of even love for it requires a certain loss of self. A similar predicament stares Amla in the face, leading her to an attachment with a married partner, avoiding the need for commitment in the process.

Bye-Bye Blackbird is a symbolic novel in which Anita Desai presents the East-West encounter. It is a great irony that the British characters in the novel seem to be more realized than the Indian protagonist. *Where Shall We Go This Summer* as the title suggests, shows the tragic inner reality of Sita, the main character, who is stifled by the cruelty and callousness of urban life. Fed up with the burden of children, she runs away to a small island and persuades her husband to return. Thus Anita Desai has heralded a new era in the realm of psychological portrayal of the character. She herself observes:

"My novel don't have themes-at least not till they are finished, published or read, do I see any theme.

While writing I follow flashiness of insides, I veer away or even fight any thing that threatens to distort or destroy this inside, and somehow come to the end and look back to see the pattern of footprints on the sand" (4)

In Anita Desai's novels, there is shift from the collective to the personal, from the communal to the individual unlike Markandaya's novels where the stress is on the economic and social background. But in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's novels another famous woman writer the social dimension is more important than the characters. Though Jhabvala is not an Indian by birth she is endowed with keen power of observation which reflects in her amazingly insightful portrayal of life in and around the urban milieu of Delhi. Jhabvala observes the life around her in a detached and dispassionate manner. She is often compared with Jane Austen for her realistic delineation of the familial and social scene in urban middle class family. Some of her novels are ironic illustration of inter-cultural dichotomy. The fiction of Jhabvala clearly fall under two distinct groups. Her first four novels namely *To Whom She Will*, *The Nature of Passion*, *The Householder* and *Get Ready for Battle* are gentle comedies of manner having a totally Indian cast of character dealing with the world she was exposed to and knew best-that of urban middle class. The second group of novels namely *Esmond in India*, *A Backward Place*, *A New Dominion* and *Heat and Dust* deal with a problem much closer to her own heart-that of being an alien in her adopted country.

Love and Marriage in Indian middle class is Jhabvala's favourite subject. Indian family in particular exerts considerable fascination on her and she comes back again and again to the subject. Jhabvala's treats young fascinating love with elements of irony. In her first novel *To Whom She Will* her foolish young people, Amrita and Hari, fall in love and then out of love with equal ease. The system of arranged marriage does not appear to be so tyrannous after all, especially when Amrita falls in love in the end with her husband. Similarly, the young female rebel in *The Nature of Passion* Lalaji's favourite daughter Nimmi who goes out and dates with a man of her-all to the scandal of her orthodox family-falls out of love with another who also happens to be the husband arranged for her. Arranged marriage works out just as well or just as badly as ones that depend on falling in love. Jhabvala is pessimistic about the marriage of her character whether arranged or not. In *Get Ready for Battle* she centers upon India's extreme poverty, exploitation of poor and corruption. The interaction between two cultures, European and Indian, is also her favourite theme. In fact, it is her forte since it is in this area that her personal experience finds expression in art. Mrs Jhabvala being a foreigner never accepts India in its totality. With the passage of time her attitude towards the alien country changes. She has reveled this,

There is a cycle that Europeans-----tend to pass through. It goes like this. First stage, tremendous enthusiasm-everything Indian is marvelous, second stage, everything Indian is marvelous, third stage everything Indian abominable (7).

These feelings are mirrored in the yearning for Europe that overtakes her Western characters in the three novels published during this period: *A Backward Place*, *A New Dominion* and *Heat and Dust*. Mrs Jhabvala applies her theory to characterization of Westerners in India that are a feature of *A Backward Place*. Etta, Judy and Clarissa are poised at different points on a turning wheel of emotional experience, and their being Westerners in India as from individual temperament or social and cultural background. In *A New Dominion*, she selects a time-span identical with the period of time. It takes her two western characters Raymond and Lee, to experience the intense effects of a full turn of the wheel of torture and disillusionment. In *Heat and Dust* the experiences of an English woman in the India of 1923 are recreated and analysed, after a pause of fifty years by another extraordinary courage for whom the cycle 'renews itself' and is poised to make another revolution. Just when India appeared to have failed the novelist as a source of spiritual and emotional sustenance, a new challenge directed her energies to another 'battle' this time to an artistic kind. Though Jhabvala is not a feminist, yet some of her novels central focus is on women. The women in Jhabvala's fiction are shown as the victim of merciless social customs. They are shown as puppets in the hands of social tradition oppressive men dominate society. The presence of Westerner is a very vital aspect of Jhabvala's fiction. In the social context Indian and European meet fall in love, get married and face either mutual dissonance or familial function.

No doubt that the writer writing in the post-independence era began to use language in a very effective way. Writing from the perspective of the fragmented marginalized, racially discriminated people, the Women writers from 1960s onwards began to question the imposition of social practices, which were arbitrary. The New writers began experimenting with the form and literary works associated with post-colonial experiences of migration, identity crisis, diaspora began to be written. In *The God of Small Things* Arundhati Roy portray pictures of the contemporary time by an effective use of language. Arundhati Roy experiments with the form of the language to write a hackneyed story- a high caste woman falls in love with a man of lower caste. The result is obvious-class discord, secret rendezvous, arrest and annihilation. The novel begins with death, is interwoven with memories mostly tragic and ends in a feeling of loneliness and despair-it is not a lived-happily-ever after ending. Roy's resorting to the use of the language metaphor is essential to our understanding of Indian culture and Indian post-colonial scenario. The novel reveals the agony of Estha and Rahel as they watch in fear the atrocities heaped by the police on Velutha—"History in live performance" (309)

Though Roy depicts different time frames, handling of social institutions and characters strike a note of similarity. Be it Romeo-Juliet, Shirin-Farhad or Ammu and Velutha, societal behavior is stereotyped. The reaction of society, which she mirrors in her works, is reflective of the fact that over the years societal

behavior, as far as lover are concerned has not changed. In India human reaction to lover generally begins on a note of disapproval. Society refuses to identify with the plight of the lovers. The novel shows both gender oppression and class oppression-Ammu and Velutha share and suffer oppression at the hands of society. Marriage is also an issue in the novel. Ammu's marriage breaks down and she is made to feel a black sheep of the family. She had married out of caste and then had a divorce- this further weakens her stand. Chacko marries an English lady who walks out of the house after a few years. Chacko returns home and his sexual needs are fulfilled through factory women. When his ex-English wife come with her daughter she is given a warm welcome at Ayemenem. Ammu and her twin children humiliated by the treatment meted out to them by Mammachi Baby Kochamma and Chacko. Ammu had never experienced love and security at home. She was illtreated even by her father. Ammu marries hoping thereby to get out of the clutches of a brutish father. But her husband's alcoholic bouts are too much for her to bear and she returns to Ayemenem to lead a bleak and lonely life. The physical and emotional vacuum in her life brings her in contact with Aelutha-the god of small things.

Thus the Ammu-Velutha relationship is portrayed as a protest against the existing laws of society. It attacks the institutions of family, religion, politics and public administration but in doing so it touches the bounds of sentimentality oscillating between a personal tragedy and an archetypal symbol. Arundhati Roy devises a pattern that shows how frustration sustains perpetual suffering in the life of the characters in the novel.

Indubitably the new era belongs to the writers like Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Manju Kapur and Kiran Desai who are emerging and growing as powerful and prominent writers deserving world wide appeal. In the nineties, Manju Kapur, a Delhi based, has beautifully narrated the hitch and hesitation of Indian women in a joint family in 'male construct' society. Her debut novel *Difficult Daughter* focuses larger issues of patriarchy, which denies women voice and liberty set around the time of partition. Fundamentally she has projected the women of 1940's when women had no voice to assert their rights. In this novel Manju Kapur realistically depicts women of three generations focusing on Virmati, the difficult daughter of second generation. The opening line of novels gives a jolt to the reader "the one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother" (10). This cryptic statement is made by Virmati's only daughter, Ida a divorcee and childless perforce. She could not develop an understanding with her mother during her life and after Virmati's death this realization engulfs her with guilt. Virmati being the eldest is burdened with family duties because of her mother's pregnancies. However, seeds of aspiration are planned in Virmati when she sees Shakuntala, her cousin, tasting the "wine of freedom". She secretly nurtures the desire of being independent and leading a life of her own. Thus one can see the budding of a "New Women" in Virmati who does not want "to be rubber doll for other to move as they willed".

In spite of her initial revolt against the family and firm stand against her love, she succumbs to his imploration and passion. Though she dares to cross on patriarchal threshold, she is caught into another where her free spirit is curbed and all she does is "adjust compromise and adapt". We see in Virmati the incipient New Women who is conscious, introspective educated, wants to carve a life for herself, to some extent she even conveys a personal vision of womanhood by violating current social codes yet she lacks confidence, self control, farsightedness and is psychically imprisoned with an underlying need to be emotionally dependent on Prof. Harish. She fails to break "dependence syndrome" and halts on the path of full human status. This novel is a feminist discourse not because she is woman writing about women but because she has understood woman both as a woman and as a person pressurised by all kinds of visible and invisible contexts.

A Married Woman her next novel tries to prove that educated, culture and city-bred women in spite of their Indianess are in an increasingly stronger position to take control of their intimate live with men than before. The novel shows the sociological pressure that exerts on Astha the protagonist of the novel and how she gradually tries to search of her soul and soul mate. In this novel Manju Kapur try to re-imagine femininity. Astha, while living the life of a conventional wife to her husband Himanshu and a typical Indian mother to her daughter Anuradha, is steering a path of independence, which under normal circumstances an Indian mother

wouldn't dare to do. In order to escape from the tedium of married life, she tries to read clumsily for a heightened sensational experience of life. She tries to destabilize the concept of gender and deconstruct the concept of the Indian middle class morality.

Astha is chained by her middle-class values to her roots. She is the only child of simple, God-fearing parents who are very protective of her and expect her to conform to tradition. She enters into an arranged marriage like any good, middle class girl, doing what her parents think is right for her. Her more modern father might think of Journalism as an appropriate career for her, but uncertain hours of that profession do not agree with the husband and she ends up as a school teacher obeying her husband's wishes without a demur. But this career of hers is never allowed to come before her other more important roles—that of a wife and a mother. In a way, Astha's story is similar to Veermati's of *Difficult Daughter*. Veermati had suffered deeply in order to be united with her love, the professor. Astha too has to depend totally upon the husband and the family. But Astha's story continues where Veermati's ended. The root of tradition and conventions are deeply rooted not only in the society, but also in Astha's husband, so that he carves for a male offspring. When Astha explains that the onus of bearing a male child rests on the man and not the woman, the husband is annoyed at the results of having an educated woman for a wife.

Thus the conflict grows in Astha and manifests itself in the form of recurring migraines and then a growing distance from her husband. Juggling a job and the demands of growing children, pressure at home and non-understanding husband, Astha finds an escape in her writing and her sketching. Her emotions take wings and pour into her poetry but this is also futile as the bleakness of the poems was not appreciated by the husband. Like the blowing of a gentle breeze on a warm humid day, Aijaz Khan entered into the uneventful and arid life of Astha. He was the founder of the Street Theater Group. While Hemant sarcastically said that Aijaz Khan and group were "culture-vulture", Astha shortly was carried away by the good work done by Aijaz Khan. She even agreed to write a script for a play on Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi controversy. She is drawn to him and basks in his admiration but her root clings to her and she continues to live in limbo until Aijaz's untimely death in a Hindu-Muslim riot. It is only after Aijaz's death, that Astha actively participates in rallies against communalism and has the courage to go against her husband's disapproval. Shortly Astha made a trip to Ayodhya to study the communal situation there. It was there she met Pipee the widow of Aijaz for the first time. She was attracted to her hair instantly.

As both their hearts were empty at that time, it was rather easy for them to come closer. It was not difficult for Astha to transfer her attraction from Aijaz to his widow. Now Astha had a substitute-husband in Pipee, she thought that if her husband had an extra 'other' in his life she could also have an extra 'other' a kind of Old Testament tit-for-tat attitude. Both Pipee and Astha seem to be aware of this hidden truth. Though she finds a soul mate in Pipee yet such relationship couldn't go for long time. Astha, however, is not a strong woman. She could never be bold enough to leave her marriage and live with Pipee and the relationship breaks up. Thus in this novel Manju Kapur gives free rein to her imagination and brings her characters and situations alive. The conflict between the roots of oppressive patriarchal culture and the wings of female imagination and sensibility is brought out well in the novel.

In *Home* Manju Kapur once again goes back to her theme of three generation residing in one house the women existing within the joint family set-up. This novel shows the choking closeness and destructive limitation of Indian family values. The novel is about the family of Banwari Lal, his son Yashpal and Pyarelal and their wives and children which explore the world of joint families. It is a world trying to grapple with complexities of adjusting your aspirations and individualities with those of the house, facing challenges of generational changes, trying to accommodate growing children in narrow personal space and even narrower working spaces. The novel focuses on three female characters—Sona (daughter-in law of Banwari Lal), Rupa (Sona's sister) and Nisha (Sona's daughter)—who claim their identity in their own ways. The story begins with two sisters. One is good looking and the other merely plain. The beautiful elder Sona is married to the elder son of Banwari Lal while the younger one, Rupa is attached to a junior Government officer of less value.

Each sister thinks that the other is luckier and each one has more difficulties than the other. Rupa is a part of nuclear family. Rupa and her husband, Prem Nath remain childless couple throughout the story. She is lucky as she has not bear the taunt of in-laws for having no child. Sona unlike Rupa receive's occasionally taunt from her mother-in-law for not having been pregnant after passing two years. Sona struggles to have Children in order to establish her place in the family and rejects the responsibility for Vicky, an orphaned son of the daughter of the family. Sona finally give birth to a baby girl Nisha. Everybody is happy because girl is considered as Lakshmi for the traditional family. The family of Banwari Lal is traditional and patriarchal. They believe that men workout of the house, and women within. Nisha, the main protagonist emerges as a self-dependent woman in the novel. She refuses to reconcile with the patriarchal and male dominated family structure and tries to make her own individual identity. Manju Kapur has portrayed the confused growing up years of Nisha in a heart rending manner as she is sexually abused by her cousin Vicky in the early stage of her life. It affects the child psychologically and mentally. In the traditional family of Banwari Lal's girls education is considered secondary. But Nisha's education begins properly at her aunt's house. A change appears in Nisha's behavior after she leaves her own home. A change appears in Nisha's behavior after she leaves her own home. Her aunt and uncle try to talk on the issue of Vicky with Nisha's but no one in the family ready to believe on it.

During Nisha's education her brother gets married. Now it is Nisha's turn. Her mother knows that she is manglik and it is not easy to find a manglik boy for her. Nisha was told to keep fast for her future husband. She is of modern thinking and does not believe in traditional beliefs. She is not ready to spend her whole day without food and water. Nisha has been influenced by her aunt's updated thinking of life. The lady believes in practical ways of life and thinks of her sister—"There was an age for everything and when the child should be thinking of studies" p-95. Rupa has a business of pickles; Nisha sees her mentor in her aunt and wants to lead a life like her. We see two real sister-Sona and Rupa, born in the same house are totally different in their thinking after their marriage. One considers a working woman as emancipated individual, while for the other it is shame. During first year of her college Nisha comes across a boy Suresh. She falls in love with Suresh but in her mind she always reminds herself of the patriarch set up of her home. When her affair with the Suresh comes to light she has to face many quarries and each member of the family looks her with suspicion. She becomes the prisoner in her own house. Since then, day and night the issue of her marriage is discussed. She makes her uncle Prem Nath ready to meet Suresh and leave them to inquire themselves about him. But her misfortune does not let her do anything peacefully. Suresh also responds coldly on the issue of marriage and gives priority to the wishes of his family rather than personal inclinations. Nisha is badly cheated. She is conscious of the happenings around her. So, she adjusts herself to the situations and turns into a business woman who deals in Salwar suits.

Focusing on the change of women's position, Manju Kapur has presented the changes in the moral foundations of the Banwari Lal's family. The novel touches the realities of life in which owing to the modernization the 'old fashioned' shop of Banwari Lal is replaced by modern type mirror's showroom and the "home" is fragmented into flats. Nisha defies the social structure and defines womanhood entirely in different term that suits her aspirations. She proves to be a responsible working business woman. Meanwhile Nisha's marriage is fixed with Arwind. "Being a woman in modern India means to be entrapped into the inescapable cage of being a woman-wife-mother". Same is fated in Nisha's life. She is closed inside her home after her marriage. Her sister-in-law, Pooja takes over her business. Nisha deliver twin-one girl and one boy and becomes a complete woman according to the frame of society. Manju Kapur's novels present feminism at its most sane, keeping in mind the Indian context. Her female characters reveal their struggle for basic rights, quest for identity and survival. They dare to break down the conventional perceptions and dogmas of the patriarchal society. Though they do not achieve liberation through wider occupation or feminist revolts, but through deviant behavior become aware of their self reliance which is proved in concern with new women

Thus all these women novelists seem aware of the negative aspect of illogical feminism. An analysis of the novel by Indian women novelists with feminist view reveals that these novelists have written with immense concern and understanding for their female characters. The hidden and suppressed world of Indian

women comes to full light in these novels. However, the feminist movement during the latter half of the twentieth century influences literature greatly. As a result a gradual change in the status of women is witnessed with the passage of time. Indian feminine sensibility can be fully felt by reading these novels. It will not be wrong to call these novelists the most powerful forerunner of Women's liberation movement in India. It is an accepted fact that these women writers have added a new dimension to Indian-English fiction with their exquisite perception of men and matters.

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