

Socio-Cultural Study of Manju Kapur's Fiction: A Mertonian Perspective

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By

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled “Socio-Cultural Study of Manju Kapur’s Fiction: A Mertonian Perspective” submitted in fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is the outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Sanjay Prasad Pandey, working as Professor in the School of Liberal & Creative Arts (Social Sciences and Languages) of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting critical observations of other investigators, due acknowledgements have been made of the sources. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “Socio-Cultural Study of Manju Kapur’s Fiction: A Mertonian Perspective” submitted in the fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in English is a research work carried out by Manjit Kaur, Reg. No. 42000442 is a bonafide record of her original work carried out under my supervision, and that no part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma, or equivalent course.

(Signature of Supervisor)

Name of supervisor: **Dr Sanjay Prasad Pandey**

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PREFACE

The completion of this thesis entitled “Socio-Cultural Study of Manju Kapur’s Fiction: A Mertonian Perspective” marks a significant milestone in my academic journey and is the culmination of years of research, reflection, and writing. My interest in the socio-cultural dimensions of literature led me to explore the works of Manju Kapur, whose novels provide a rich tapestry of contemporary Indian society. Through her portrayal of characters and their struggles, Kapur offers a unique viewpoint to examine the complexities of social norms, cultural expectations, and individual aspirations. In this study, Robert K. Merton’s sociological concepts have been applied to analyse the social structures and cultural patterns depicted in Kapur’s fiction. Merton’s concepts, such as anomie, conformity, rebellion, retreatism and innovation provide a robust framework for understanding the interplay between individual identity and societal constraints in Kapur’s narratives. The intensive exploration of the review of past and the present literature on Manju Kapur led to the belief that no critic and reviewer of the past and the present had applied the socialistic ideas of Robert K. Merton on the fiction of Manju Kapur. The research gap was found and the research on the fiction of Manju Kapur was carried out from the fresh perspective breaking from the traditional understanding and criticism of Manju Kapur.

Manju Kapur is a postcolonial novelist who has depicted the social and political times and the life of the women living in the pre-independence and post-independence India. She departed from the traditional novelists such as Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan and came under the impact of the Indian and the western feminists such as Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, and Kate Millet and evolved her fresh views on love, marriage, sexuality and lesbianism. Manju Kapur created a galaxy of women characters to depict the social, economic and marital life of her women who are trapped in the oppressive patriarchy. She started her career with the publication of her first novel *Difficult Daughters* and still continuing her career with publication of her last novel *Brothers*. In all her six novels she presented her “New Woman” who is rebellious, deviant, educated, economically independent and assertive.

The main focus of each novel of Manju Kapur is marriage; it acts as a nucleus and all the themes revolve around this theme. Manju Kapur talks of child marriage, extra-marital affairs and divorces in her novels. Each woman is obliged to marry and to reproduce children in her life. Barren women like Sona, Rupa and Ishita lead a despicable and wretched life. In *Difficult Daughters* (1998) by Manju Kapur, Virmati, the protagonist, exhibits rebellious and deviant behaviour in the context of her traditional Indian family and society during the pre-independence era. Her actions challenge the expectations placed on women regarding education, marriage, and personal freedom.

Her second novel *A Married Woman* (2002) is about the life and struggles of Astha who breaks the patriarchal male hegemony and enters into the lesbian relations with Pipee. Manju Kapur explores the problems and challenges of Indian women through Astha. Astha's actions highlight her inner conflict and desire for a more authentic life, challenging societal norms and expectations.

Home (2006) of Manju Kapur presents the lives of married women and describes the complication of the arranged marriages in joint families. The women suffer the economic problems after their marriages. They are worried about harmony and security of their life. Nisha is a modern woman who expresses her passion to disrupt the society and its age-old traditions. She doesn't want to be like a doll in the house to be sold in the market at any rate.

Manju Kapur's novel *The Immigrant* (2011) depicts the themes of cultural dislocation and the displacement of the characters. The main focus is on Nina who is a thirty one year old spinster living with her widowed mother in Delhi. She marries Ananda, a dentist of Canada and flies abroad with her husband to begin her new married life. Nina feels alienated in the alien land; her husband doesn't talk much to her. She is haunted by old memories of her old Indian culture and individualism.

The novel *Custody* (2011) of Manju Kapur presents the heartrending life of a rebellious woman; her loss of love and sufferings caused by the betrayal. Shagun and Ishita are rebellious women as they disrupt the social structure in their passion to

violate the social code of morality. Manju Kapur has dramatised the anguish of women who fail to maintain their family.

Brothers (2016) is the last novel by Manju Kapur. Tapti Gaina is the main character in the novel and through her Manju Kapur narrates the tale of the discrimination of women and the main cause of their anomie. Tapti is an attractive, sensible working lady but she is plagued by self-doubt. The plot depicts the societal pressures on the sensibility of women and their internal dissonance. The storyline spans from the 1930s to the 2010s and Manju Kapur gives the comprehensive view of the changing status of women and the growth of the rebellious spirit in them. The women struggle to end social injustices such as child marriage, widow remarriage and purdah customs.

Conclusively, the world of Manju Kapur is of new women who are the product of a new era of science and technology, internet and cyber culture. They are deviant, rebellious, independent, assertive, dominating, and anxious to break the traditional chains of male hegemony. They suffer but their journey of life is exhilarating, motivational and thrilling. Each novel is explored and investigated relying on the latest social ideas of Robert K. Merton.

The journey of completing this thesis has been both challenging and rewarding. It has broadened my perspective on the intricate relationship between literature and society and has deepened my appreciation for the power of fiction to reflect and critique the social order. I hope this thesis will contribute to the ongoing scholarly discourse on Manju Kapur's work and inspire further research into the socio-cultural dimensions of contemporary Indian fiction.

ABSTRACT

The thesis entitled “Socio-Cultural Study of Manju Kapur’s Fiction: A Mertonian Perspective” examines Manju Kapur's fiction through the sociological prism of Robert K. Merton's specifically, his ideas about anomie, deviance, and social structure. The complex ways in which modern Indian society is portrayed in Manju Kapur's novels offer a rich environment for exploring the relationships between societal limitations and personal autonomy. Robert K. Merton, a luminary in the field of sociology, introduced several key concepts that delve into the complexities of social behaviour and structures. By applying Merton's theoretical framework, this study seeks to elucidate how Kapur's characters navigate the complex terrain of societal expectations and personal aspirations, often resulting in experiences of strain and deviance. Kapur's portrayal of characters negotiating the collision between traditional expectations and new societal structures resonates with Merton's philosophy, which explores the tension between cultural goals and the tools available to attain them. Similar to Merton's theory that social pressures can result in aberrant conduct, Kapur's characters frequently struggle with social conventions that serve as barriers, pushing them to make unusual decisions and take unusual actions. The novels offer a rich mosaic for comprehending how characters, especially women, negotiate their roles within a changing Indian society, offering social commentary on the tensions and disruptions in the socio-cultural landscape in addition to bringing literary reflections of Merton's theory of anomie. Kapur's novels *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, *Home*, *Custody*, *The Immigrant* and *Brothers* depict the lives of women striving for identity and autonomy within the confines of a patriarchal society. For instance, in *Difficult Daughters*, the protagonist Virmati grapples with her desire for education and independence against her family's traditional expectations: "It was as though her entire being was being consumed by the need to be someone different, someone who belonged to herself and not to her family" (Kapur 25). This sentiment reflects Merton's concept of anomie, where there is a disjunction between culturally prescribed goals and the legitimate means available to achieve them.

Manju Kapur is a postcolonial novelist who depicts two phases of the history of feminism. She was greatly influenced by the western and Indian feminists such as Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, and Kate Millet. Her oeuvre consists of only six novels but she has created a galaxy of characters depicting all the pre-independent and post-independent trends of feminism. This study is significant as it explores the socio-cultural forces that impacted the life and works of Manju Kapur. The socialistic ideas of Robert K. Merton are latest as he has explored the various trends in the social structure of society. He has discussed in detail the various social concepts such as conformity, strain, and deviant attitude of the people living in society. The concept of anomie and various modes of adaptations are investigated in the textual analysis of the characters of Manju Kapur. Robert K. Merton's anomie theory offers a fascinating prism to examine the complex interplay of societal norms and human desires reflected in Manju Kapur's tales while analysing her novels within the socio-cultural environment. Kapur's portrayal of characters negotiating the collision between traditional expectations and new societal structures accords with Merton's philosophy, which explores the conflict between cultural aspirations and the tools available to attain them. Similar to Merton's theory that social pressures can result in aberrant conduct, Kapur's characters frequently struggle with social conventions that serve as barriers, pushing them to make unusual decisions and take unusual actions. The novels offer a rich mosaic for comprehending how characters, especially women, play their roles within the changing Indian society, offering an exquisite commentary on the tensions and disruptions in the socio-cultural landscape in addition to bringing literary reflections of Merton's theory of anomie. Manju Kapur wrote six novels; *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008), *Custody* (2011), and *Brothers* (2016) depicting the intricate interplay of tradition and modernity, societal expectations, and individual aspirations within the evolving landscape of Indian society. Merton was famous for his original innovative theories of anomie, strain, and deviant behaviour. He wrote *Social Theory and Functional Analysis* (1969), *The Sociology of Science* (1973), *Sociological Traditions from Generation to Generations* (1980) and *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1968). Robert King Merton propounded his concepts of deviant behaviour and social anomie in his notable works such as *Social Structure and Anomie* (1938) and

Science, Technology, and Society in Seventeenth-Century England. Merton has explored the various causes leading to structural strain. He has investigated the causes of deviant behaviour of man in the society. People may feel strained when there is a mismatch between cultural aspirations and institutionalised mechanisms. This stress might result in aberrant conduct. Merton cites five distinct ways in which people react to stress: (a) Conformity: This is the most common response to societal pressures. Conformists accept societal values and the prescribed ways of achieving them, striving to reach their goals through lawful means. (b) Innovation: Innovators acknowledge societal values but reject the accepted methods for achieving them. They may pursue their goals through unconventional or illegal methods, such as engaging in criminal activities or prostitution. (c) Ritualism: Ritualists abandon the pursuit of societal goals but continue to adhere to established procedures. They may become disillusioned with the possibility of success but still diligently follow the rules and work hard. (d) Retreatism: Retreatists reject both societal values and established methods. They may turn to substance abuse or withdraw from society, sometimes resulting in homelessness. (e) Rebellion: Rebels reject both societal values and the institutionalised ways of achieving them, aiming to create a new social order. They may become political activists or revolutionaries in their efforts to bring about change.

These concepts are applied to the investigation of the behaviour of the women characters of Manju Kapur. The study explores the trauma, sufferings, and the oppression of women in the rigid patriarchal system of Indian society. Using Robert K. Merton's theory of anomie, this research explores the ways in which Kapur's works depict the alienation and dissatisfaction that can arise when individuals are unable to achieve their socially-prescribed goals, and how these feelings can manifest themselves in deviant behaviour of these individuals. Drawing on Merton's concept of anomie, it analyses how Kapur's novels illustrate the conflict between cultural norms and individual aspirations, as well as the effects of inequality on the lives of her characters. This study further examined the ways in which her fiction projects the challenges faced by women in Indian society. In this study all the six novels of Manju Kapur depict the complexity of the interweaving of tradition and modernity as

she presents the expectations of the traditional society and dreams and aspirations of individual characters who work under the impact of the evolving modernity. Kapur's tapestry consists chiefly of women protagonists such as Virmati, Ida, Kasturi, Astha, Nisha, Sona, Tapti and Pipee. All these female characters have been portrayed as the victims of Indian culture in transition. They are trapped in the traditional and male dominated social system and often they emerge deviant and rebellious in their life. The women of Manju Kapur are confronted with social issues such as early marriage, forced marriage, domestic violence, gender discrimination, and other social taboos. They experience social inequality and revolt against these cultural forces. They are deviant in their behaviour and are condemned for their rebellious actions. The force of anomie grips their consciousness as they feel misfit in their life. They are crazy to become rich, popular, to earn name and fame and in their quest for their identity often emerge as deviants.

Manju Kapur's career and scholastic path provided a strong basis for her development as a novelist. Her career experiences and academic endeavors equipped her with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully negotiate the literary world and develop her own voice in Indian literature. Her scholastic journey began at Delhi University with a Master's degree in English literature, which served as a springboard for her exploration of a variety of literary genres and storytelling techniques. Her exposure to a wide range of literary works sharpened her storytelling skills and expanded her perspectives, providing a solid base for her future creative ventures. "Delving into diverse literary genres during my academic years enriched my understanding of storytelling, laying the groundwork for my narrative style," Kapur once said in reflection on her academic experience (Kapur, *The Hindu*, 3). Her scholarly endeavors also gave her a rich environment in which to critically analyse a variety of tales, which helped her to understand the subtleties of society and the complexity of human emotions in literature. Her keen sense of observation and interpretation were further developed in the demanding academic setting and these qualities would eventually set her works apart. Her views on social structures have also been greatly influenced by her work as an educator. During her time as a teacher, Kapur gained insightful knowledge of social norms, family dynamics, and

human behaviour. She was able to examine the complexities of interpersonal interactions from a unique perspective because of her direct exposure to a wide range of personalities and life experiences. “Observing the myriad facets of human behaviour in my teaching profession deeply influenced my portrayal of characters and relationships in my novels,” the author said, looking back on her teaching career (Kapur, Interview with *The Guardian* 2). Manju Kapur’s writing growth was significantly accelerated by her scholastic years spent studying a variety of literary works. Her knowledge of literature was enhanced by her exposure to a variety of genres, styles, and narrative techniques. Her novels would subsequently showcase her ability to dive further into the subtleties of storytelling, which was made possible by her academic background.

Manju Kapur's literary journey was profoundly shaped by a rich mosaic of authors, books, and movements that left indelible marks on her writing style, thematic choices, and narrative techniques. These influences played a pivotal role in honing her writing abilities and crafting narratives that reverberates deeply with the complexities of Indian society. Manju Kapur is a remarkable contemporary Indian novelist. Her novels are loaded with social dynamics, cultural subtleties and familial expectations. Seema Suneel writes in her book *Man-Woman Relationship in Indian Fiction*:

Following its independence, India saw a nuanced fusion of contemporary and tradition. Values, traditions, and changing social standards were woven into the fabric of society in complex ways. Because of her upbringing and experiences in this environment, Kapur was able to include these subtleties into her creative works. (123)

Manju Kapur has depicted the growth of new trends and new psychology of women struggling to shape their identity. Her women like Virmati and Astha emerge as “New Women” who are rebellious and deviant in their behaviour. This thesis has modern relevance and social significance as the main thrust of Manju Kapur’s fiction is the depiction of the plight of women and the vindication of their rights in the society. She strongly advocates the case of women contending that no society could make progress without the cooperation of women. Manju Kapur's development as a

novelist is the result of a combination of her life experiences, cultural influences, educational background, literary inspirations, and a strong dedication to capturing the complex lives of Indian women. Her works provide witness to her commitment to deciphering the intricacies of gender relations and societal expectations, giving voice to the marginalised and serving as a forum for reflection and discussion within a broader socio-cultural framework.

This thesis explores the multidimensional layers hidden in the plots of Manju Kapur's novels. Manju Kapur is a famous Indian feminist novelist. Feminism, an outgrowth of western literature and critical theory, stands as one of the most pivotal and widely embraced themes in literature worldwide. Indian English writers, particularly women authors, have been significantly impacted by this movement, giving rise to a distinct branch within Indian English literature focused on feminist ideals. Ajaz Ahmad Bhat comments in his paper on feminism:

More than half of the population of the world is made of women but she is not treated on par with man despite innumerable evolutions and revolutions. She has the same mental and moral power, yet she is not recognised as his equal. In such conditions, the question of searching her identity is justified. Actually in this male dominated society, she is a wife, mother, sister and homemaker. She is expected to serve, sacrifice, submit and tolerate each ill against her peacefully. Her individual self has very little recognition in the patriarchal society and so self effacement is her normal way of life.(Bhat 30)

Manju Kapur through her novels reveals her passion for feminism in modern Indian English fiction. Her literary journey aligns her with those women writers who bring to the fore the challenges faced by women, encompassing various facets of feminism, including the psychological portrayal of female characters. Greene observed thus:

The emergence of feminist ideas and feminist politics depends on the understanding that in all societies which divide the sexes into differing cultural, economic or political spheres, women are less valued than

men. Feminism also depends on the premise that women can consciously and collectively change their social place. (Green 134)

Feminism advocates for the equal rights and status of women, aiming for parity with men in all spheres based on the principle of gender equality. The concept gained prominence in the early twentieth century and became an integral part of the socio-political movements aimed at liberating women from patriarchal oppression. Beyond a political movement, feminism involves the study and resolution of gender-based issues, challenging societal norms regarding the roles of men and women. “Feminism is essentially the belief that men and women should be treated equally in the legal, economic, and social spheres, regardless of caste, religion, or other prominent characteristics that define them” (Usha Kaushik 116). The writings of Indian women authors clearly reflect the influence of feminist thought, either directly or indirectly. Women writers, in particular, have found a platform to honestly chronicle their own experiences and viewpoints in fiction. Gayle aptly says:

Women writers in contemporary Indian English literature explore the psychological, social, cultural, family, and spiritual paths women take in search of their own identities, while also shedding light on the limitations imposed by society on them. (Gayle 136)

Manju Kapur is a bold writer depicting the issues of patriarchy, inter caste marriage, family bond, and male-female bond in the contemporary social set up. She has depicted her woman as a victim of biology, gender, domestic violence and circumstances. She gives her own views of social relations. Her novels intricately weave together the strands of Indian society and culture. Marriage is the main theme of all her novels and there are so many issues linked with the issue of marriage. Ironically each female character of Manju Kapur is under strict obligation to marry a boy.

Manju Kapur broke from the traditional theory of marriage, love and sex. Women in her novels are rebellious and love freedom to enjoy their own identity. She created “New Women” who are educated and struggle to forge their independent identity. They revolt against the traditional patriarchal system and express their free

ideas and thoughts about love and sex. Manju Kapur focuses on the rebellious nature of her women. She explored the growth of rebellious spirit among the women of the west. In ancient Indian society the popular opinion was against woman and she was dictated to pursue the conventional bourgeois woman's career of marriage and motherhood. Indeed, her role was fixed as she was not allowed to transgress against sex, gender and class distinctions. The emergence of "New Woman" became inevitable, her struggle to transform herself from "a relative creature into a woman of independent means intimately connected with the stirrings and rumblings now perceivable in the social and industrial world" (Ardis 1). Socio-cultural forces, new science, new technology, new education and trends towards liberalisation brought about the emergence of the new woman fiction. The last two decades after the colonial rule witnessed the start of a change in social attitudes regarding gender relations; the concept of male domination was punctured and the modern concept of gender equality gained momentum. Passionate discussion started on issues of marriage and divorce laws, right to property, custody rights, educational and employment opportunities for women and female suffrage.

Kapur depicts her own postmodern concept of love and sex and dramatises the lesbian relationship in the novel. She depicts Indian women's quest for identity trapped in the bog of male hegemony and social disruptive order. Her novels depict the longing of Indian woman to achieve her own identity in the male controlled society. For instance, in *Difficult Daughters*, the protagonist Virmati grapples with her desire for education and independence against her family's traditional expectations. She remarks thus:

The mother-daughter nexus is only one of the many manifestations of the Indian women's roles. She is a wife, a mother, a daughter-in-law in fact there are many aspects of a woman's life. (23)

In her novel *A Married Woman* the issues of female gender and sexual identity are depicted through the characters of Astha and her husband Hemant. Astha is restless and soon she is transformed into a lesbian. She becomes careless with everything. Pipeelika becomes a lesbian widow. Astha is lonely at home as her husband is away most of his time at work. Astha gets solace in the lesbian

relationship with Pipeelika. They emerge as transgressive figures in the novel. The lesbian women enjoy a secret celebration of sexual pleasures. Kapur comments thus: "they had been skin on skin, mind on mind" (*A Married Woman* 303). When "Pipee closed her hands around me, I was barely able to breathe from the pleasure, exclaims Astha" (*A Married Woman* 256). Catharine R. Stimpson states that "Lesbianism represents a commitment of skin, blood, breast, and bone" (Stimpson 197). Astha enjoys sexual freedom in breaking the norms of the society. She revolts against the patriarchal society and conventional heterosexual norms. Ashok Kumar observes thus:

Manju Kapur has shown the passions of women for love and lesbianism, an unworkable marriage and its consequent aggravation, and the traumas of her female heroes, who suffer and die for their success. (Kumar 165)

A woman may be poor or rich, her first priority is to marry a boy as it is the social necessity in the world of Manju Kapur. She gets her identity only through her marriage. In the novel *The Immigrant* Nina realises, "we are conditioned to think a woman's fulfilment lies in birth and motherhood, just as we are conditioned to feel failures if we don't marry" (233). So each of the women of Manju Kapur confront two kinds of oppression, first by the imposition of motherhood as a symbol of her status and second by the responsibility of continuing the human race. "Sona doesn't conceive for ten years and her life becomes hellish. Though medically speaking, infertility was not specifically a woman's problem; it was she who bore the brunt of this particular deficiency" (*Home* 165). Manju Kapur as a feminist highlights the sexual repression of women in her novels leading them to suffer the trauma. Miller refers to this domination as "a most ingenious form of interior colonization" (Miller 25). When Nina enters the alien land Kapur comments "Welcome home, darling" said Ananda, putting his arm around his wife afterwards. And that was the main point, wasn't it? Not her orgasms, but the fact that she was home" (*Home* 121). Nina feels pressure on her own physical desires. Female body is colonised by males as he is free to use her and abuse her sexually. Nina is a "New Woman" as she struggles to conquer her isolation and fear. Finally she gets her identity and recognition.

In *Custody*, Shagun is working like a slave to Raman who neglects her. He is lost in his own job to make money but Shagun finds a way to satisfy her desires and to end her alienation. She falls in love with Mr. Ashok Kumar who is the boss of her husband and finds a way to enjoy her sexual pleasures. She breaks all the chains of rigid patriarchy and divorces Raman. Shagun leaves Raman because she feels suffocated. It is the clash of personalities that leads to their separation. She decides to come out of the stifling bondage by opting for divorce. Her decision is welcomed by Ashok when he says:

They could no more be parted than a hand from its arm, the sea from the shore, the stars from the sky. But what he did understand was that she could not continue with this strain. It was better to make a clear break. (*Custody* 112)

Shagun dares to leave her husband although she is fully aware that the society doesn't recognise the identity of a woman who leaves or divorces her husband. People hate her and she doesn't enjoy respect and status. She snaps a meaningless conjugal relationship, a matrimonial bond that has lost all its sanctity.

This study has been undertaken keeping in view the following objectives:

- 1) To critically analyse the theoretical ideas of Robert K. Merton and establish their relevance to the Indian society
- 2) To study the fiction of Manju Kapur in the light of the ideas given by Robert K. Merton
- 3) To understand the disjuncture between the socially approved means and culturally accepted goals as portrayed in Manju Kapur's fiction
- 4) To examine the complexities leading to strain and deviant behaviour

This study is based on explorative, interpretative and analytical research methodology. The proposed research has applied conceptual tools from the anomie theory as propounded by Robert K. Merton in a close reading of Manju Kapur's selected fiction.

In the Introduction of this study, the life, achievements and experiences of Manju Kapur have been discussed. The relevance of the theoretical framework and the research methodology has been discussed. All the important concepts of Robert K. Merton have been discussed to give a new critical approach to the fiction of Manju Kapur. The world of Manju Kapur is packed with the themes of male hegemony, blood thirsty patriarchy and domestic violence. Women suffer sexual oppression and sexual abuse as they struggle to explore their self in the male dominated society. This study explores the implications of Merton's ideas in the context of Kapur's exploration of familial relationships, educational aspirations, and the quest for personal fulfilment.

In the first chapter of the study entitled “The Concepts of Merton: Issues and Perspectives” all the important ideas and the concepts of Merton are elucidated in detail. His concepts of deviant behaviour, revolt, aggression, social strain and social change have been discussed. Merton’s famous conceptual tool of anomie is at once revolutionary and original governing the lives of the individuals. In the present study all the major characters of Manju Kapur have been examined and analysed relying on this concept of Merton. The application of anomie gives new perception to study the mindset of the characters of Manju Kapur. Robert K. Merton’s sociological concepts offer profound insights into the issues and perspectives of Indian society. From understanding the impact of social norms and economic pressures to examining the roles of education and gender, Merton’s ideas provide a strong analytical framework for exploring the dynamic and multifaceted nature of social behaviour in India.

In the second chapter entitled “The Making of the Novelist” the birth, influences and the trajectory of Manju Kapur’s writing career have been fully discussed and explored. She emerged as the postcolonial novelist raising the women question like the western feminists. Manju Kapur’s journey as a novelist is marked by her keen observations of societal norms and her empathetic portrayal of women’s experiences. Her academic background, personal experiences, and the socio-cultural milieu of India, all have played crucial roles in shaping her literary voice. Through her compelling narratives and complex characters, Kapur offers a profound critique of the traditional structures that define and confine women, making her an essential voice in contemporary Indian literature.

The third chapter entitled “Robert K. Merton and the Fictional World of Manju Kapur” explores the application of the theoretical ideas of Robert K. Merton on the selected novels of Manju Kapur. Merton identified individual’s five modes of adaptation to cultural goals and institutional means: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion. These modes are evident in the diverse responses of Kapur’s characters to societal pressures. In the novel *Home*, Nisha initially conforms to her family's expectations by engaging in the family business and preparing for an arranged marriage. Her adherence to traditional roles illustrates conformity to societal norms. Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* embodies innovation by seeking education and personal freedom, using unconventional means to achieve her goals in a restrictive environment. Astha in *A Married Woman* initially displays ritualism by performing her duties as a wife and a mother without questioning the underlying societal expectations, even when they offer little personal fulfilment. In *Custody*, Shagun’s decision to leave her marriage and traditional roles signifies retreatism, as she rejects both societal goals and means, withdrawing from the social system. Nina in *The Immigrant* represents rebellion, as she seeks to redefine her identity and purpose by pursuing education and career opportunities in a new cultural context, challenging traditional goals and means.

In the fourth chapter entitled “Fetters of Tradition and Quest for Identity” the struggles of all the women characters are investigated. Kapur has focused on the quest for identity of her women as they struggle to break the chains of society. Kapur’s novels vividly depict the constraints imposed by traditional societal norms and expectations. These traditions often serve as fetters, restricting the freedom and choices of her characters, especially women. They are trapped in the den of patriarchy but they struggle to hunt for their independent spaces. They are always under a dilemma to confront the harsh social realities. They are forced to face the recurring problems of love, life and sexuality; they are motivated to revolt against the society to forge a new identity in society. Kapur's fiction poignantly captures the struggle between the fetters of tradition and the quest for identity. Her protagonists, primarily women, navigate the complexities of societal expectations while striving for personal autonomy and self-expression. Through their journeys, Kapur illustrates

the profound impact of cultural norms on individual identity and the resilience required to challenge and redefine these norms.

In the fifth chapter entitled “The World of Women and Manju Kapur's Novels” the lives of all the women characters of all her novels have been discussed in detail. Each of her novels moves around the themes of marriage, family issues, mother-daughter relationship, man-woman relationship, separation, sexuality, lesbianism and sexual liberty. The novels of Manju Kapur depict the dilemmas of women living in a hostile Indian society. Like Angela Carter, Bapsi Sidhwa, Monica Ali and Khaled Hosseini, the fiction of Manju Kapur deals with the themes of feminism, patriarchy, sexuality and representation of the female body. Kapur has faithfully depicted the plight of the women protagonists who encountered bloodthirsty patriarchy, in their quest for identity in a colonised hostile world. Her novels offer a compelling exploration of the world of women in contemporary India, navigating the complexities of identity, relationships, and societal constraints. Through her fine portrayal of female protagonists, Kapur sheds light on the multifaceted experiences of women striving for personal autonomy and fulfilment amidst cultural traditions and societal expectations.

In Conclusion, all the major issues are resolved and all the main outcomes of the research have been explored. The socio-cultural study of Manju Kapur's fiction through Mertonian perspective provides valuable insights into the complexities of contemporary Indian society, particularly in relation to gender roles, familial expectations, and individual aspirations. This thesis has explored Kapur's portrayal of characters grappling with societal norms and their quest for identity, using Robert K. Merton's sociological theories as a framework. It is argued that Manju Kapur is a historical novelist of pre-colonial and post-colonial periods as she raised the woman question following the feminism of Virginia Woolf, Beauvoir and Kate Millet. Manju Kapur deals with the question of the fractured identities of women of India like Anita Desai, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy and Githa Hariharan. Manju Kapur created a galaxy of women characters in her novels such as Kasturi, Virmati, Ida, Sona, Nisha, Shagun, Peeplika, Astha, Nina, Tapti Gaina to depict the female consciousness. The novelist has depicted the multidimensional faces of her women. Her six novels are

packed with all the contemporary issues such as child marriage, divorce, remarriage of women, education, freedom, and the identity of women. India is entering into the new phase of cultural transformation and this new changed set up women's role in building the modern society is indispensable. Kapur's characters navigate a complex terrain shaped by societal expectations, familial obligations, and personal aspirations, illustrating the enduring relevance of Merton's sociological concepts. As Kapur continues to captivate readers with her insightful portrayal of human relationships and societal norms, her work serves as both a mirror reflecting societal complexities and a critique of entrenched cultural norms.

This study will be very fruitful to explore the psyche of women living in the modern society of India. Their challenges, problems and conflicts are investigated from the socialistic perspective employing the effective tools of Robert K. Merton. The socio-cultural study of Manju Kapur's fiction from Mertonian perspective promises significant benefits for society. This research will deepen our understanding of complex social dynamics, especially within the context of Indian society. Highlighting the struggles and empowerment of women Manju Kapur advocates for gender equality, influencing social attitudes and policies aimed at improving the status of women. The research will contribute to the preservation and dissemination of Indian cultural narratives, enhancing cultural awareness within Indian society. This research can also illuminate the intricate connections between literature and social norms, demonstrating how fiction not only reflects but also shapes societal values.

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Introduction

Society is one of the earliest organisations in the human world. It came into existence when some people, earlier living in isolation and fending for their selves, so far as their needs and security were concerned, felt that they could lead a safer and comfortable life if they organised themselves into a unit. The organisation is premised on the rights and duties of its citizens; this requires relinquishing of individual independence to a certain extent to align with the prescribed rules and regulations. It implies that a society is a “developed and civilized” world as compared to that of animals which is governed by “survival of the fittest”. The society devises certain directives to ensure appropriate behaviour and lifestyle vis a vis its protocol along with protection to those considered weak-- physically or economically. Every society has its own culture and a code of conduct to bring about conformity with an aim to fortify peace, harmony, and safety for all the members of it. According to Kingsley Davis, “Culture is a complex whole including art, music, architecture, literature, science and all aesthetic technology, philosophy and social institutions, religious and moral and aesthetic values”(Davis 342). There also comes up a moral or ethical code of propriety and any deviation from it by one or more of the members breaks the set patterns. Such deviation from the ethical conduct leads to restlessness, intolerance and the ‘guilty’ are punished as per the demands of the established code. A non-observance of social regulations elicits punishment as per the established norms which may be direct or tacit.

The social, economic and political thinkers, along with academicians, contributed to the intellectual development through exchange of ideas. The social and ethical codes of conduct underwent a change with the passage of time in response to the development of ideas in different spheres. The role of the individual in such a vast and complex society remained no longer of ensuring his safety and fulfilling the essential needs for survival. As Abul Hussain observes about the personality of an individual:

Every individual is born into a particular socio-cultural milieu. But he/she is not born as social. Hence, the pattern of culture designs the personality of an individual. Just as it is natural and inevitable that fish must live in the water. So it is natural and inevitable that man must live in the cultural environment. Consequently one's ideas, attitudes, values, norms one follows and skills one acquires are determined by culture. No individual can organize his/her personality independently of the cultural environment in which he/she is born. There is always a body of culture which gives content and direction to the manner in which an individual will develop as a person. (Hussain 40608)

As social life is no longer simple, and the behaviour of the people in the society is formed by the number of influencers – familial, religious, moral, social, psychological etc. The characters in a literary work represent the real people, men and women of society of a particular period. Usually, the genre of writing has a close relation to the material it is based on. A number of literary theories have emerged, some scrutinising the genre or form of the work, others probing into the actions, reactions, and the psychological working of the characters. The biased social norms privileging one gender over another, one race or class over others too find expression in literary writings and so do the protests against the prejudiced social and cultural codes. Sociological theories are often used to explain different social phenomena and create a deeper understanding of the world we live in. Fiction allows critics to explore, express, and criticise these theories and ideas in a creative way. Many authors/ researchers use fiction to explore the implications and consequences of various sociological theories, often illustrating the various complexities of social lives. By combining fiction with sociological theories, critics/ researchers are able to provide unique insights into the roles and behaviour of people in society and the relationships between them. The relationship between sociological theories and fiction can be explored in a few different ways. On one hand, fiction can be used to explore sociological ideas and theories in a real-world context, allowing readers to explore topics such as power dynamics, gender roles, and social stratification in a unique way. On the other hand, sociological theories can be used to analyse and

interpret the themes and messages in fictional works, helping readers to gain a better understanding of the underlying social issues in the story.

Fiction is a powerful tool for exploring and understanding the world around us, including its social aspects. Various theories provide insightful and helpful frameworks to interpret the characters' motivations, relationships, and other dynamics within fiction. In this way, literary theories can provide a useful tool to better understand and interpret fiction. The thesis entitled "Socio-Cultural Study of Manju Kapur's Fiction: A Mertonian Perspective" explores the multidimensional layers hidden in the plots of Kapur's novels. She is a bold writer depicting patriarchal issues, family ties, intercaste marriages, and man-woman relationships in the contemporary social set up. She has portrayed her female characters as a victim of natural disasters, gender norms, and domestic abuse. Manju Kapur is a modern woman writer who gives her own views of social relations. Her novels intricately weave together the strands of Indian society and culture. This thesis attempts to shed light on the complicated link between her literary works and Mertonian perspective by carefully examining her personal experiences, the cultural set up she lived in, and the sociological underpinnings of her novels. Her works mostly centre on the development and progression of female characters' lives, as well as their battles for survival and identity exploration while living in the harsh Indian society. Interestingly, Manju Kapur had employed the body as a powerful weapon to survive in male-dominated society. They assert their right to govern their body by making choices like getting married, having children, and getting divorced. Germaine Greer concludes in her book *Female Eunuch* that "Whatever else we are or may pretend to be, we are certainly our bodies" (19). The female body and her sexuality is culturally coded, the female body is linked with honour of the family, community and society. Body and sexuality create tensions in the mind of women of Manju Kapur. Sexuality and oppression are the main themes of the novels of Manju Kapur. Interestingly, as a feminist she was inspired by the philosophical concepts of Immanuel Kant. He expressed his views on sexuality and power dynamics in society in his famous work *Lectures on Ethics* (1963) as:

Sexual love is natural in life but it expresses the appetite of the body; the Object is used and misused; the person after the sexual adventure is thrown away as people throw away a lemon which has been sucked dry. After sexual oppression the moral degradation begins. (Kant 163)

Kant further remarks that “sexuality is not an inclination which one human being has for another as such, but is an inclination for the sex of another; it is a principle of the degradation of human nature” (Kant 164). People consider sexual desire as an appetite, and it degrades people. He continues his view in this way:

The desire which a man has for a woman is not directed towards her because she is a human being, but because she is a woman; that she is a human being is of no concern to the man only her sex is the object of his desires. (Kant 164)

Her women assert their identities through body and in compliance with the cultural codes and eventually suffer the trauma of life. Pooja Tolani comments thus, “The stories of Manju Kapur effectively convey the intricacies of people's aspirations and struggles in addition to the societal shifts that have taken place.” Manju Kapur is a prominent woman novelist like Anita Desai and Shobha De who had the courage to depict the challenges confronted by the middle class Indian women. Her women characters often confront with the contemporary orthodox society to assert their right of freedom. In this regard, Beauvoir observes:

Passage from the state of Nature to the state of Culture is marked by man's ability to view biological relations as a series of contrasts; duality, alternation, opposition, and symmetry, whether under definite or vague forms, constitute not so much phenomena to be explained as fundamental and immediately given data of social reality. There are two such dualities, or contrasts, to be noted in social reality as we know it. First, there is the duality of the Subject and the “Other”; second, there is the duality of Man and Woman. These pairs of opposites are not unrelated, moreover: Man always appears as the Subject, while Woman always appears as the Other. (Beauvoir 762)

The novels of Manju Kapur are loaded with the social dynamics, cultural subtleties and familial expectations. She started writing at a time when India had been passing through socio-cultural massive changes. She wrote six novels; *A Married Woman* (2002), *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *The Immigrant* (2008), *Custody* (2011), *Home* (2006), and *Brothers* (2016) depicting the intricate interplay of traditional values and modern views, societal expectations, and individual aspirations and stress within the evolving landscape of Indian society. Seema Suneel writes in her book *Man-Woman Relationship in Indian Fiction*:

Following its independence, India saw a nuanced fusion of contemporary and tradition. Values, traditions, and changing social standards were woven into the fabric of society in complex ways. Because of her upbringing and experiences in this environment, Kapur was able to include these subtleties into her creative works. (Suneel 123)

Manju Kapur observed the shifting nature of Indian society and these cultural shifts had “a significant influence on people's lives, their aspirations, and their behaviour.” She admitted in an interview with the Editor of *The Hindu* that, “I try as a writer to capture these contradictions in my stories,” she once said, referring to the contrasts that make Indian society so beautiful (*The Hindu*, 6). Her views and comprehension of gender roles and societal expectations were also greatly affected by the political and cultural climate of India throughout her early years. One recurring issue in Kapur's writings is the tension between traditional beliefs and the shifting role of women in Indian culture. The complexities in familial relationships, cultural conventions, and transformation in gender roles are all frequently explored in Kapur's novels.

Kapur intricately weaves themes of destiny, familial relationships and the impact of socio-cultural contexts in her fiction. Kapur deftly navigates the complexities of familial ties, societal expectations, and the clash between old and new, leaving the reader with a rich tapestry of insights into the intricate web of human relationships and the forces that shape them.

With the shifting perception and status of gender in the contemporary world, the “New Woman” is a reality. The woman has changed her attitude; she no longer hesitates to take the lead. She rejects all traditional beliefs of the patriarchal society. Even if there are variables associated with this new viewpoint, the results differ depending on the individual. The way Indian women are portrayed in Indian English novels changed dramatically during the post-independence era. The modern woman began to confront and question longstanding customs, traditional beliefs, and values. She moved away from the outdated archetype of the ideal woman, who had passively accepted domestic and sexual oppression, whose expression and actions were limited by patriarchal norms. She stated, "Society's expectations and familial dynamics often shape an individual's identity, and I have sought to portray these complexities in my characters." (Kapur, Interview with *The Telegraph* 5). Her observations and personal experiences form the basis of her investigation. The intricacies and paradoxes of a country undergoing change are reflected in the diverse characters of Indian society, which Kapur demonstrates in her writings. Her novels depict the socio-cultural environment of India that prepared her for her narratives' sophisticated depictions of human connections and social complexities. She observed in an interview with *The Indian Express* thus: “The societal tapestry is an amalgamation of culture, tradition, and modernity, and as a writer, I attempt to unravel the threads that bind us” (3). No wonder, Manju Kapur had a keen understanding of societal subtleties and the ability to incorporate these complexities into her novels.

This study is an attempt to portray the responses and reactions of individuals, primarily women to social norms and practices. Human beings as part of society are bound by its norms and conventions, which do transform from time to time nevertheless, they are always experienced. While some people take them as a guiding post others find it stifling, whatever the case, human beings react to it. The aim of this study is to analyse various reactions to the social norms and beliefs, particularly in the context of female characters portrayed in Manju Kapur’s novels. In a way it is also a study of how women go about to achieve something they are lacking. The study will certainly benefit the society as it will not only widen the range of critical analysis of fiction, but also sensitise the readers about how people will react to rigid,

inflexible social norms. If they conform to the established code of conduct, their minds may become regressive and there may not be a holistic development of their personalities. On the contrary, if they rebel, there may be strife and tension on various levels leading to a less conducive environment for personality development. Manju Kapur's fiction and the conceptual tools of Robert K. Merton emphasise the need of resilience in the social norms must change with the changing times. The dead, obsolete values must be discarded and new, progressive, relevant ideas should be given place in the moral code so that there is a development of individuals and society without any kind of discord. Such awareness will be of advantage to both the individuals and the society and a better, cordial environment in families will create an ambience of co-operation and amicability. Suppression always results in rebellion and it can be avoided if rigidity is given up. Robert K. Merton put out the anomie theory, a sociological and criminological theory in 1938. As mentioned in the journal article, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, "He was an exemplary discipline-builder who formulated key concepts with which to perceive and solve sociological problems, a masterful teacher and a kind colleague" (Holton 506). He noted that people are under pressure from society to fulfil socially acceptable objectives. Stress and despair encourage people to engage in illegal or deviant behaviours, such drug sales or prostitution, in order to stabilise their finances. A lack of motivation or low self-esteem leads to individual strain. Merton states that the positioning of a human being with its natural biological impulses fitting into a restrictive society with his norms and restrictions. And sometimes when these societal norms seem stifling, the individuals react and respond in different ways, this may lead to deviation from the social sanctioning. Merton further says that "structure of society primarily restrains the free expression of man's fixed native impulses and that, accordingly, man periodically breaks into open rebellion against these restraints to achieve freedom" (Merton 176). There are several factors that might lead to this type of stress, such as drug abuse, mental disease, or trauma experienced as a child. Merton propounded the anomie theory to describe the state of normlessness. This suggests that the absence or weakening of social norms that govern behaviour leads to the development of anomie. In a society, people are more inclined to act in a

deviant manner and are less likely to adhere to societal norms. Merton then claims that anomie results from a misalignment between cultural aspirations and institutionalised methods. People are conditioned to view success, money, and power as cultural goals. Although structural strain is one reason for deviations occurring in the context of anomie, it is not the sole explanation. People may feel strained when there is a mismatch between cultural aspirations and institutionalised mechanisms.

In this study the ideas of Robert King Merton who propounded his social theories of deviant behaviour and social anomie in his notable works such as *Social Theory and Social Structure*, *Social Structure and Anomie* and *Science, Technology, and Society in Seventeenth-Century England*. This study investigates all the major issues in the novels of Manju Kapur relying on the socialistic concepts of Merton. The application of the socialistic concepts of Merton gives a new impetus to explore and investigate the socialistic issues discussed by Manju Kapur in her novels. It is pertinent to note that the societal norms and expectations greatly impacted the sensibility of Manju Kapur which resulted in the evolution of the growth of her characters. The interesting factor of the plots of Manju Kapur is the social strength of her narratives; the presence of the intricate structures and the dominating intricate social elements. In this thesis all the novels of Manju Kapur have been analysed and examined through the lens of Mertonian sociological perspective. The Mertonian worldview provides a helpful framework for comprehending the social context and how it influences an individual's development. By viewing things from this angle in this study a new perspective to comprehend the novels of Manju Kapur had been evolved. This study addresses the concept of an inalienable “interaction between society and the individual as well as how institutions, conventions, and values affect artists' ability to express themselves creatively” (Merton 138). This study uses a sociological approach to examine the intricate relationships that exist between the novelist's central themes, the social context, and her personal experiences.

Merton's concept of conformity is the most typical strain response. Conformists embrace cultural ideals and institutionalised means, and they strive to attain their objectives by legal means. Merton comments thus:

In every society, Adaptation I (conformity to both culture goals and means) is the most common and widely diffused. Were this not so, the stability and continuity of the society could not be maintained. The mesh of expectancies which constitutes every social order is sustained by the modal behaviour of its members falling within the first category. Conventional role behaviour oriented toward the basic values of the group is the rule rather than the exception. It is this fact alone which permits us to speak of a human aggregate as comprising a group or society. (Merton 138)

While innovators recognise cultural ideals, they reject established means. They may attempt to attain their objectives using illegal means, such as crime or drug trading. Ritualists reject cultural aims while adhering to established methods. They may grow jaded or pessimistic about their chances of success, yet they continue to work hard and obey the rules. In this study the concepts of Merton had been applied to explore the cultural intricacies of the novels of Manju Kapur. Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998) depicts the problems and challenges of the middle urban class of the family believing in Arya Samaj. Her narrative skill is remarkable, particularly as the story unfolds against the backdrop of partition and addresses women's issues. Manju Kapur delves deeply into the inner lives of Indian women constrained by the oppressive forces of society and patriarchy. The novel reveals the complex experiences of India during the colonial and post-colonial eras. Kapur captures the profound impact of the partition tragedy with evocative and lyrical prose. Virmati, the protagonist, is a young and rebellious woman who starts a love affair with a married professor and ends up becoming his second wife. The interesting part of the novel is the historical background of the partition as Manju Kapur depicts the chaotic and the emotive history of the partition. The holocaust of partition had destroyed and disintegrated the lives of many families. The novel unfolds the struggles of women of three generations: Virmati, Ida, and Kasturi, who embody the three phases of Indian freedom. Kasturi symbolises pre-independence, and is depicted as a sufferer in the traditional patriarchal domination. Virmati's entire life is dedicated to her family. Virmati emerges as an Indian flapper of post modern

India; she is rebellious, modern, and sexual. She throws all the social codes of society in training her daughter independently. In the words of Susie Orbach, she “struggles to prepare her daughter for a life of inequality, the mother tries to hold back a child’s desire to be a powerful, self-directed, energetic, productive human being” (Orbach 27). Virmati believes, “One of the benefits of education is that it teaches us to think for ourselves” (102). Being a “New Woman” she wants to lead a free life but her parents warn her that a woman is no more than a body and the noose of patriarchy is not so loose, she cannot escape marriage and the process of reproduction. She resists the colonisation of her body and struggles to become a self-directed woman of a free society. Her adventure to develop a relationship with the Professor turns into misadventure as “her body was marked by him, she could never look elsewhere, never entertain another choice” (163). Her life becomes hellish, she becomes a slave studying alone and working alone, she becomes a silent dove colonised by a powerful Professor. Virmati comments thus:

A woman should be aware, self-controlled, and strong willed, self-reliant and rational, having faith in the inner strength of womanhood. A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense. (*Difficult Daughters* 12)

Ida begins her journey to reconstruct the earlier life of her mother Virmati and goes to Lahore to know about her life. Virmati’s dreams and aspirations are conditioned by her cousin Shakuntla who was a revolutionary and a modern flapper. Virmati’s mother Kasturi was brought up in an orthodox society where marriage was regarded as the ultimate goal and predetermined future for a girl:

During Kasturi’s formal schooling it was never forgotten that marriage was her destiny. After she graduated, her education continued at home. Her mother tried to ensure her future happiness by the impeccable nature of her daughter’s qualifications. She was going to please her in-laws. (*Difficult Daughters* 58)

When Virmati asks Kasturi that she would like to go to Lahore for higher studies, she rebukes her thus: “When I was your age, girls only left their house when

they married. And beyond a certain age” (111). She urged her to settle down in life and become a bride. She says, “A woman without her own home and family is a woman without moorings” (111). But Virmati is the product of modernism, consumerism and liberalism; she breaks all the patriarchal shackles and left for Lahore to pursue her own independent life. Virmati exhibits the spirit of “New Woman” with her claim to personal identity, passion for higher studies, love and innovation. Her women are victims of gender discrimination and domestic violence as Kapur says: “There is a man within every woman and a woman in every man. When manhood is questioned and womanhood is fragile.” (13). Virmati is a symbol of the nation's independence movement. She is rebellious and deviant, rupturing the outdated morality of Indian society. As Susan Polis Schultz comments, “The new woman arises full of confidence, she speaks eloquently, and thinks independently, full of strength. She organises efficiently and directs proudly” (Schultz 76). The transformation of Virmati is the reality in the novel; her bold efforts reveal her rebellious nature and an urge to change the face of the dead Indian society. Merton observes thus highlighting the inevitable nature of change in society:

Though the underlying assumption that humans have not undergone important genetic changes in the last few tens of thousands of years is widely accepted, it is perfectly obvious that the social settings in which they operate have been dramatically altered. They not only continue to change at a rapid rate, they also vary significantly from one society to another at any given time. (Merton 2)

Virmati's unfulfilled urge for change is conspicuous. This urge inculcates in her the courage to confront and question the established social norms and social customs. Manju Kapur's novel examines the intricacies in the character of Virmati who fights against the norms of the dead society. She exposes the falsehood and hypocrisy of the society through the perspective of various cultural and social norms within a confined society.

Manju Kapur's novel *Home* (2006) deftly examines the complexity women encounter in Indian society. The plot is based on the heroine Nisha and her struggles

to balance personal fulfilment with family obligations. With deft storytelling, Kapur explores issues of love, desire, and the challenges women face in pursuing their own happiness and meaning within India's socio-cultural context. Manju Kapur depicts the impact of cultural transformation on the sensibility of her women characters. This provocative book presents a wide array of female characters, highlighting the complex aspirations, challenges, and experiences of women from many generations living in a North Indian household. This novel deftly captures their intricate interplay, revealing the difficulties that women confront in a conventional, patriarchal culture. Manju Kapur illustrates the follies and foibles of Indian women trapped in the bog of envy, suspicion and change to enjoy the pleasures of life. They are the victims of the cultural trauma of the post-partition era of India. Manju Kapur has highlighted the virus of patriarchal domination through Lala Banwari Lal. The traditional patriarchal society dominates women in all aspects of life. They are not allowed freedom and there is gender discrimination. The ideas and the suggestions of women are ignored. Manju Kapur dramatised the trends of change in her novel *Home*. Merton had explored the nature of change in society. He writes thus:

How is one to pick the most significant changes that have occurred? Are there patterns that have repeated themselves? Are there specific institutions or parts of societies which so determine the lives of people that it is possible to understand social change by focusing on them rather than on the details of actual human lives? How far back into the past is it necessary to go in order to grasp the essence of contemporary social change. (Merton 3)

Manju Kapur had taken the theme of sexual suppression in her fiction. Manju Kapur emerges as a feminist author as her novels present a literary representation of feminist politics. V. T. Girdhari says:

Initially, the woman in Indian English authors' novels was portrayed as a victim who was exploited and oppressed; however, with the passage of time, the past tradition has been transformed. The woman depicted by these authors is self-dependent, free and liberal and can

make every decision in her life. She is not a toy for enjoyment and sex. (Girdhari 78)

Her novel *Difficult Daughters* navigates the societal norms and familial expectations that govern the life of Virmati, the heroine. The novel unfolds a poignant tale of a woman's quest for autonomy and love amidst the tumultuous socio-cultural changes of the time. Kapur weaves a narrative that not only reflects the historical context but also delves into the gendered expectations and societal constraints faced by women. Kasturi, mother of Virmati, observes, "It is the obligation of each young lady to get hitched" (*Difficult Daughters* 15). Modern people exhibit a marked shift in their perspective towards the emancipation and empowerment of women. All the female characters in *Home* also struggle to escape from the chains of slavery of patriarchal society and aspire to lead a modern life. But the psychological wounds don't allow them to adapt to change. This is exemplified in the engrossing family drama of *Home* dealing with three generations of women. Vicky is the grandson of Banwari Lal who becomes the bone of contention. Vicky feels guilty about what happened to Sunita. Yashpal falls in love with Sona who is bold and beautiful. Yashpal emotionally blackmails his parents to get Sona as wife. Pyare Lal is the other son who has the arranged marriage and in the novel all the grandsons and daughters in-law express their rebellious activities in the family. Manju Kapur highlights the tensions of each family. The death of Banwari Lal led to the modernisation and transformation of the family house. It was converted into self-contained flats. The business and the joint family crumbled as all the characters pay the price of fragmentation of the family. The traditional house becomes the den of manipulation, repression and sexual abuse. Manju Kapur has depicted the world of *Home* thus:

All day the Banwari Lal men nibbled something. Mid-morning snack, evening snack, feeling stressed snack, visitor snack. They worked long hours, six days a week. Their pleasures lay in discussing what to eat, in anticipation as the order was sent out, in the stimulation of the olfactory senses as the packets unfolded, in the camaraderie of sharing. (*Home* 52)

The traditional and patriarchal nature of the society is highlighted in the very beginning of the novel. The conventional society has been chiefly controlled by the patriarchs. In this regard, Aamer Hussein says:

Nisha, the seemingly docile central character of *Home*, claims her space halfway through the novel when she demands an education. But life at university offers little more than cribs to help with her exams. More significantly, she has a clandestine romance with the boy who acquires them. But this is India, and the boy is unsuitable. Nisha has to find an alternative occupation, putting to use her entrepreneurial genes. From these few bricks, Manju Kapur creates a novel full of bright spaces and dark corners; her telling is brisk, unsentimental, and capable of turning domestic drama into suspense. (Hussain 2)

Kapur questions traditional gender norms and highlights the value of women's agency and autonomy. In a world that is changing quickly, the book honours women's tenacity and fortitude as they navigate the challenges of everyday life. Kapur illuminates the changing dynamics inside Indian households and the challenging decisions women frequently have to make in the name of happiness and fulfilment through the lives of characters like Nisha and Veena. The book raises important questions about the sacrifices women make for their families and highlights the value of following one's own goals in spite of anomie she feels due to social norms. All things considered, *Home* provides a thorough examination of the tensions between customs and modernisation, family and personal wants, and the many duties and expectations placed on women in Indian culture. Beautifully capturing the complex web of decisions and challenges women confront in their pursuit of happiness and fulfilment is Kapur's art.

In the novel *A Married Woman*, (2002) Kapur explores the intricacies of marital relationships and societal expectations, particularly focusing on Astha, the protagonist, as she grapples with personal desires and societal norms. The novel delves into the evolving landscape of post-independence India, touching upon issues of identity, individual freedom, and the changing roles of women in society. Astha is

trapped between modernity and patriarchy, being a liberal woman she challenges the orthodox male supremacy and begins her quest for a meaningful life with Pipeelika in her lesbian relationship. Kapur depicts the realities of married life in a conventional society, where a woman must erase her identity and give up her whole existence for the welfare of the family. Astha feels, “A willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day and an obedient mouth are the essential prerequisites of a married woman” (*A Married Woman* 231). *A Married Woman* delves into the complexities of love, duty, and societal expectations, echoing Merton's exploration of the strain between culturally defined goals and the available means for achieving them. Astha, the protagonist, grapples with the expectations imposed by society and family, embodying Merton's concept of anomie as a disconnection between individual aspirations and societal norms.

Kapur's diasporic narrative in *The Immigrant* (2008) intersects with Merton's anomie theory, reflecting the strain experienced by immigrants as they negotiate cultural identity. The characters, like Merton's theory suggests, navigates a societal structure where traditional values may clash with the means available for achieving success in a new land. The resulting tension becomes a thematic underpinning in Kapur's exploration of the immigrant experience. This novel of Manju Kapur takes a closer look at the experiences of immigrants, specifically focusing on Nina, an Indian immigrant in Canada. Kapur masterfully intertwines cultural dissonance, the quest for identity, and the challenges of adapting to a new socio-cultural milieu. *The Immigrant* serves as a mirror reflecting the multicultural complexities and the clash of traditional values with the ethos of the west. P. Elizabeth comments about immigrants in her paper:

The adjective diasporic from diaspora stands for every immigrant who has migrated to different countries across the globe seeking better fortunes. Wherever they go, these migrants carry with them a profound sense of attachment with their former place of residence. Diaspora aims to examine the displacement or dislocation as well as conflict between generations and cultural identity. The immigrant souls are always found to be divided. (Elizabeth 119)

In this novel Kapur engages with Merton's theory through the lens of cultural assimilation and the challenges faced by individuals trying to reconcile their cultural heritage with a new societal context. The characters grapple with the dissonance between their original cultural norms and the societal expectations in their adopted homeland. The characters, like Merton's theory suggests, navigate a societal structure where traditional values may clash with the means available for achieving success in a new land.

Custody (2011) of Manju Kapur delves into the legal and emotional complexities surrounding post-divorce custody battles. Kapur addresses the societal judgements faced by single mothers, scrutinising the intersection of law, morality, and societal expectations. The novel, set in contemporary India, offers a compelling commentary on evolving familial structures and the challenges faced by women navigating a patriarchal legal system. As Kapur delves into the legal and moral complexities in the novel, Merton's concept of anomie becomes particularly salient. The characters navigate a societal structure where the means for achieving success and fulfilment, especially in familial relationships, may be at odds with traditional norms.

Brothers (2016) of Manju Kapur's unfolds a compelling narrative, employing an unusual narrative technique where the dénouement is presented at the outset, challenging the author to sustain the reader's engagement through the intricate working out of the plot. The plot mirrors a real-life event from 2006, commencing with the assassination of Himmat Singh Gaina, CM of Rajasthan by his own brother Mangal Singh. Tapti, Mangal's wife and Himmat's on-off lover, is left grappling with an uncertain future, devoid of both husband and the source of her happiness. The novel then delves into the past, a few generations back, in the ancestral village of Lalbanga, setting the stage for the tragic fratricide. The narrative interweaves the stories of two sets of brothers, Virpal and Dhanpal in the past, and Himmat and Mangal in the present. The exploration of their destinies serves as a commentary on the interplay between fate, character, and the societal structures that shape individual lives.

Robert K. Merton's anomie theory offers a fascinating prism to examine the complex interplay of societal norms and human desires reflected in Manju Kapur's tales in the analysis of her books within the socio-cultural environment. Manju Kapur's literary tapestry, woven through six distinct novels, reflects a sophisticated interplay of diverse literary influences that have contributed to the richness and uniqueness of her narrative voice. Each work engages with a spectrum of themes, drawing inspiration from a variety of authors, movements, and cultural discourses. This analysis explores the profound literary influences apparent in each of her novels—*Difficult Daughters* (1998), *Custody* (2011), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008), *Brothers* (2016) and *A Married Woman* (2002). Kapur's debut novel resonates with the poetic sensibilities of Kamala Das, whose evocative expressions of the female experience in Indian literature find echoes in the refined exploration of love, duty, and feminine subjectivity within *Difficult Daughters*. In *A Married Woman*, Kapur delves into societal norms and personal desires, drawing inspiration from the fearless storytelling of Ismat Chughtai. Chughtai's unapologetic portrayal of women navigating societal expectations aligns with Kapur's examination of Astha's journey. *The Immigrant* reflects shades of Bharati Mukherjee's exploration of immigrant experiences. Kapur's storytelling finesse and her depiction of the immigrant struggle for identity share thematic commonalities with Mukherjee's narratives of cultural displacement and adaptation. *The Immigrant* depicts Kapur's engagement with the immigrant experience in Canada. *The Immigrant* draws inspiration from the diasporic literature of Jhumpa Lahiri also. The poignant examination of cultural identity and the complexities of belonging align with Lahiri's profound narratives of the immigrant journey. *Custody* depicts the legal and moral complexities central to custody reflect the influence of Rohinton Mistry's exploration of societal intricacies in India. Kapur's scrutiny of contemporary Indian society and its impact on familial structures resonates with Mistry's keen observations of the human condition. Manju Kapur's *Brothers* deftly unfolds a tragic tale of familial discord, beginning with the assassination of Himmat Singh Gaina, CM by his own brother Mangal Singh. Set in an ancestral village, the novel weaves the destinies of two sets of brothers, exploring themes of fate, character, and the battle between established traditions and modern values. Kapur's evocative prose captures the

complexities of familial ties against the backdrop of societal shifts in contemporary India, making *Brothers* a poignant exploration of human relationships shaped by inescapable societal forces. Through this detailed examination of literary influences, Manju Kapur emerges as a literary alchemist, blending the essences of various voices to create narratives that are both unique and universal. The convergence of inspirations adds layers of depth to her storytelling, inviting readers to explore cultural landscapes while contemplating the profound intricacies of the human experience. Understanding these literary influences is vital in unraveling the intricate layers and textured complexities within Kapur's works, illustrating foundations upon which her storytelling prowess and thematic explorations are built.

Feminism, an outgrowth of Western literary works and theoretical perspectives, stands as one of the most pivotal and widely embraced themes in literature worldwide. Indian English writers, particularly women authors, have been significantly impacted by this movement, giving rise to a distinct branch within Indian English Literature focused on feminist ideals. Ajaz Ahmad Bhat comments about feminism thus:

More than half of the population of the world is made of women but she is not treated on par with man despite innumerable evolutions and revolutions. She has the same mental and moral power, yet she is not recognised as his equal. In such conditions, the question of searching her identity is justified. Actually in this male dominated society, she is a wife, mother, sister and home maker. She is expected to serve, sacrifice, submit and tolerate each ill against her peacefully. Her individual self has very little recognition in the patriarchal society and so self effacement is her normal way of life. (Bhat 30)

Manju Kapur through her novels reveals her passion for feminist themes in contemporary Indian English literature. Her literary journey aligns her with those women writers who bring to the fore the challenges faced by women, encompassing various facets of feminism, including the psychological portrayal of female characters. Greene observed thus:

The emergence of feminist ideas and feminist politics depends on the understanding that in all societies which divide the sexes into differing cultural, economic or political spheres, women are less valued than men. Feminism also depends on the premise that women can consciously and collectively change their social place. (Green 134)

Pooja Tolani and Asha Saharan express that the way women are portrayed in Indian English fiction has changed dramatically since the country's independence. In these stories, women are no longer portrayed as weak or mute instead, they are seen standing up for their rights, demanding their own space, and being unique. Authors like Manju Kapur have portrayed contemporary Indian women who are struggling to claim their freedom and identity, resulting in strong, independent characters who are questioning long-standing customs. The shifting dynamics of women's roles and ambitions in modern Indian society are reflected in these literary works.

Manju Kapur's literary works are centered on her examination of gender and feminism within the framework of Indian societal and cultural practices. Her works frequently explore the intricacies of cultural norms, gender roles, and the changing status of women in Indian culture. Manju Kapur's exploration of gender roles and feminism across her six novels unveils a refined and evolving perspective on the position of women in Indian society. Each work serves as a literary canvas where Kapur intricately weaves narratives that delve into the intricacies of female experiences, societal expectations, and the ongoing struggle for gender equality. The novels written by Kapur, such as *Difficult Daughters* and *A Married Woman*, capture the challenges and victories confronted by females in a society that is changing quickly. Usha Kaushik and Krupa Raval remark on feminism thus:

Feminism is the belief that all men and women should be treated equally in legal, economic and social arenas, regardless of caste, religion and other predominant identifying traits. Feminist ideology, directly or indirectly, has influenced the women writers of India. Fiction has remained the most ideal genre for women writers to record their own experiences and views with an authenticity. (Raval 116)

Her novels feature complex depictions of female protagonists negotiating both personal goals and social conventions. Her examination of gender roles is profoundly influenced by her observations and experiences in the Indian social milieu. The protagonist of *Difficult Daughters* is Virmati, a young lady living in the initial years following India's freedom. The novel provides a thorough examination of the social restrictions that women in traditional Indian households must live under. Jandial comments thus about it in the following words:

It is a mistake to devalue Virmati's struggle just because she failed, for what mattered was to have made the attempt, to break the patriarchal mould, and for Virmati to have tried to do that in the forties was a great achievement. (Jandial 47)

The key themes of the novel are Virmati's battle against social conventions and her quest for personal fulfilment in the face of social expectations in a culture that is undergoing change. Kapur deftly captures the complexity and limitations faced by women as they struggle to balance their own aspirations with those of society. Kapur writes:

Virmati was sure that neither parents nor grandfather would ever forgive her. The process of rejection that had started with Tarsikka would be completed. Let them damn her as they might at least she had her new life. (*Difficult Daughters* 37)

Pooja Tolani also comments about Virmati thus:

While India fights for freedom from the British Raj, Virmati fights for freedom to live life on her terms. Like so many other Indian girls, she wants to decide what to study and where, whom to marry, and when. (Tolani 291)

Her novel *A Married Woman* is a charming tale of love set against a backdrop of religious and political turmoil, conveyed with empathy and wisdom. The narrative of *A Married Woman* centers on an artist who defies the norms of middle-class society. Manju Kapur explores the problems and challenges of Indian women

through Astha. A significant shift can only be achieved within by achieving a deeper mental experience of freedom. Astha wants to be independent of other people and is moving towards full human status, which challenges Hemant's idea of masculine dominance. "A willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day and an obedient mouth are the perquisites of a married woman" (*A Married Woman* 231). Astha is a middle-class wife with a kind and helpful husband with a traditional mindset. Astha falls in love with Pipee and struggles with the social stigma and complications of her newfound emotions. The tale takes a different course. The novel examines themes such as cultural expectations, personal awakening, and identity development within the confines of traditional Indian culture. This novel introduces a new, feminism-related form of domestic morality. The plot revolves around Astha's life, marriage to Hemant, relations with Aijaz, emotional and physical attachment to Pipee, wife of Aijaz, and participation in social and political affairs. Kapur has a female viewpoint on the world in this novel. Astha is an educated woman with a picture-perfect family to display. Nevertheless, she enters into a sexual connection with Pipee, a woman, despite her desire for a different type of independence. Here, Kapur makes a risky move that makes us think of Shug and Celie from Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*. The real picture of marriage in conventional society, where a female must erase her identity and give up her life, is depicted by Kapur in this novel. Astha comes to the same realisation. Astha demonstrates her independence by abandoning her family's responsibilities to take part in the demonstration against the destruction of a mosque in Ayodhya. Astha abandons the responsibility of her family behind when she leaves to take part in the protest against the dismantling of the mosque in Ayodhya, she presents herself as an autonomous person free from prejudices. Uma Kaushik and Krupa Raval say thus:

In *A Married Woman*, a lady candidly confesses to her personality cult inside the intimate metaphor of a failed marriage. Through Astha, Kapur challenges the status quo on homosexual partnerships and highlights how women's roles are evolving in the new era of freedom and liberty. (Raval 123)

Manju Kapur's *Home* describes the tale of a conventional joint family. Banwari Lal's granddaughter Nisha is the main character. She had received traditional parenting from the time she was a little child. The author appears to be exposing the persistently narrow-minded views of the raising of girls in India through her. Her mother believes it's best for girls to stay indoors; therefore she can't play outside like guys. Her mother asks her, "Why? You're going to get filthy and black" (51). Nisha experiences gender prejudice from her own family as well as physical assault from her own relative. Nisha, who benefits from a contemporary education, is confined to an orthodox Hindu community that prevents her from expressing her feelings freely. She attempts to rebel against her family and the established family structure, but in the end, she gives in to her parents' wishes and marries 36-year-old widower Arvind. In an attempt to escape her loneliness, Nisha launches her own company. She wants to be self-sufficient financially. Manju Kapur describes the path to full equality in this way. *The Immigrant* also continues the feminist trend. The protagonist of the novel is Nina, a thirty-year-old unmarried girl, working as an English teacher at Delhi University. Following her father's passing, she and her mother are attempting to make it through the difficult circumstances. According to Nina, women can only experience freedom and liberty when they achieve economic independence. She is guided by tradition even if she disapproves of the established norms and standards that govern women in society. Canadian immigrants Ananda and Nina get married. Marital problems arise quickly because she can't put up with his contradictory quirks. Nina is lonely because of her husband's emotional and sexual dysfunctions. She experiences both physical and emotional estrangement, in a sense. "I miss home, I miss my job, and I miss things. I feel like a shadow. What am I but your wife?" (237–238). She has no one to talk to but her spouse and feels alone in a strange country. At the novel's conclusion, Nina's hopes for a fulfilling marriage and a loyal friend are dashed, but she also gains the ability to stand on her own two feet. "I have to be who I am" (333). In this novel, Kapur examines the experiences of several educated Indian women who married Indian immigrants, as well as the NRI sensibilities. The characters, particularly Nina, embody the shifting dynamics of gender roles within the context of migration. Kapur weaves a feminist narrative that explores the intersections of cultural expectations and individual aspirations,

reflecting the multifaceted experiences of women. Characters like Nina grapple with the clash between traditional values and the pursuit of individual dreams. Kapur employs feminism as a tool to dissect the challenges faced by women negotiating cultural identity in a foreign land. The legal and familial complexities central to custody offer Kapur a platform to scrutinise the impact of gender norms on women's lives. Characters such as Raman, Shagun, and Ishita navigate the intricacies of custody battles, allowing Kapur to dissect societal expectations and challenge traditional notions of motherhood. The novel becomes a feminist commentary on the legal and social constraints imposed on women.

Manju Kapur's novel *Brothers* delves into the intricate dynamics of the relationship between two brothers, providing a lens to scrutinise how women, often designated as "Sisters," navigate the expectations of a patriarchal society. S. Pratheeba says aptly, "In the contemporary world, women have embarked on a transformative journey, akin to men, asserting their awareness of living conditions and seeking fulfilment. Women often gather to raise their voice to prove their own stability in the society" (Pratheeba 607). Despite societal expectations, the novel sheds light on the profound connection between the brothers, both immersed in the realm of politics. Kapur deftly introduces poignant and powerful female characters that align with the overarching theme of societal progress. These vibrant characters serve as conduits, offering insights into the shared struggles and tribulations of both men and women at their respective life stages. Kapur's narrative doesn't shy away from addressing critical issues such as widowhood, remarriage, and motherhood, unveiling the pervasive challenges faced by women. Through the characters, she skillfully portrays the enduring impact of oppressive societal norms on women's sexuality. Kapur's response to anti-women movements within society positions the novel as a poignant exploration of contemporary India, unraveling the complexities women face in addressing gender-specific issues that demand delicate consideration.

Through the way of gender and feminism, Manju Kapur's novels collectively form a mosaic that not only reflects the evolving role of women in Indian society but also serves as a compelling commentary on the ongoing struggle for gender equality. The way Kapur portrayed her female heroines in these novels brought to light the

struggles and victories faced by women as society moved from traditional to more contemporary ideals. The narratives capture the individual experiences and the struggles women have while juggling with expectations from society, their need for self-actualization, and social restraints. These works serve as moving mirrors of Kapur's examination of gender norms, social expectations, and women's changing situation within the framework of Indian society. They stand for her commitment to depicting women's lives as complicated and their fights against social standards. During Kapur's early years, the demands that society placed on women in traditional Indian households had a significant impact on how she portrayed women in her works. Her works are resonant with her perception of these cultural restrictions and their effects on women's lives. According to Kapur's statement in an interview with *The Times of India*, "Social expectations and familial pressures significantly shape women's identities and their narratives, a central theme in my stories." (Kapur *The Times of India* 4). Kapur's novels are infused with a feminism theme that emphasises women's autonomy, equality, and the right to self-determination. In her novels, women are frequently shown defying expectations placed on them by society and carving out their own careers. Her writings have strong feminist undertones, which express her support for women's autonomy and resistance to social norms. The way in which Kapur depicts feminism and gender roles in the Indian setting is subtle, demonstrating her attempt to capture the complexity of women's experiences in a culture that is undergoing change. Her examination of these subjects represents the shifting roles and goals of female gender in India as a nation in transition. For an understanding of the complexity of Kapur's storytelling, it is essential to go into her thematic examination of gender and feminism in Indian society. Her dedication to capturing the complex lives of women within a society that is always changing is seen by the deft way in which she incorporates these issues into her works.

Manju Kapur's exploration of her women characters within the societal structures of her novels resonates with the insightful lens of Robert K. Merton's theory of anomie. Merton's theory, which posits a discordance between cultural objectives and the approved means available to attain them, becomes a compelling framework to understand the challenges and constraints faced by the female

characters in Kapur's narratives. In *Difficult Daughters*, Merton's anomie theory illuminates the societal strain experienced by Virmati as she confronts the incongruity between traditional gender roles and her desire for personal fulfilment. The societal expectations placed on women during pre-independence India create a dissonance that aligns with Merton's concept of anomie, emphasising the strain between cultural aspirations and the limited means available for women to assert their individual agency. Kapur's second novel, *A Married Woman*, further exemplifies Merton's anomie theory as Astha grapples with the societal strain between the prescribed roles of a wife and mother and her quest for personal identity. The societal norms restricting Astha's choices become a poignant manifestation of anomie, where the cultural goals set for women clash with the limited means for them to achieve personal autonomy. In the diasporic narrative of *The Immigrant*, Merton's anomie theory provides insight into the strain experienced by Nina as she navigates the cultural expectations of her homeland and the challenges of adapting to a new country. The disconnect between societal objectives and the resources available for cultural assimilation illustrates the anomie present in the immigrant experience. The immigrant theme is beautifully explored in *The Immigrant*, where Merton's theory is evident in the challenges faced by Nina as she negotiates the dissonance between her cultural heritage and the societal expectations of her adopted homeland. The strain on individual identity within the broader cultural context mirrors the anomie experienced by immigrants striving to find their place in a new society. In *Custody*, the characters, particularly Shagun and Ishita, grapple with the societal strain imposed by legal and cultural expectations. The clash between the cultural goals of motherhood and the means available within the legal system encapsulates the essence of anomie in the context of gender roles. So, Manju Kapur's exploration of gender and feminism, when viewed through the perspective of Robert K. Merton's anomie theory, unveils the intricate complexities faced by female characters as they navigate societal expectations and limited means for personal fulfilment. The intersection of gender roles and societal strain becomes a powerful thematic underpinning, offering readers a profound understanding of the challenges inherent in the pursuit of gender equality.

Exploring familial ties, society expectations, and the transforming roles of men and women within the Indian social fabric are subjects that recur often throughout Kapur's writings. The hardships and ambitions of women in a changing society are depicted in the face of modernity. Furthermore, a recurring theme in her works is the struggle between an individual's wants and social conventions. In her novels, Kapur frequently shows individuals juggling the demands of society norms with their own goals, underlining the difficulties of finding personal fulfilment in conventional roles. Her depiction of the evolving family relations in modern-day India is a central subject examining "the conflict between tradition and modernity is set against a backdrop of intergenerational conflicts and evolving family patterns" (Hasruba 2293). Kapur's depiction of the human experience within the context of Indian society is evidence of her dedication to examining the complexity of interpersonal interactions, cultural expectations, and personal goals. As Kapur succinctly puts it, "My writing style is a reflection of the intricate patterns in human relationships, interwoven with societal complexities" (Kapur, Interview with *The Times of India* 5) she is attempting to depict the complexities of human connections. In conclusion, Manju Kapur explores subjects like familial connections, societal expectations, and the changing roles of individuals in a changing society through her literary style, which is distinguished by vivid descriptions and complex tales.

The novels of Manju Kapur deal with the postmodern issues such as feminism, patriarchy, lesbianism, sexual oppression, and other issues of national and international significance. The themes are universal as her themes are not confined to the Indian society only but are relevant to the western society also. Her fiction explores the complex blending of western and Indian worldviews, reflecting the cultural shifts occurring in modern Indian society. This confluence plays a crucial role in shaping the socio-cultural dynamics in Manju Kapur's fiction. This intersection between tradition and modernity, and collectivism and individualism, is at the centre of many of her characters' struggles. In her works, Kapur deftly portrays how the characters, particularly women, are caught between the rigid structures of traditional Indian society and the allure of modern, western ideals that promise individual freedom and self-expression. For example, in *Difficult Daughters*,

Virmati's aspiration to pursue higher education embodies the western value of self-empowerment. However, her family's insistence on marriage and domestic duties highlights the traditional Indian value of prioritising familial obligations. This creates a significant internal and external conflict, where Virmati's desire for personal growth clashes with the cultural expectations placed upon her. In *A Married Woman*, Astha's journey illustrates the tension between adhering to her role as a wife and mother and seeking her own identity through her lesbian relationship with Pipeelika. This situation exemplifies how western ideals of love and personal freedom challenge the conventional Indian ideal of marital loyalty and family unity. Nisha in *Home* struggle with the traditional role of women as caretakers and homemakers, yet her entrepreneurial ambitions reflect the western ideals of financial independence and personal achievement. The challenge of reconciling these two contrasting worldviews leads to significant strain, as the characters attempt to navigate both personal desires and cultural expectations. This cultural fusion not only shapes the individual lives of Kapur's characters but also reflects the broader societal transformations that have taken place in India, particularly in the wake of globalisation.

Indian culture traditionally focuses on family and following societal rules, while western ideals emphasise personal freedom, individuality, and equality. Manju Kapur's characters often find themselves caught between these two ways of life, trying to balance traditional expectations with modern desires. The convergence of Indian and western worldviews in Manju Kapur's fiction reflects the changes happening in modern Indian society. Her characters challenge the traditional roles imposed by Indian society, influenced by western ideas of gender equality and personal freedom. Marriage is portrayed as a social duty and a means of upholding tradition and stability. Marriage is regarded as the ultimate goal and destiny from which these women cannot escape. Characters who challenge this norm, such as those pursuing love marriages, divorce, or extramarital relationships, face ostracism and judgment from their families and society. In *Custody*, for instance, the breakdown of a family due to divorce highlights the clash between the Indian idea of family unity and the western focus on individual happiness. Shagun's decision to

leave her marriage for another man reflects western ideals of personal happiness and self-determination. However, this choice disrupts the traditional family structure, causing societal and emotional strain for her children and ex-husband. Economic and social aspirations also show the blend of these two worldviews. Western values of success and individual achievement often conflict with Indian expectations of prioritising family and tradition. Education, seen as a pathway to independence, reflects the influence of western ideals, but in Kapur's novels, it also becomes a source of strain when it conflicts with family expectations.

This struggle can be understood using Robert K. Merton's anomie theory, which explains the pressure people feel when they cannot achieve societal goals through acceptable means. It helps us understand how Kapur's characters respond to these challenges. Some conform to societal norms despite their struggles, while others adapt by combining elements of both Indian and western values. For instance, Nisha in *Home* tries to balance her entrepreneurial goals with her duties to her family whereas Astha in *A Married Woman* rejects societal norms entirely, forging her own identity. Through her novels, Kapur shows the complex reality of Indian society, where traditional values and modern ideas exist side by side and often clash. Using Merton's anomie theory, we can see how these characters adapt to the pressures of blending Indian traditions with western ideals, making her novels a valuable reflection of modern life.

The Indian worldview in Manju Kapur's fiction serves as a foundation against which the tension between tradition and modernity unfolds. Rooted in family-centred values and adherence to societal norms, the Indian worldview emphasises duty, hierarchy, and family over individual aspirations. This perspective strongly shapes the lives of Kapur's characters, often creating internal and external conflicts as they navigate the demands of tradition while being drawn to modern, western ideals. Traditional Indian society places great value on familial roles, with women often expected to prioritise marriage, motherhood, and domestic responsibilities. In Indian society, men often hold authority and women are expected to be submissive. In *Custody*, the societal disapproval of divorce highlights the Indian cultural preference for endurance and familial unity over individual happiness. The western worldview

in Manju Kapur's fiction is portrayed as a counterpoint to traditional Indian values, offering modern ideals such as individualism, personal freedom, gender equality, and self-determination. This perspective often becomes a source of both inspiration and conflict for Kapur's characters, as they strive to reconcile these ideas with their cultural and familial obligations. One of the most prominent influences of the western worldview in Kapur's novels is the aspiration for personal independence, particularly among women. Characters like Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* and Astha in *A Married Woman* struggle to break free from traditional expectations, inspired by the western ideals of education, career, and self-expression. Virmati's pursuit of education represents her desire to transcend societal norms, which value marriage over personal growth. Kapur's novels reflect the influence of western feminist ideals as her female characters challenge societal norms that confine them to domestic spaces and subordinate roles. In *Home*, Nisha's entrepreneurial ambitions symbolise a shift toward western ideals of economic independence and self-reliance, even as she faces resistance from her traditional family. The western perspective brings modern views on relationships, love, and marriage into Kapur's narratives. Arranged marriages, a hallmark of Indian tradition, are often contrasted with the western ideal of romantic love and personal choice. In *Custody*, the breakdown of a marriage through divorce reflects the western belief in prioritising personal happiness over social expectations; a stark departure from Indian values of family unity and endurance. It presents new goals and aspirations that clash with the traditional means available in their society, leading to various modes of adaptation. Some characters innovate by blending traditional and western values, while others rebel by rejecting both to define their own paths. Through this perspective, Kapur's novels reveal the complex interplay of western ideals with Indian traditions, showcasing the strain and transformation that emerge from this cultural convergence.

The novels of Manju Kapur are significant not only in India but to the women of all over the world as she had raised the female voice depicting the oppressed psyche of wounded women trapped in the bog of patriarchy and sexual abuse. The sociological aspects such as rebellion, anomie, ritualism, conformity, and deviation are common in India and in other countries. The convergence of western

and Indian worldviews in Manju Kapur's fiction is a recurring theme, reflecting the complex interplay between tradition and modernity in contemporary Indian society. She presents characters who navigate the merging of these cultural perspectives, leading to moments of growth, conflict, and transformation. This convergence highlights the tensions between duty and personal freedom, and traditional roles versus modern aspirations. This fusion in Manju Kapur's fiction highlights the complexities of cultural transformation in modern Indian society. Her characters often navigate the tension between traditional Indian values which emphasise, familial duty, and societal norms, and western ideals of individualism, personal freedom, and gender equality.

Beyond the acclaim of critics, Kapur's works have a lasting influence. Her stories have struck a chord with readers from a wide range of backgrounds, igniting discussions on gender, traditional roles, and the changing face of Indian culture. Readers' emotional connection to her works has been facilitated by the reliability of her characters and the realistic depiction of familial interactions. Her investigation of the difficulties of women and their personal goals with conventional conventions has given rise to significant conversations about gender equality and social norms. Her novels have acted as starting points for discussions on the roles and difficulties faced by Indian women. The academic world also recognises Kapur's influence on Indian literature as her writings are frequently taught in college curricula. The complex topics in her books are often examined and discussed by academics and literary specialists, who therefore add to the scholarly conversation on gender dynamics and the changing Indian society. In an interview with *The Times of India*, Kapur reflected on the deep influence of her works and said, "It's incredibly rewarding to witness the resonance of my stories with readers, instigating conversations on societal themes and the evolving roles of men and women"(Kapur, Interview with *The Times of India* 5).

To conclude, the core of Kapur's literary works is her characters' reaction against social norms. Her representations of female characters reflect both her own experiences and the roles that society assigns to women. Her novels provide moving depictions of the battles women fight in a patriarchal and conventional culture for

identity, autonomy, and uniqueness. By advocating for women's autonomy and independence through her characters, Kapur subverts social standards and makes a fundamental contribution to Indian feminist fiction. Examining the recurrent themes in Kapur's writing demonstrates her dedication to depicting the changing roles that women play in the home and in society. Readers can relate to the struggles and victories of her characters because of her distinctive writing style and narrative approaches, which are firmly rooted in genuine and relevant storytelling. Her narrative style combines the social and personal, striking a deep chord with readers who are looking for real, vivid storytelling. Her writing has provoked discussions, debates, and introspection about gender roles, society expectations, and the human condition. Manju Kapur's development as a novelist is a result of a combination of her life experiences, cultural influences, educational background, literary inspirations, and a strong dedication to capturing the complex lives of Indian women. Her works provide witness to her commitment to deciphering the intricacies of gender relations and societal expectations, giving voice to the marginalised and serving as a forum for reflection and discussion within a broader socio-cultural framework.

Chapter I

The Concepts of Merton: Issues and Perspectives

Robert K. Merton stands as one of the most significant sociological thinkers of the 20th century, whose theoretical contributions have left an indelible mark on the discipline. His innovative concepts and frameworks, including anomie, social structure, and deviance have not only enriched sociological thought but also provided robust tools for research. His concepts and theories have provided valuable insights into the functioning of social systems, the nature of deviance, and the role of expectations in shaping behaviour. The thesis entitled “Socio-Cultural Study of Manju Kapur’s Fiction: A Mertonian Perspective” explores the multidimensional layers hidden in the plots of Manju Kapur’s novels relying on the concepts of Robert King Merton. He wrote his seminal work *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth-Century England* (1938) and brought revolution in the domain of sociology. He propounded new theories of society and social change in his book on *Social Change in the Modern Era* (1986). Merton wrote on various problems of society; he wrote books such as *Mass Production* (1948), *On Theoretical Sociology* (1967), *On the Shoulders of Giants* (1965), *Social Theory and Functional Analysis* (1969), *The Sociology of Science* (1973) and *Sociological Traditions from Generation to Generations* (1980). Merton devoted his entire life in exploration of the various trends of social change and in understanding the behaviour of man.

Merton, originally named Meyer Robert Schkolnick, was born on July 4, 1910, in Philadelphia, America. He came from a working-class family of Yiddish-speaking Russian Jews who had immigrated to the United States from Eastern Europe in 1904. A journalist puts it, “He was born at the bottom of the social structure” (Hunt 39). Although living in poverty, Merton never stopped learning, he was a frequent visitor of libraries and museums. He often visited Andrew Carnegie Library where he read history, geography, and majorly biographies. He was a regular visitor to the Central Library, the Museum of Arts, and the Academy of Music. He

spent most of his time in the famous Columbia University. His boyhood in South Philadelphia inspired him to explore social, cultural issues. He observed that:

South Philadelphia endowed young people with every form of capital - social capital, cultural capital, human capital, and, above all, what we may call public capital - that is, with every sort of capital except the individually pecuniary. (Merton 45)

Merton propounded many social theories and ideas which brought revolution in the domain of sociological thoughts. His mother's passion for learning inspired him to read a lot from an early age. He was able to get his Harvard University diploma in 1931. He became the leading sociologist of the contemporary age. The “reference group theory”, the “sociology of knowledge”, the “sociology of time”, the “sociology of deviant conduct”, are his famous ideas which dominated the contemporary sociology.

Merton was thought to be a functionalist sociologist. Merton taught at Harvard, Tulane University, Columbia University, and subsequently Rockefeller University until retiring in 1984. During his lifetime, he received great attention and success in the subject of sociology. Merton's major distinctions and achievements included over twenty honorary degrees. He became a member of the National Academy of Sciences and member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

Robert K. Merton had a profound impact on the development of sociology. Merton's theories have also affected the realms of psychology and politics. At Philadelphia Temple University, he first learned about sociology. He had already started working on initiatives that would make him well-known in the sociological field by the time he concluded his studies in 1938. *Science, Technology, and Society in Seventeenth-Century England*, his first notable work, was published and helped shape the sociology of science. He attained a significant position in sociology as a result of his numerous contributions to the subject. Being the pioneer of modern sociology, he made substantial contributions to the study of criminology. He presided over the American Sociological Association as its 47th President. He taught at Columbia University for the most of his career, rising to the rank of University

Professor there. For his contributions to sociology, he received the National Medal of Science in 1994.

Merton made contributions to sociology in different fields: sociology of crime and deviance, sociology of science, and sociological theory. He developed terms like "self-fulfilling prophecy," and "role model." The idea of self-fulfilling prophecy, which is an important part of modern political, sociological and economic theory, is one way in which an idea or a belief influences the result of an event or the behaviour of an individual or a group. More exactly in Merton's words, "the self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a false characterization of the circumstance generating a new behaviour that causes the initially wrong notion to materialise" (Merton 507).

Robert K. Merton put out the strain theory, a sociological and criminological theory in 1938. This concept suggests that society exerts pressure on individuals to pursue socially accepted goals, even if they lack the means to achieve them. Because of the stress it produces, some people turn to criminal or deviant behaviour to stabilise their finances, such as selling drugs or engaging in prostitution. The strain might be caused by the uneven allocation of resources in society causing structural pressure. This implies that certain people are more likely to succeed than others just based on their race or socioeconomic class. Causes of individual strain include low self-esteem and lack of motivation. This type of tension can be attributed to a wide range of circumstances, such as drug abuse, mental disease, or childhood trauma. Merton identified five ways in which individuals react to stress: the most typical response is conformity. Conformists embrace cultural goals and the tools to accomplish them. When individuals embrace cultural ideals but reject the ways to accomplish them, this is referred to as "innovation." This is the most prevalent form of deviation. When people reject cultural goals but continue to employ the means to attain them. This is referred to as "ritualism." This is frequently observed in people who have given up on obtaining achievement. Rebelliousness occurs when people reject cultural ideals and the methods to accomplish them in favour of their own goals and means. This is the rarest kind of deviation.

Merton's famous conceptual tool of anomie is at once revolutionary and original governing the lives of the individuals. In the present study all the major characters of Manju Kapur have been examined and analysed relying on this concept of Merton. The application of anomie gives new perception to study the mindset of the characters of Manju Kapur. Merton presented a novel theory of Deviant Conduct in his paper in 1938 "Social Structure and Anomie", which has had a major influence on the subject of sociology. Merton's concept anomie contends that aberrant conduct is generated by a schism between a society's cultural values and the institutionalised means of accomplishing those goals. According to S. Messner, "Social Structure and Anomie contains two analytically distinct theoretical arguments, a theory of social organization and a theory of deviant motivation" (Messner 34). He further adds that, "The theory of social organization discusses the sources of pressures on individuals to violate social norms" (Messner 35). Robert K. Merton's notion of anomie has been used to explain a broad variety of deviant behaviours, including crime, drug usage, and poverty. Inequality and social strife are examples of societal issues that have been explained using the idea. Merton's anomie hypothesis is founded on the premise that deviation is generated by a schism between a society's cultural ideals and the institutionalised ways of accomplishing those goals.

Cultural objectives, according to Merton, are the things that individuals are trained to value, such as marriage, wealth, success, and power. He describes institutionalised means as appropriate methods of reaching such goals, such as education, hard labour, and financial savings. People may feel strained when there is a mismatch between cultural aspirations and institutionalised mechanisms. This stress can lead to deviant behaviour as people strive to discover methods to fulfil their goals even if they lack access to legal means. Merton's anomie hypothesis has several consequences for research and policy. To begin, the idea implies that if a man wishes to minimise aberrant conduct, he should work on lowering tension in society. Individuals are given additional options to attain their objectives through legal methods. Second, the theory implies that we must consider the function of social institutions in the development of aberrant conduct. This indicates that man must focus on altering the ways in which these organisations and structures work, rather

than merely changing the individual conduct of those who participate in aberrant activity.

Merton defines anomie as "a state of normlessness." This suggests that anomie arises from the weakening of social norms governing human behaviour. In a culture where anomie is prevalent, people are more prone to act in deviant ways and are less likely to adhere to social norms. Merton claims that anomie results from a misalignment between cultural aspirations and institutionalised methods. It is the natural instinct of the people to run after wealth, success, and power to gain as cultural strength. Educational attainment, hard work, and financial savings often bring chaos in the life of an individual. For Merton anomie is "studied in terms of the effect of the economic and social conditions surrounding its original formulation: situation of chronic depression" (Merton 78). Simone and Gagnog observe regarding this:

The anomie that unexpected riches may cause is highlighted. This was Durkheim's main worry. Questions on (a) commitment to recognised cultural goals and (b) the degree of attainment of significant progress toward such goals are used to develop a preliminary typology of deviant adaptation. (Gagnog 123)

Merton has explored the various causes leading to structural strain. He has investigated the causes of deviant behaviour of man in the society. People may feel strained when there is a mismatch between cultural aspirations and institutionalised mechanisms. This stress might result in aberrant conduct. Merton cites five distinct ways in which people react to stress:

- (a) Conformity: This is the most typical strain response. Conformists embrace cultural ideals and institutionalised means, and they strive to attain their objectives by legal means.
- (b) Innovation: While innovators recognise cultural ideals, they reject established means. They may attempt to attain their objectives using illegal means, such as crime or drug trading.

- (c) Ritualism: Ritualists reject cultural aims while adhering to established methods. They may grow pessimistic about their chances of success, yet they continue to work hard and obey the rules.
- (d) Retreatism: Retreatists oppose both cultural ideals and institutionalised methods. They may develop drug or alcohol addictions or become homeless.
- (e) Rebellion: Rebels oppose both cultural aims and institutionalised means, and they attempt to establish a new social order. They have the potential to become political activists or revolutionaries.

Merton's anomie theory has a significant impact on sociology. It has been used to explain a broad variety of deviant behaviours, including crime, drug usage, and poverty. Inequality and social strife are examples of societal issues that have been explained using this idea. Merton's anomie theory has been commended for providing insights into the reasons for aberrant conduct.

Merton's anomie theory has assisted in understanding the origins of abnormal conduct as well as this theory has assisted man in understanding the origins of aberrant conduct and in developing strategies to avoid deviant behaviour. Robert K. Merton's idea of anomie is a sophisticated and complicated theory that has had a significant effect on the subject of sociology. C. Calhoun in his paper suggests that, "Merton's reach can be felt in the study of social structure, social psychology, deviance, professions, organizations, culture, and science" (Calhoun 89). Robert K. Merton is stated as one of the finest sociologists of modern time and the doyen of science sociology. He was a model discipline builder who developed fundamental concepts for seeing and solving social problems, a brilliant teacher, and a kind colleague. According to Calhoun, "Robert K. Merton was one of the most important sociologists of the 20th century, creating insightful theories and ground-breaking studies that have influenced a wide range of fields." (Cahloun 67)

Merton's work addressed the difficulties associated with merging research and theory. It connected multiple domains of empirical study and emphasised the importance of bridging the gap between practical and seemingly pure sociology.

Merton also attempted to merge sociology and scientific institutional analysis, with each influencing the other. According to Roben Cohen:

Robert K. Merton (1910-2003) was a mystery. He was immensely influential in his time on a wide range of sociological subjects, including sociological theory, research methodologies, and neglected areas such as the sociology of science. (Cohen 12)

Cohen further comments thus:

Merton developed the most notions and hypotheses of any sociologist. Ambivalence, anomie-and-opportunity structure theory, manifest and latent functions, Matilda effect, Matthew effect, Principle of Cumulative Advantage, role-set, the self-fulfilling prophecy, serendipity, status-set, and unintended effects of purposeful activity are examples. (Cohen 12)

He also pioneered new fields of study, such as the sociology of scientific discovery. Merton also attended important sociological institutes such as Columbia University in New York. Merton's *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1965) is one of his seminal works. Sztompka (1986) conducted the sole full-length evaluation of Merton. On the occasion of Merton's 75th birth anniversary, an intellectual portrait was created. To commemorate his work's 100th anniversary since his birth in 1900, the *Berliner Journal of Soziologie* issued a special collection (Mueller et al., 2010). Robert K. Merton produced a staggering amount of work as a sociologist giving new theories to explore human behaviour. He is the creator of the sociology of science. The sociology of knowledge, organisation theory, deviant behaviour and mass communication are some of his revolutionary ideas. Merton has given a variety of conceptual ideas in his empirical investigation of social ideas. Alan Sica records in her paper, "His core work, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, has been translated into a dozen languages since 1949, when it first appeared in English, and has required 30 printings to fill the global market's demand" (Sica 21). The major theories propounded by R.K. Merton are functionalism, manifest and latent functions, and dysfunction.

Merton avoided employing abstract general theories and instead examined the social trends from the perspective of a particular middle-range theory. He belonged to structural functionalism school, which identified the traits and qualities of social structures and their impact on the social contexts of human action. Theory of Functionalism is an effort to understand social structures as collaborative tools for addressing both individual and communal goals. The functionalist viewpoint holds that societies function like living entities, with different social institutions working as their different organs for societal preservation and development. Functionalist viewpoints hold that institutions sustain and progress because they support social cohesion and stability. Emile Durkheim's contributions are recognised as the foundation of functionalist sociology. He observed that all the parts of society i.e. social institutions, social roles and social norms serve a special purpose and are responsible for the survival of the society.

In the social sciences, institutions are the rules and frameworks of social cooperation and order that regulate behaviour within a particular human community. Institutions include family, religion, peer group, economy, legal system, criminal justice system, language, and media. The component of an action that is not clearly expressed or planned and is hence concealed is known as a latent function. The functionalist perspective holds that social structures work as a collective endeavour to fulfil demands at the individual and society levels. Functionalism is rooted in the theories of Emile Durkheim, who focused on how societies achieve internal stability and persist over time. The functionalist viewpoint is constantly striving to provide an explanation for how societies were able to preserve internal harmony and stability. According to the functionalist viewpoint, a variety of social institutions cooperates to support and propagate societies. In order to preserve social stability, it is believed that the various facets of society will organically interact. Every social institution affects every other institution rapidly because they all function together to create a stable society. Institutions that are dysfunctional and don't support a society's overall functioning will vanish. Robert K. Merton distinguished between visible and hidden functions in the 1950s, which helped to shape the functionalist perspective. Manifest functions are the intended and explicit consequences of a social system's phenomena

or structures. For instance, crime looks challenging if explained from a functionalist viewpoint since it appears to have no impact on preserving societal order. However, crime could also serve the covert purpose of illustrating the limits of permissible behaviour.

Social institutions are examined by functionalists in terms of the role they serve. Each institution in the society had a particular role to play. The social order is very significant in the social set up. Education plays a vital role in bringing social order. Education helps individuals to get jobs. Education empowers the individuals to get jobs and thus promotes a strong economy. The functionalist viewpoint states that the main subjects of study are society and its institutions. Functionalism's inclination to impose rules on society is another concern raised by some of its critics. They argue that society can only exist because it is composed of living people. Functionalism downplays the significance of the individual. Interestingly, human behaviour often alters societal institutions. Functionalism fixes roles of the individuals in society. Society is only alive as it is composed of living people. The actions of human beings often change social structures. Functionalism places strong emphasis on social order and balance. Pope says about Durkheim, "He focused on the problem of order and the positive effects of social institutions, explaining their existence in terms of their functionally necessary contributions" (Pope 361). In order to endure, a social institution needs to have a goal. But institutions change throughout time—some disappear, while others grow. Functionalism gives sociological analysis a new shape. Merton noted that functionalist analysis, as a contemporary form of sociological study, has a viable foundation. This strategy led to an expansion in the way the functional was utilised in anthropological contexts, but it was unable to achieve the objective of a true explanation of society. Merton actually noted from a triangle perspective in his study that "functionalist analysis basically hinges on the connection between individual and social institutions" (Merton 23). There are relatively few functionalist academics that offer functionalist analytical analysis, with the majority of them focusing on the theoretical aspect of the subject solely in the context of data.

Merton wanted to make it clear that sociological theory had not yet reached its full potential in the area of functional analysis. Merton not only attempted to fix this functionalism flaw, but also to improve it. According to Merton, there has been uncertainty over the correct phrase in sociology's functionalist approach ever since its inception. In Merton's words, "make possible the adjustment or modification of a social system." that clarifies the function's meaning. According to Merton:

Sociology should not be driven by intellectual aggression or speculative notions. Instead, it should focus on arranging empirical facts in a coherent manner. Sociological theories should be grounded in factual evidence and aim to explain these facts systematically. Rather than being preoccupied with grand speculations about social systems involving exchange, negotiation, convergence, control, and integration, sociology should address real problems and empirical issues. (Merton 146)

America in 1960s saw a notable outburst of governmental corruption, ethnic strife, and abnormal behaviour. Merton became interested in these occurrences and developed middle-range theories to explain those utilising condensed theoretical frameworks. Merton maintained that these middle-range theories are better in line with actual facts than large theories. Grand theories frequently lack significance in grasping the core of social reality and are quite abstract. Therefore, sociology ought to embrace mid-range ideas rather than big theoretical frameworks.

Merton presents a set of rules for his functional paradigm after thoroughly examining the shortcomings of functional analysis. He underlines how crucial it is to begin the functional analysis with a clear discussion on the activities and behaviours of the people and groups under investigation. It is feasible to pinpoint the precise social components that require functional study by watching and recording the interactions and activity patterns among the units under inquiry. These descriptions can provide insightful information about the roles that these scheduled activities play.

Dysfunction: These are observed outcomes that are harmful to the system because they prevent or limit the system's capacity to adapt and modify.

Manifest Function: These are observed effects that guarantee good system coordination. They are what the system intends and are universally understood and acknowledged.

Latent Function: The undesired functions frequently go unrecognised or unappreciated by the system and are known as latent functions. They are incidental effects that result from the obvious functions.

Robert K. Merton draws on Durkheim's writings for his theoretical examination of "Social Structure and Anomie." It served as the theoretical underpinning for Merton's efforts to formulate a macro-level justification for the prevalence of norm-violating behaviour in American society. Merton builds his theory on sociological presumptions about human nature, in contrast to Durkheim. Durkheim's idea of unbounded needs and appetites is replaced by Merton's view that human needs and desires are essentially the result of a social process, specifically, cultural socialisation. People brought up in a society that places a strong emphasis on material aspirations, According to Durkheim, anomie was the result of society's inability to control or limit the purposes or objectives of human desire. Merton's focus resides primarily in the social regulation of the methods individuals apply to achieve material objectives. According to Merton's theory, deviance is very significant. Individuals display abnormal behaviour in a variety of social contexts. Deviant behaviour results from a mismatch between culturally prescribed methods and socially prescriptive aims. He discovers that while deviant behaviour hasn't outlived its usefulness, it still exists in society. As a result, sociology shouldn't focus on deviance as a pathological issue, but rather on its hidden and manifest orientations. According to Merton, anomie is not a result of quick social change. Instead, it is a type of behaviour that people exhibit when they are under societal pressure. Anomie theory is often referred to as social strain theory for this reason. The tension results from an incompatibility between socially and culturally prescribed methods and objectives. Cohen observes thus: "People who are under societal pressure channel their stress in various ways, leading to the manifestation of various types of antisocial behaviour. They come in three varieties: functional, dysfunctional, and non-functional deviant behaviours" (Cohen 89). In addition to

undermining societal support for institutional norms, this persistent gap between cultural promises and structural reality also encourages transgressions of such norms. How precisely do humans respond to these environmental demands? Perhaps Merton's most significant contribution to the anomie tradition is his response to this query. Merton offers an analytical typology of personal adjustments to the gap between culture and social structure in the form of various adaptations: Conformity, Innovation, Ritualism, Retreatism and Rebellion. These adaptations define the kind of social roles that individuals take on in response to demands from structures and cultures. Merton defines anomie as "a breakdown in the cultural structure, occurring particularly when there is an acute disjunction between the cultural norms and goals and the socially structured capacities of members of the group to act in accordance with them" (Merton 67), after identifying the modes of individual adaptation. According to this theory, cultural values may contribute to the development of behaviour in conflict with the demands of the values themselves.

According to Merton, anomie is primarily a social notion and that anomie is an "attribute of a social system, not to the state of mind of this or that individual inside the system." For instance, the state of anomie ends when there is a broad decline in confidence in the effectiveness of the government, when contractual collaboration is marked more by suspicion than by trust, or when the society feels uneasy due to an alarming spike in crime rates. As a result, Merton's theory is appealing and has a significant influence on the subject of deviance due to his capacity to elucidate a wide range of deviant events using a relatively straightforward analytical framework. This is what a broad theory might look like.

Before this turning point, Merton made a significant contribution to sociology. Some of Merton's publications with others, the widely read piece titled *Social Structure and Anomie* (1938) and *The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action* (1936). These two studies "significantly influenced sociology by illustrating the distribution of abnormal behaviour among the roles within the social system and highlighting the significant differences in the rates of distribution of abnormal behaviour among systems. Illustrating specific facets of culture, including cultural objectives and standards, as well as social structure"

(Cohen 21). Merton was a highly accomplished American sociologist of the 20th century with a wide range of abilities resulting as Deflem comments:

In important sociological findings, assisting with the ongoing evolution and deeper investigation of answers, the strain theory and the theory of anomie are two components of Merton's assessments of the social structure and anomie paradigm. Today's sociology has faithfully embraced Merton's approach. (Deflem 471)

According to Crothers, “To show that the framework's pillars are firm, Merton's theories have been examined and updated. Numerous sociologists have examined the effects of Merton's theories in their writings” (Crothers 272). The deviance theory and theory of anomie are the "Ideas of Middle Range" that Merton discussed. Today's sociology has been greatly impacted by these theories. These concepts are in line with empirical study that aims to identify the main source of impact on our society. Merton investigated the social and economic underpinnings of American society, commonly referred to as the "American dream," and developed a theory and analysis that might account for social order, which made a major contribution to sociology. When there was a persistently high rate of crime during periods of economic success, the 1950s was a crucial decade for Merton's study. Numerous studies have been done by sociologists to explain why this happens. Due to the enormous desire for an explanation, Merton's study “became quite popular, leading him to build on his initial essay and further analyse the key factor underlying why crime persisted despite periods of economic expansion. Due to the growing demand for his paradigm, Merton amended it, enhancing it by responding to criticisms” (Merton 172), which resulted as a breakthrough in sociology. The number of references to Merton's theory in these many versions of his articles on “Social Structure and Anomie” was unusually high in the 1960s. He carried out a significant study that had a profound effect on society. Merton maintained that cultural duties and conformism were the root causes of corruption and criminal behaviour, independent of the structural and economic conditions of the time. According to Merton:

The connection and widespread exposure of the 'American dream' which implies that anybody may potentially achieve economic success through toil and effort, was the primary reason why conformity led to crime and deviance. A cardinal American virtue, "ambition," encourages a cardinal American vice, "deviant behaviour." (Merton 188)

The American public very quickly adopted the cultural commitment to the American dream, which subsequently became so deeply embedded in typical lifestyle of America that even amidst economic recessions, there still co-existed a "strain" towards maintaining the American ideal. According to Merton, there is a major rift between "culturally defined goals" (Newburn 375). Merton recognised that it is challenging to succeed with the right resources due to the evolution of the social structure. The system makes it more difficult for members of the lower classes to fight and accomplish the kinds of goals that are valued. Merton says:

Conformity is the most often used strategy for adaptation because it makes it simple to accept cultural and industrialized aims. Due to the disparity between aims and justifiable needs, this has connections to Merton's notion of anomie. Due to the framework of society and culture, crime and deviance become socially acceptable and a means of expression. (Merton 78)

In a nutshell, Merton was saying that society's members share goals and resources. Merton lists five strategies for coping with the stress arising from their inability to succeed: innovation, ritualism, retreatism, innovation, and, lastly, rebellion. Overall, this means that when goals are not achieved, criminality or deviation appears. This is shown in the pressures created by the stark disparities that characterise the society that has been constructed around the idea of the "American dream." Merton strongly suggests that the achievement in America that is so extensively highlighted is a "recurring theme and a key element in the formation of American culture expressing the idea that people who have encountered a challenge in accomplishing their goals may, as a result, look for alternative strategies of achieving them. Unconsciously, the person feels pressured to commit a crime in

order to live up to a certain level of riches” (Merton 187). Craig Calhoun in his research published in *Robert K Merton: Sociology of Science and Sociology as Science* remarks that:

Merton's work addressed the challenges of integrating research and theory. It connected different fields of empirical research and spoke to the importance of overcoming divisions between allegedly pure and applied sociology. Merton also sought to integrate sociology with the institutional analysis of science, each informing the other. (Calhoun 355)

Merton's sociological concerns have led to a new development in the theory of deviance. Merton's contribution led to a huge growth in the subject of structural sociology. Merton's findings have been the subject of continued discussion for over fifty years. “Amazing discoveries have been made as a result of Merton's observations. Merton proposes a sophisticated, complex framework for sociology. His conjectural and methodological functional analysis alignments are frequently used without acknowledging the author” (Sztompka 19). Merton has been a famous figure in sociology, having held president positions in the Eastern Sociological Society in 1968 and the American Sociological Association in 1956. Merton approaches sociology through a unique perspective on human behaviour, analysing sociological concepts to produce an answer:

For whatever the role of biological impulses, there still remains the further question of why it is that the frequency of deviant behaviour varies within different social structures and how it happens that the deviations have different shapes and patterns in different social structures. Our perspective is sociological. We look at variations in the rates of deviant behaviour, not at its incidence. (Merton 168)

Without making any mention of a cultural or a social framework, Merton carefully crafts a response. According to Merton's sociological exploration, although individuals are skilled at adjusting their conduct when they are in a social setting, they only demonstrate this ability by selecting options that are approved by society.

Sociology has improved tremendously as a result of Merton's sociological insight. Merton developed a social theory that held people accountable for deviant behaviour. Merton's approach has been used by researchers to develop measurements of anomie based on signs of social structural conditions in the mid-20th century. Many scholars have found value in Merton's anomie approach. Merton's contributions have successfully established a framework that is and has been an important component of the analysis of anomie. Cole comments thus:

The major outcome of Merton's work is that it has helped sociology advance in its findings and being able to further generate innovative sociological concepts in sociology, especially in advances in the beneficial consequences of people's actions to keep a group in balance; this is related to function, a term Merton is associated with these consequences. Similarly, with dysfunction, denoting the repercussions that attenuate stability, Merton has a way in which he acquires and presents questions and solutions, in a way in which he constructs and denotes each investigation through puzzles to combat the question. (Cole 830)

Undoubtedly, among sociologists of the 20th century, Merton has had the biggest impact. His significant contributions to the field of sociology have advanced it, and several sociologists have made use of "his work to construct sociological theories with the aim of advancing sociology setting up a rich social backdrop for the examination of and study of the aberrant behaviour that appears in American civilisation" (Featherstone and Deflem 471). Guglielmo Rinzivillo from Department of Social and Economic Sciences, Sapienza - University of Rome, in his article "Some turning points in the early sociology of Robert King Merton" published in *International Review of Sociology*, recounts the merits of Merton as:

One of Merton's great merits was, unlike the great theorist Talcott Parsons, that of devoting himself to empirical research with a view to integrating it realistically into theory. He paid enormous attention, therefore, to the logic of the scientific community and to the tensions between it and society at large...What he meant was that science

would be authentically science only if it had an organisation which permitted doubt to express itself: as long as this ethical imperative existed, science might develop. (Rinzivillo 591)

Merton was highly valued for more than fifty years as a well-known academic who wrote 200 articles and over twenty books alone or in collaboration. Furthermore, textbooks discussing criminological theory or deviance usually include Merton's interpretation of strain theory. As a result, several publications analyse Merton and his creations.

Applying R.K. Merton's theory of anomie, this research will explore the ways in which Kapur's works depict the alienation and dissatisfaction that can arise when individuals are unable to achieve their socially-prescribed goals, and how these feelings can manifest themselves in deviant behaviour of these individuals. Drawing on Merton's concept of anomie, it will analyse how Kapur's novels illustrate the tension between cultural norms and individual aspirations, as well as the effects of inequality on the lives of her characters. This study will also shed light on the ways in which her fiction projects the challenges faced by women in Indian society. In this study all the six novels of Manju Kapur such as *A Married Woman*, *Difficult Daughters*, *The Immigrant*, *Home*, *Brothers* and *Custody*, depicting the intricate interplay of tradition and modernity, societal expectations, and individual aspirations within the evolving landscape of Indian society. Kapur created a galaxy of women characters such as Virmati, Ida, Kasturi, Astha, Nisha, Sona, Tapti and Pipee are depicted as the victims of transformation of culture. They are trapped in the traditional and male dominated social system and often they emerge deviant and rebellious in their life. The women of Manju Kapur are confronted with social issues such as early marriage, forced marriage, domestic violence, gender discrimination and other social taboos. They experience social inequality and male hegemony and revolt against these cultural forces. They are deviant in their behaviour and are condemned by their rebellious actions. The force of anomie grips their consciousness as they feel misfit in their life. They are crazy to become rich, popular, to earn name and fame and in their quest for their identity often emerge as deviants. Kapur in her novels depict the longing of the struggle of Indian women to achieve an identity in

the male dominated society. She remarks, “The mother-daughter nexus is only one of the many manifestations of the Indian women’s roles. She is a wife, a mother, a daughter-in-law...in fact there are many aspects of a woman’s life.” (23)

In her novel *Difficult Daughters* Virmati revolts against the patriarchal social order in her deviant passion and enters into the scandalous relationship with a married professor who lives in her neighbourhood creating the sensation in the plot. She becomes the second wife of the professor. In *A Married Woman* Astha is a middle class woman; she has everything: children; loving husband but she finds satisfaction in the lesbian relationship with Pipee; the widow of a political activist, Aijaz. *Home* is focussed on the struggles of women like Sona and Nisha. In *The Immigrant* a married girl moves to Canada with her husband who suffers from sexual impotency and this becomes the main cause of their alienation and sufferings. Shagun and Raman’s relations are based on their deviant behaviour. Sona is barren as she struggles to sustain in the family. She struggles to become pregnant and pray god thus: “She tried to calm herself by praying, closing her eyes to concentrate on her favourite image of god...Please, I am growing old, bless us with a child, girl or boy, I do not care, but I cannot bear the emptiness in my heart” (*Home* 19). She gives birth to Nisha who becomes the source of torture to her parents as she emerges as deviant and rebellious in the novel. Her love affair is opposed by the family and this depresses Nisha. She is not allowed to continue her study. Nisha becomes a prisoner of the patriarchal order and becomes a prisoner in her own house. Sona bursts out thus:

This girl will be our death. My child, born after ten years, tortures me like this. Thank god your grandfather is not alive. What face will I show upstairs? Vijay gets his wife from Fancy Furnishing while my daughter goes to the street for hers. (*Home* 198)

This thesis explores the themes and the nature of women of Manju Kapur relying on the theories of Merton. Their rebellious nature, their lust for sexuality and lesbian love and revolt against the patriarchal world order is the result of their anomie and deviant behaviour fully explored by Merton in his books. Manju Kapur is a socialistic novelist who has depicted the existential challenges, the hopes and

aspirations, and the traumatic experiences of her women. Each of her character struggles to escape from the patriarchal culture as she revolts against the male hegemony.

Merton's concept of anomie has particular relevance to Indian society. Indian society is characterised by a wide range of social inequalities (including gender and caste) and economic disparities that lead to alienation and anomie. For example, the traditional caste system in India had brought about marginalisation. This tendency led to disconnection and meaninglessness. Furthermore, in a society where social mobility is often restricted, individuals may experience anomie if they are unable to achieve their goals. Ultimately, Merton's concept of 'Anomie' stresses the importance of understanding how structural inequalities can lead to feelings of estrangement and anomie in individuals, which is particularly pertinent to Indian society. His ideas can be applied to Indian society in order to explain some of the social issues that are prevalent in the country. He suggests that when individuals are unable to attain their goals through legitimate means, they may gravitate to illegitimate means to attain them, leading to deviant behaviour. In the Indian context, where there are issues like corruption, unequal distribution of resources and discrimination on the basis of sex, Merton's concept will help by shedding light on the factors that contribute to such unusual behaviour. Moreover, Merton's concept can also be used to understand the impact of globalisation and modernisation on Indian society. As India continues to modernise and adopt Western values, there may be an incongruity between cultural values and the means to attain them, leading to anomie and deviant behaviour. Thus, Merton's concept of anomie can be a useful tool to understand various social issues and behaviours in Indian society. However, it is important to acknowledge the unique cultural and social context of India when applying this concept. Merton's 'anomie' suggests that individuals in a society become overwhelmed by the pressure of social expectations and pursue goals without considering the consequences. This very concept can be applied to Indian society since it has a hierarchical structure of stratification. This often leads to individuals feeling a sense of alienation and isolation and can cause them to act without considering the consequences. The effects of anomie can be seen in India in many ways. Indian citizens often feel pressure of societal expectations and find it difficult

to meet these demands. This can lead to a lack of a sense of purpose and confidence, as individuals strive to achieve society's expectations of success. Moreover, unequal economic and social opportunities can lead to individuals turning to criminal or unacceptable anti-social activities in order to be successful. This can be seen in the rising numbers of crime and lawlessness plaguing India. The concept of anomie can also be seen in more subtle ways. In India, there is often a lack of respect for diversity and difference. Individuals may feel pressured to conform to certain social norms in order to be accepted. Moreover, people may be discouraged from pursuing their dreams and this tendency promotes deviant behaviour.

Merton's 'anomie' is particularly relevant to the experience of women in India. Women in India often lack access to educational and economic opportunities, leading to a feeling of marginalisation. At the same time, traditional cultural norms and expectations about gender roles can lead to a sense of confinement and powerlessness. This can create a sense of anomie when women feel that the available options for them are inadequate or ineffective. In addition, women may feel additional pressures from expectations of the family and community, leading to further feelings of isolation, powerlessness, and frustration. Thus, this study aims at the comprehension of the complex dynamics of Indian society through the Mertonian viewpoint to provide a deeper appreciation of Kapur's substantial contribution to the socio-cultural landscape of contemporary Indian literature.

The condition of women in ancient Indian society was complex and varied. Some women enjoyed a great deal of freedom and respect, others were subject to strict social and cultural norms that limited their opportunities and relegated them to subordinate roles. Despite these examples of female empowerment, many other women were subject to patriarchal customs and norms that confined them to the domestic sphere and limited their participation in economic, political, and intellectual life. Women were often confined to the household, where their primary roles were to manage the household, bear and raise children, and perform religious and ritual duties. Even our scriptures like Ramayana and Mahabharata that are taken as guiding principles for human behaviour and social conduct. In Indian society, "Sita is

considered as the ideal for womanhood by Indians. It is due to her chastity, sacrificing spirit and dedication.” (Janapathy77)

Manju Kapur is a renowned Indian novelist, best known for her works exploring the aspirations of modern Indian women. Her fiction has been written from the perspective of the socio-cultural landscape of 21st century India, providing insight into the complex issues facing women. Kapur diverted her attention from much discussed social issues to domestic and women issues. Her novels focus on women's endeavour for emancipation from the patriarchal social system. She portrays the real status of women, shunning all inhibitions and projecting her characters in an unprejudiced way. She presents the idea that women's sense of upliftment lies in their developing self, getting freedom from dependence on men. She breaks the image of “Ideal wife” in her works. In Indian society “Self restraint, a sense of service and dedication are supposed to be important traits of a woman. She should serve food to the husband” (Janapathy 84). But Kapur focuses on a sense of freedom and identity. Emancipation does not lie in limiting women to their conventional role but in expansion and awakening of their “self”. Modern women give new meanings to traditional mythologies. Kapur is considered significant in drafting women's inclination towards consciousness for rights and providing them self-expression. Using R.K. Merton's theory of anomie, this research has explored the ways in which Kapur's works depict the alienation and dissatisfaction that can arise when individuals are not able to achieve their socially-prescribed goals, and how these feelings can manifest themselves in deviant behaviour of these individuals. Drawing on Merton's concept of anomie, it will analyse how Kapur's novels illustrate the tension between cultural norms and individual aspirations, as well as the effects of inequality on the lives of her characters. By examining Kapur's works through Mertonian perspective, this study will shed light on the ways in which her fiction projects the challenges faced by women in Indian society.

The study of Manju Kapur's fiction in the Mertonian perspective is important for several reasons. Firstly, Kapur's novels offer a real and complex portrayal of Indian society, particularly in relation to the family, gender relations, and social norms and values. By examining these themes through Mertonian perception, this

study will deepen our understanding of the interplay between social structure and individual agency in Indian society, and the ways in which social norms and values shape individual behaviour. Secondly, Kapur's fiction provides insight into the experiences of women in patriarchal societies and the challenges they face in asserting their individual agency. By examining the tension between individual desire and societal expectations in Kapur's novels, this study will provide gender bias in Indian society. Thirdly, Mertonian sociology has broader implications for our understanding of society and social change. By examining the tensions between social structure and individual agency in Kapur's fiction, this study will contribute to a broader understanding of the role that social norms and values play in directing individual behaviour and the need for social change to accommodate individual aspirations and desires. Overall, this study will provide a deeper appreciation of the complex socio-cultural dynamics of Indian society and the need for social change to accommodate individual aspirations and desires.

Merton highlights the importance of social norms and values in influencing individual behavior. This study will examine the ways in which social norms and values impact the lives of Kapur's characters and their broader implications in Indian society. The study will also consider the ways in which fiction can reflect and comment on society, and how literature can contribute to social change. In this study, the relationship between society and fiction is reciprocal. On one hand, Kapur's novels reflect the socio-cultural dynamics of Indian society and provide insight into the ways in which societal norms and values shape individual behaviour, and on the other hand, Kapur's fiction also has the potential to contribute to social change by challenging societal norms and expectations and providing a platform for individual agency and aspirations. Thus, the study of Manju Kapur's fiction from a Mertonian perspective highlights the interplay between society and fiction and the potential of literature to reflect and comment on society while also contributing to social change.

Kapur's novels are complex works of fiction that deal with socio-cultural issues that are central to Mertonian sociology. The theoretical framework of Merton emphasises the role of social norms and values in shaping individual behaviour, which is highly relevant to the themes explored in Kapur's novels. By applying

Mertonian perspective to the analysis of Kapur's fiction, this study aims to deepen our understanding of the interplay between social structure and individual agency in Indian society. This will involve exploring the ways in which social norms and values shape the courses of the lives of the characters in Kapur's novels and the broader implications for Indian society. The Mertonian perspective will provide a set of analytical tools that can be used to understand the interplay between social structure and individual agency in Kapur's novels and the broader implications for Indian society. Overall, the application of Mertonian sociology to the analysis of Kapur's fiction will contribute to a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics of Indian society.

Chapter II

The Making of the Novelist

Manju Kapur is a prominent Indian novelist who created a galaxy of women characters mirroring the typical patriarchal Indian society. She is a keen observer of social customs and the people living around her. She has deeply explored the customs, traditions and rituals prevalent in Indian society. She reacted against the traditional society that promoted male hegemony and supremacy of the patriarchal order. She emerged as a post modernist woman writer like Shobha De and Arundhati Roy. Manju Kapur presented the new concept of woman identity and presented “New Woman” who is free and struggles to get her own independent identity. She found women suffering from patriarchal oppression, sexual oppression and the victims of orthodox rigidity and superstitions.

Manju Kapur's career and scholastic path provided a strong basis for her development as a novelist. Her career experiences and academic endeavors equipped her with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully negotiate the literary world and develop her own voice in Indian literature. Her scholastic journey began at Delhi University with a Master's degree in English literature, which served as a springboard for her exploration of a variety of literary genres and storytelling techniques. Her exposure to a wide range of literary works sharpened her storytelling skills and expanded her perspectives, providing a solid base for her future creative ventures. "Delving into diverse literary genres during my academic years enriched my understanding of storytelling, laying the groundwork for my narrative style," Kapur once said in reflection on her academic experience (Kapur, *The Hindu*, 3). Her scholastic endeavors also gave her a rich environment which helped her to understand the subtleties of society and the complexity of human emotions in literature. Her keen sense of observation and interpretation were further developed in the demanding academic setting; these qualities would eventually set her works apart.

Her views on societal structures have also been greatly influenced by her work as an educator. During her time as a teacher, Kapur gained insightful knowledge of society norms, family dynamics, and human behaviour. She was able to examine the complexities of interpersonal interactions from a unique perspective because of her direct exposure to a wide range of personalities and life experiences. "Observing the myriad facets of human behaviour in my teaching profession deeply influenced my portrayal of characters and relationships in my novels," the author said, looking back on her teaching career (Kapur, Interview with *The Guardian*). Manju Kapur's writing growth was significantly accelerated by her scholastic years spent studying a variety of literary works. Her knowledge of literature was enhanced by her exposure to a variety of genres, styles, and narrative techniques. Her novels would subsequently showcase her ability to dive further into the subtleties of storytelling, which was made possible by her academic background. Along with giving her a platform to critically analyse and evaluate a variety of narratives, Kapur's academic endeavors also allowed her to witness the complexities of interpersonal interactions, societal dynamics, and the complex character of Indian society. Her career path served to reinforce her chosen route as an author. As a teacher, she had the opportunity to see and engage with a wide range of people, which provided her with "important insights on relationships, human behaviour, and social expectations. Her works feature complex interpersonal interactions and nuanced characterizations, which are probably a result of her exposure to a wide range of people and situations" (Goel 122). Kapur herself confessed thus: "My academic and professional experiences have significantly contributed to my understanding of human relationships and societal dynamics, which form the core of my narratives" (Kapur, Interview with *The Times of India* 5).

Manju Kapur's professional involvement and academic training gave her the ability to express the complexity of familial connections, society conventions, and human emotions in her works. Her claim that "teaching has been an exploration of human nature, and this understanding is a foundation for my portrayals of characters in my novels" (Kapur, Interview with *The Hindu* 3) is further supported by her commitment to the teaching profession, which is intricately involved in

understanding human behaviour, familial interactions, and societal dynamics. Her scholastic and professional experiences developed Kapur's capacity for observation, empathy, and a keen grasp of social subtleties, all of which had a significant impact on the stories she created. These characteristics were essential to her capacity to convey in her writing the complexities of familial connections, society standards, and human emotions.

Manju Kapur's literary journey was profoundly shaped by a rich tapestry of authors, books, and movements that left indelible marks on her writing style, thematic choices, and narrative techniques. These influences played a pivotal role in honing her storytelling abilities and crafting narratives that resonate deeply with the complexities of Indian society. Her exploration of Indian literary stalwarts such as R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Anita Desai provided her insights into the fine distinction of Indian storytelling, the portrayal of societal realities, and the interplay between tradition and modernity. Kapur acknowledged the profound influence of Indian literature, expressing, "The depth and diversity of Indian literature have been instrumental in shaping my narrative style and thematic explorations" (Kapur, Interview with *Hindustan Times* 3). Furthermore, her engagement with international authors, notably the works of Virginia Woolf, Jane Austen, and the Brontë sisters, introduced her to diverse storytelling techniques, intricate character development, and fine narratives that significantly influenced her approach to literature. Kapur expressed the impact of international authors on her writing, noting, "The richness and depth of narratives by international authors have significantly contributed to my writing style" (Kapur, Interview with Lisa Lau).

Manju Kapur's early life and upbringing had a significant influence on her success as a novelist. She was raised surrounded by the traditions and culture of a normal Indian home after being born in Amritsar, India, in 1948. Amritsar, a city well-known for its rich cultural heritage and historical significance, had a big impact on her upbringing. The "conventional wisdom, familial bonds, and societal standards that permeated a city steeped in history yet embracing modernity were undoubtedly present in my early years and family background (Kapur, *The Hindu* 3). Her plots depict an interplay between custom and social changes; there is unconventional and a

distinctive blend of tradition and modernity. Kapur's observant narratives are original and remarkable in depicting the shifting roles that men and women perform in the household and in society. Her familial dynamics, the values of society, and her cultural surroundings all had a big impact on her ambitions and perspectives. Kapur's "awareness of societal duties, relationships, and the changing dynamics inside an Indian household was based on the beliefs and conventions of her family" (Nitonde 11). Dr. Ram Sharma writes thus:

Manju Kapur desires to prove through her woman protagonist that a woman should be aware, self-controlled, strong-willed, self-reliant and rational, having faith in the inner strength of womanhood. A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense. She seems to bring out the implicit fallacy in Aristotle's dictum that man is a social animal. (Sharma 32)

Growing up in India during the post-independence era, Kapur saw the country going through substantial social and political transformations. Her views on social conventions, which are frequently mirrored in her literary works, may have been impacted by the cultural shift from traditional to more contemporary ideals. She studied English literature for her Master's degree at Delhi University, where she improved her language abilities and expanded her knowledge of literature, allowing her to investigate a variety of stories and storytelling strategies. It is possible that experiences or difficulties in Kapur's early years influenced her decision to pursue a career in writing. Manju Kapur's need to investigate and question these roles had been influenced by the social expectations that were put on women during that time, especially in traditional Indian households. Christopher Rollason comments thus, "The investigation of gender roles and relationships in her works was probably inspired by her personal experiences and perceptions of the restrictions placed on women by the society" (4). In her interview published in *The Times of India* she says, "My culture, my background, my experience, all of that has come into the novels, and I think it has given them a certain depth and strength" (Kapur Interview with *The Times of India* 7). Here Kapur reflects her experiences and cultural background. This acknowledgement emphasises how much her early life influenced the books she

wrote. In her interview with the BBC she stated that "India is such a diverse country and full of contradictions, and it's the most wonderful place to write about" (interview with the BBC 9). This statement of Manju Kapur highlights the impact of Indian society on her works. Her background and early years had a big influence on the range and depth of her novels. Comprehending the relationship between Kapur's early life and her development as a novelist is essential to appreciating the subtleties in her works. Her observations, character development, and societal critique that are presented in her books and short stories are the result of her early encounters.

Postcolonial fiction of Manju Kapur explores the colonial issues which had led to the fractured identities of women of India. She had keenly observed marginalising and dehumanising of women. They were treated as the second class citizens of the society. Manju Kapur wrote fiction to depict the issues of fractured identities of the characters, displacement, gender discrimination, oppression and the dilemmas of the women living in the colonised societies. The partition of India and Pakistan was a painful episode which led to great upheaval, a brutal massacre and exodus of masses over the borders. Thousands of the women were uprooted from their homelands, many women widowed, raped and murdered in the streets. This chapter focuses on the dilemmas of the colonised women, their displacement and alienation caused by the oppressive forces of patriarchy and sexualities. As Nelson puts it, "issues of identity, problems of history, confrontations with racism, intergenerational conflicts, difficulties in building new supportive communities," are some of them (Nelson 92). She followed the images of women used by Bapsi Sidhwa, Monica Ali, Angela Carter and Khaled Hosseini. Kapur employed the realistic symbols, images to magnify the issues of feminism, patriarchy and sexualities. Sudesh Mishra observes in his *From Sugar to Masala: Writing by the Indian Diaspora*, "Panic, nausea, schizophrenia, hysteric, time-lag, estrangement, violence, nostalgia, and madness are some major themes of Manju Kapur" (Mishra 123). The voice of feminism is more perceptible and prominent in Pakistani and Bangladeshi fiction. Women characters of Manju Kapur are depicted as victims of male control as they suffered the hegemony of male characters. They were subjected to injustice, oppression, and exploitation by the males. Young says thus:

Postcolonial Feminism is certainly concerned to analyze the nervous conditions of being a woman in a post colonial environment, whether in the social oppression of the post colony or the metropolis. Its concern is not in the first place with individual problems but with those that affect the whole communities. (Young 115)

Male dominated society treated women with indignity; her status was decided by the shape and loveliness of her body. Her body determined her identity. Sudesh Mishra observes that “The historical image of woman is very interesting; she was called “Novissima”, the “Odd Woman”, the “Wild Woman”, and the “Superfluous woman” in English fiction and periodicals that appeared in 1880s and 1890s” (Mishra 123). Karen Horney rightly observed: “Men have the legal right to sexualize all females, regardless of age or status.” (Horney 123) The female bodies are often defiled by men; they are closely watched, evaluated and objectified as they are treated as second class citizens. Bartky has also made her observations in her *Psychological Oppression* that a woman is sexually objectified when her sexual parts or sexual functions are separated out from the rest of her personality. In such a case she becomes a mere instrument of sexual pleasures of men (Bartky 28). She opines that women live in suppressed culture. Manju Kapur introduced the themes of sexualities, oppression; revolt and suppression of women in her novels. In Indian society, sexual victimisation, rapes and forced marriage are very common. Manju Kapur had raised her voice against gender oppression.

Foucault made historical observations in his book *The History of Sexuality*; he gave a detailed analysis of the forces that invaded the female body. Female body has always been the target of attack in history as men take pride in colonising their bodies. Each part of the female body is monitored; controlled and examined by men.

What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, and its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. (Foucault 138)

In the process of cultural transformation freedom is lost and women are subjected to sexual objectification. She also contends that in the cultural transformation process the worst hit are women. They lose their freedom and identity. The themes of domestic violence and sexual abuse have been investigated in the fiction of Manju Kapur. Her feminist message is given through the representation of deviant and rebellious behaviour.

Urvashi Butalia in her paper titled “The Other Side of Silence” describes the dismal existence of the women of Manju Kapur, who face abuse and estrangement because of their abnormal behaviour. In Indian culture, women are traditionally and religiously viewed as symbols of love and purity. However, in practice, women face subjugation, sexual molestation, rape, and other forms of brutality in the name of morality and religion. The status of Indian women in medieval society had been decided by the patriarchal set up and nobody dared to go against it. In the Gupta period, the status of woman was very low, she was not allowed the property rights, education was denied to her and her duty was to serve her husband in her life till death and even after death. But in the post-colonial era feminists in India seek gender equality: the right to work for equal wages, the right to equal access to health and education, and equal political rights. Unlike the western feminism, Indian feminism has been a long unsettled debate since the Women Studies researchers have not yet defined “Indian Feminism.” Indians don’t have any clear cut corpus of writing which can be referred to as “feminism” or “feminist writing/theory”. Indian feminism has always been looked down upon due to the lack of theoretical writings which could grasp the crux of the problems of the Indian women. The emergence of “Feminism” has been a powerful challenge to the prevailing power structures and gender equations at the level of the family, the economy and the polity. The term “feminism” evokes revolutionary movements that played a vital role in liberating the status of women. The word ‘Feminism’ refers to an intense awareness of identity as a woman and interest in feminine problems. The subjugation of women is a central fact of history and it is the main cause of all psychological disorders in society. According to Janet Richards in her book *Women Writer’s Talking*:

The essence of Feminism has a strong fundamental case intended to mean only that there are excellent reasons for thinking that woman suffer from systematic social injustice because of their sex; the proposition is to be regarded as constituting feminism. (Richards 3)

Modern feminism came into existence in the 1960s, and soon it turned into a socio-political movement. It aims at understanding the power structures in the society, male domination, social institutions which marginalise women. Feminist theory also devises the strategies to transform the social structures to bring about women emancipation. The strong wave in the 1960s and 1970s promoted women empowerment. In 1980s, 'Feminism' concentrated on transforming the individual fields and in the 1990s began a major role in directing academic focus on the concern of the so-called 'otherness', differences and questions of marginality. Margaret Homans has pointed out that the concept of feminism raises fundamental queries about reading, writing and the teaching of literature. It operates as an interdisciplinary tool for social and cultural analysis. Feminism is seen as the struggle against all forms of patriarchal and sexist aggression. Women did not write in the beginning as it now, the obvious reason as Virginia Woolf puts it, "A woman must have money and room of her own if she is to write fiction" (126). Money symbolises power and freedom and a room of her own is to have contemplative thinking. In the book *A Room of One's Own* (1929) Virginia Woolf observes that "women were not allowed to walk on the grass" (126). Women were not recognised as individuals or autonomous beings. As Chaman Nahal describes feminism thus:

I define feminism as a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the dependence syndrome. There is dependence syndrome whether it is husband, father, the community or a religious group. When women will free themselves of the dependence syndrome and lead a normal life, my idea of feminism materialises. The study shows feminism is a struggle for equality of women, an effort to make women become like men. Feminism is seen as a struggle against all forms of patriarchal and sexist aggression. (Nahal 17)

Feminism evolved from women's own awareness and their struggles against patriarchal oppression and male domination. No democratic society can deny the rights of women to education. The debate on women's right to education has been a very popular theme in many Asian countries. In the 18th century a Chinese scholar, Chen Hung- Mou wrote on women's education as "there is no one in the world who is not educable; and there is no one whom we can afford to educate; why be neglectful only in regard to girls?" (Choudhri 7). Mahashweta Devi writes in her famous novel *Rudali*, "It is the women who are ruined by the Malik Mahajans who turn into whores. Nonsense they are a separate caste" (80).

The essay "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" by Chandra Talpade Mohanty is arguably the first documented critique of the dominant feminist discourse in the West. Mohanty has made outstanding contributions to this field. The representation of "Third World Women" in Western feminist writings is examined by Mohanty in this essay. Her analysis of dominant Western feminisms is pointed. Third World Women are not treated with the same respect by Western feminists. Religious, ignorant, frail, and helpless are the characteristics of the Third World Woman. On the other hand, white women are seen as progressive, intelligent, bold, and sexually free. Mohanty also criticises the Western "model of power," which is the humanist, traditional idea that males are oppressors and women are subjugated. Susie Tharu and K. Lalita were other feminists who compiled an anthology of two volumes of women writing from thirteen languages. They have followed the path shown by Showalter and gathered and rediscovered the writings of Indian women. They have traced the history of the post-colonial feminists who raise a cry against patriarchal oppression and male domination in modern India. During the process, they have encountered discussions in which women have weighed in on issues pertaining to their duties as mothers, wives, and companions. Dana Shiller observed, "Man is the most firm – woman the most flexible. Man is the straightest – woman the most bending" (Shiller 539). According to Lyn Pykett:

The New Woman novels were much more directly linked to contemporary controversies surrounding the Woman Question, and to

the various discourses within which they were produced and mediated. Many of the New Woman novelists were also prominent contributors to the debates on 'woman' in the newspaper and periodical press, and the New Woman fiction was sometimes reviewed alongside sociological and other polemical work, as if it were part of a seamless discourse on the Woman Question. (Pykett 7)

The organised feminist movement that brought up the subject of women in public discourse, print media, and electoral rallies is where "New Woman" got its start. The results of the women's struggle were very positive and encouraging. Married women were granted the ability to keep and manage their own money by the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870, and in 1882 they were granted the authority to possess and manage their own property. In 1878, University of London granted degrees of B.A. to women for the first time and after two years women colleges were opened at Oxford. "New Woman" soon became a popular catch-phrase in print media, in social circles and departed from the stereotypical Victorian woman who was docile, domestic, stuck to the kitchen, "an angel of the household". "New Woman" was "intelligent, educated, emancipated, independent and self-supporting" (Ledger 8). Sally gave the realistic picture of "New Woman" when she wrote:

The New Woman was a very fin-de-siècle phenomenon. Contemporary with the new Socialism, the new imperialism, the new fiction and the new journalism, she was part of cultural novelties which manifested itself in the 1880s and 1890s. (Ledger 1)

"New Woman" challenged the male patriarchy, inspired the thinkers to redefine gender roles, considering women's rights. With the growth of industry, women consumer culture increased and soon "New Woman" found advocates among the aesthetics and decadents. In press and popular fiction she was ridiculed. Interestingly "New Women" included social reformers, popular novelists, suffragists, female students and professional women. She was seen riding a bicycle in bloomers and smoking a cigarette in freestyle. Lyn Pykett has observed the ambivalent representations of the "New Woman" in the late-Victorian literature:

The “New Woman” was by turns “a mannish Amazon” and a Womanly woman; she was oversexed, undersexed, or same sex identified; she was anti-maternal, or a racial super-mother; she was male-identified, or man-hating and/or man-eating or self-appointed savior of benighted masculinity; she was anti-domestic or she sought to make domestic values prevail; she was radical, socialist or revolutionary, or she was reactionary and conservative; she was the agent of social and/or racial regeneration, or symptom and agent of decline. (Richardson and Willis xii)

The western “New Woman” began to embrace her sexual liberties, going out to drink, dance, and date her pals in public. She was passionate about fashion and innovative concepts; she disregarded traditional trends, conventions, and ceremonies, as well as outdated attire. The concept of natural beauty, grace and humility changed, they did what society did not expect from young women. They were free to go anywhere. To make an impact on society, they created their own witty lingo, smoked in public, and danced to jazz music. Skirts became shorter to make dancing in the clubs easier. Club culture transformed the living style of women. Corsets were discarded in favour of brassieres to attract the lovers. They cut their hair to look more attractive and dashing among people, feminine locks were outdated now. Alice Meynell was a poetess of the Victorian era. She published columns in the renowned Pall Mall Gazette detailing the appalling state of the “Victorian women were both allured by, and afraid of, recent innovations in women’s roles” (Maynell 26).

Richardson published *Pamela* (1742) depicting Pamela as angelic paragon, proud of her female virginity resisting all the temptations of Lord Booby, and who was rewarded at the end of the novel. Jane Austen addressed the woman question in her novels. Jane Austen realises that writers like “Richardson and Byron have truthfully represented the power struggle between the sexes”. However, she does seek a way of telling their story without perpetuating it. In each of her novels, a seduced-and-abandoned plot is embedded in the form of an interpolated tale told to the heroine as a monetary image of her own problematic story” (Gubar 119). Nicola Diana Thomson is right to a great extent when she observes in her latest book *Victorian Women Writers and Woman Question* thus:

All women whether we now label them radical or conservative, were fundamentally conflicted in their own beliefs about women's proper role, and I believe that the critical reception of their novels from imperialist period to the present has been filtered through the ambivalence of the novelists themselves as well as their critics on the complex of issues which constitute the woman question. (Thompson 3)

Shashi Deshpande is a prominent novelist of the '70s and 80s'. She wrote *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1989), *The Binding Vine* (1992), *A Matter of Time*, and *Small Remedies* (2003). Deshpande presents a true portrayal of an urban middle class Indian woman. Her novels depict the poignant condition of the contemporary woman. Shashi Deshpande has raised a voice against patriarchal domination depicting the frustrations of Indian women. In her first book, *Roots and Shadows*, Shashi Deshpande explores the blatant gender biasness and its effects in a society controlled by men. In her first novel, she depicts the suffering and suffocation of Indu who is the main woman protagonist. Indu lives in a male-controlled society. She is unwilling to conform to society's expectations of what a wife should be. She is the first "New Woman" of Shashi Deshpande, an educated woman of the twentieth century who struggles to discover her real identity. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is the second novel of Shashi Deshpande. The central theme of the novel revolves around Saru's traumatic experience, marked by significant humiliation and neglect during her childhood. After marriage, Saru faces the cruelties of the society and as a wife she experiences gender discrimination shown by her own parents who have a desire to have a male child. Saru attains a higher social status compared to her husband Manohar. But her husband's sense of inferiority complex brings suffering in her life after marriage. Her husband ventilates his frustration on Saru through sexual sadism. *That Long Silence* is about Jaya who is a good wife and a mother but finds herself lonely and estranged.

Shashi Deshpande wrote *The Binding Vine*, depicting the personal tragedy of Urmi. Women in the novel are victims as Urmi tells the heartbreaking story of her mother-in-law Mira, who was raped during her marriage. Mira suffers from her

unhappy marriage and in loneliness she writes poems. Additionally, Urmi tells the story of her friend Shakutai, who was dumped by her husband in favour of another lady. The saddest aspect of her story is that Prabhakar, the husband of Shakutai's oldest daughter Sulu, violently rapes Kalpana.

In her novel *A Matter of Time*, three generations of women from the same family are followed as they navigate personal catastrophes. Gopal, Sumi's husband, deserts her, and she must endure her shame. She experiences severe loss and makes an effort to change for her daughters' benefit. Sumi's maternal uncle Shripati married off her mother Kalyani. Shripati sends Kalyani and their two children back to her parents' house when their four-year-old boy goes missing at a railway station. At the behest of his mother-in-law Manorama, Shripati returns and remains silent for her remaining life. Manorama, Kalyani's mother, is afraid her husband could marry another woman for the same reason after failing to bear him a male heir. Manorama arranges Kalyani's marriage to her brother, Shripati. Consequently, Deshpande has exposed to us the anxieties, annoyances, and urges of three generations of women who share the same family.

The novel *Small Remedies* is about Savitribai Indorekar who is passionate about music. She chooses to follow her musical prowess above marriage and a house. She has had the most unusual life and suffers greatly from mental anguish as a result of society's discrimination. She experienced severe gender prejudice even as a little child. In addition, Munni, the daughter of Savitribai and her aunt Leela, as well as Madhu, the author of her biography, recount their own life stories. There is no denying her sincere compassion for women when one closely examines her writings. Her protagonists are acutely aware of their marginalised status in male-dominated society. All of Deshpande's novels include significant feminist themes. The realistic portrayal of women as mothers, wives, and daughters, as well as their exploration of their sexuality and identity, are her primary areas of interest. The radical feminism of Germaine Greer, Betty Friedan, and Kate Millet, among others, has no influence on her, she claims. She worries about issues pertaining to women in India. In an interview Kapur tells Lakshmi Holmstrom:

It is difficult to apply Kate Millet or Simone de Beauvoir or whoever to the reality of our lives in India. And then there are such terrible misconceptions about feminism by people here. They often think it is about burning bras and walking out on your husband, children or about not being married, not having children etc. I always try to make the point now about what feminism is not, and to say that we have to discover what it is in our own lives, our experiences. (Holmstrom 26)

In a paper presented in a seminar, "The Dilemma of the Woman Writer," Shashi Deshpande protested:

It is a curious fact that serious writing by women is invariably regarded as feminist writing. A woman who writes of women's experiences often brings in some aspects of those experiences that have angered her, caused her strong feelings. I don't see why this has to be labelled feminist fiction. (Deshpande 50)

Anita Desai's novels and short stories feature female characters who struggle to establish their identities within a male controlled society. Desai has depicted the sufferings of Indian women in a lyrical style as her characters, events and moods are described through visual imagery and symbols. Anita Desai is a modern novelist who took inspiration from William Faulkner, T. S. Eliot, and Virginia Woolf. Anita has the unique poetical power to depict the sufferings and psychic pressures of Maya in *Cry the Peacock*, to depict the frustration of the protagonist Bim Das in *Clear Light of Day* (1980). Bim Das is a self-reliant woman who is trapped in her past experiences. All her novels *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) and *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1998) deal with the issues of marriage, sex, marginalisation of women, alienation, and displacement of women protagonists. Matteo and Sophie, Uma, Maya, Mira Masi, Nanda Kaul- all are the victims of the internal and external pressures of society. Like Lotte in *Baumgartner's Bombay*, Bim and Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain*, and Uma, her mother and Mrs. Patton in *Fasting, Feasting* rarely enjoy happiness in life. Uma lacks both intellectual credentials and beauty. She has fits and wears big spectacles. Marriage doesn't happen for Uma. It does, but because the groom was already married and only

wanted to get another dowry, it fails before it ever gets off the ground. Uma suffers greatly as a result of her traditional Indian parents' fervent attempts to set her up for a happy marriage. Desai's women characters often meet tragic endings.

Manju Kapur reacted against the traditional western view of women regarded as the "angel of the house" and presented woman in different unconventional situation giving "New Woman" who thinks independently and acts independently. She discarded the "marriage plot" and projected her heroine who is involved in an extra-marital affair, she has her own identity. Mary Wollstonecraft pioneered this movement when she raised the woman question in her pamphlet: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), and supported the moral and social equality of the sexes. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in 1979 made the feminist movement radical and considered sexist subordination of women as the basic form of oppression. As Beauvoir writes in *The Second Sex*:

The term masculine and feminine are used systematically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. Actually the relation of the sexes is not quite as if that of the two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and negative whereas, woman represents only the negative. (Beauvoir 97)

In her groundbreaking work *Caste as Woman*, Vrinda Nabar emphasised the significance of tradition in our social lives. She has investigated how tradition and patriarchy have affected the collective unconscious of the Indians. According to her, prejudice against women in India starts at birth and "gender" is a social construct. The yearning for a male kid and female infanticide has undoubtedly been prevalent practices in Indian society. The concept of feminism has been presented on the pattern of Indianness by Kamla Bhasin and Nighat Said Khan, "An awareness of women's oppression and exploitation in society, at work and within the family, and conscious action by women and men to change this situation" (Choudhry 4). Madhu Kishwar is the editor of *Manushi*, is a famous journal about women and society. She hates the concept "feminists" and asserts, "I do not call myself a feminist" (Kishwar 33). She objects to this use of the western definition of feminism. It is pertinent to

note that Jane Austen, Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf supported equality of opportunity for women. Simone de Beauvoir brought out a manifesto to attack the male hegemony. Her book *The Second Sex* took aim at the androcentric traditions, philosophy, art, and religion that placed women in a subservient role to men.

Rabindernath Tagore's novels like *Chokar Bali* and *Ghare Bhaire* are known for bold female characters. Kamini Roy was the first female honors graduate. She was a well-known feminist poet from Bengal. She fought for women's voting rights and access to education. Her *Nirmalaya* is one of her famous works. Since the 1990s, interest in the Indian women's movement has grown a lot. Many important books and articles appeared which discussed the issues of gender discrimination. The famous book *Women Writing in India: Twentieth Century* (1993) written by Tharu and Lalita discussed the history of struggles against patriarchal oppression. Women were not acknowledged as unique persons or independent entities in ancient Indian society. The academic scene presented numerous challenges for women, signifying the consequences of an educational system that severely limits the intellectual horizons of women. Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980) sums up the status of a girl child in the society in a simple style thus:

(Mother): Don't go out into the sun. You'll get even darker.

(Saru): Who cares?

(Mother): We have to care even if you don't. We have to get you married.

(Saru): I don't want to get married.

(Mother): Will you live with us all your life?

(Saru): Why not?

(Mother): You can't.

(Saru): And Dhruva?

(Mother): He's different. He's a boy. (45)

Major changes took place in the post-colonial India; the rise of the middle class in India brought new values. With the growth of software and information technologies in India the companies started recruiting women force and this resulted into the refashioning of family ideals. Both Begum Shah Nawaz and Sarojini Naidu proclaimed that the Indian women's movement was not "feminist" in the same sense as the movement in the West.

The social reform movement of the 19th century served as a foundation for the 1920s Indian women's movement. The women's movement gained momentum amid the height of nationalism and the independence struggle, two events that helped to define its characteristics. In Indian feminist history, the year 1930 was a landmark because more women were participating in the liberation fight and women's place in the home was widely acknowledged. Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rabindranath Tagore, Annie Besant, and others supported the role of women. Voting rights were given to women in certain categories. Women were starting to attend more universities and schools. Bankim Chandra Chatterji penned *Rajmohan's Wife*, the first Indian novel. The book version of this work wasn't released until the 1930s, although it was serialised as *Wife* in *The Calcutta Weekly* in 1864. The subject of *Rajmohan's Wife* is how unhappy marriages affect women. The tale revolves around the misery that Matangini, a middle-class housewife, endures at the hands of her husband Rajmohan. It should be highlighted that the first Indian novel is a social fiction rather than a historical romance, and that this was the period of social revolution. The novel's condensed language establishes Matangini, our heroine's terrible destiny. From the beginning of the book, Bankim presents Matangini as:

Some sorrow of deep anxiety had dimmed the lustre of her fair complexion. Yet her bloom was a full charm as that of the land lotus half-scorched and half radiant under the noonday sun her long locks were tied up in a careless knot on her shoulder; but some loose tresses had thrown away that bondage and were straying over forehead and cheeks. (*Rajmohan's Wife* 3)

During this decade, R.K. Narayan wrote and published *The Dark Room*, which is a significant event to remember. His novel *The Dark Room* (1938) portrays

with sympathy the sufferings of women and highlights the fact that how important are their roles in family and in social life. In *The Dark Room*, a specific woman expresses her outrage and revolt. As a Hindu wife, Savitri is following in the hallowed footsteps of past Hindu spouses, including Sita from the Ramayana and her namesake from the Mahabharata. Despite living up to the ideals of loyalty and servitude suggested by these strong female characters, Savitri of *The Dark Room* is deceived by a patriarchal society that grants her husband the ability to cheat on her but denies her the right to financial independence. By the time the novel ends, Savitri is stuck in a marriage that she can't leave and can't even slightly change. Savitri does, however, resist, albeit with rebellion severely limited by her gendered powerlessness. Two Indian novelists Bankim Chandra Chatterji and R. K. Narayan depicted the mood and spirit of the Indian feminist movement. Indian feminists were influenced by historical events and cultural norms to create feminism distinct from Western feminism. Since Indian women are devoted to their faith and the traditional values found in the scriptures, the idea of women's empowerment is adapted into patriarchal culture. In the West women are guided by the notion that "self" is free and they are free to compete in a free society. But in India women as individual are considered as an integral part of the larger social structure. Indian women seek survival through oppressive familial structures, they value cooperation of the parents and husband for the growth and development.

Manju Kapur explored the growth of rebellious spirit among women. The women were expected to follow the traditional bourgeois professional path of marriage and motherhood in ancient Indian society, where the general consensus was against women. She could not violate the boundaries of sex, gender, or class, therefore her function was in fact set in stone. The emergence of "New Woman" became inevitable, her struggle to transform herself from "a relative creature into a woman of independent means intimately connected with the stirrings and rumblings now perceivable in the social and industrial world" (Ardis 1). The development of the new woman fiction was influenced by socio-cultural influences, new science, new technology, new education, and liberalising attitudes. The last two decades after the colonial rule witnessed the start of a change in social attitudes regarding gender relations; gender equality became more popular and the idea of masculine dominance

was pierced. A fierce discussion sprang out on laws pertaining to marriage and divorce, property rights, parenting rights, and women's access to suffrage, work and educational possibilities. The feminist movement “includes any form of opposition to any form of social, personal or economic discrimination which women suffer because of their sexes” (Bouchier 2). In the west, the demand for social and political equality with men manifested itself as an organised movement. Manju Kapur led an uprising against the discrimination against women in academic and professional settings. She objected to the gender disparities ingrained in the political and legal systems. She was in favour of the feminists' campaign, which they had started.

This chapter deals with the gradual growth of the mind and sensibility of Manju Kapur who is a learned woman of India. She was the University teacher and had read all about the various stages of feminism and “New Woman.” Kapur has investigated and explored the influence of matrimonial alliances in the shaping of identities of female gender. She has touched on the serious issues such as marital status, divorce, wifehood, motherhood and the financial status of her women characters in her fiction. She has created women, who are very particular about their beauty and skin colour, they are conscious of their family background leading to their identity in the society. Nina in her novel *The Immigrant* is haunted by her passing of age and is burdened with the problem of her unmarried status. She is the heroine of the novel and the issue of her identity and independence is fully explored in the plot. She condemns the Laws of Manu and revolts against the culture of male domination. Regardless of how cruel or uncaring he may be, her husband is revered in patriarchal cultures such as India. Women have been taught for generations that they must submit to their husbands and families and they have no right to pursue their own interests. In *The Immigrant*, Nina is trapped between ancient culture and modernism. Nina feels that she is living with the void. She emerges as bold and beautiful and discards all the traditional ideas and traditions. The plot begins with the mundane life of Nina but as the plot progresses Nina becomes a “New Woman”. She discards the predetermined roles assigned to women and follows her own independent way of life. Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* rightly observes 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. (Beauvoir 197)

Manju Kapur realised very early in life that marriage is an important institution in Indian society. Marriage is not just a celebration but this practice is deeply rooted in Indian society. Each mother wishes her daughter to marry to a rich and educated boy. Marriage is the only way for a girl to achieve real identity in the society. A woman without marriage is regarded as incomplete. It is the moral responsibility of the parents to find a suitable partner for their daughter. They often go to the Ganga Ghat to take the holy dip after the marriage of their daughter. A woman in Indian society is considered a weak sex and needs a male partner to look after her and to settle in life. There was a famous saying in the society, “Man for war and Woman for hearth.” Marriage gives her power and identity to enjoy in life. She gets saris; ornaments and the support of a family to survive in the society through marriage. Manju Kapur allowed her female characters to breathe in the domestic atmosphere. “Marriage to all these characters, therefore, has different meanings.” Virmati from *Difficult Daughters* is impacted by her sophisticated and elegant cousin Shakuntala, referred to as a Mem by Kasturi. During a stroll in the evening, Shakuntala once tells Virmati:

These people don't really understand Viru, how much satisfaction there can be in leading your own life, in being independent. Here we are, fighting for the freedom of the nation, but women are still supposed to marry, and nothing else. (*Difficult Daughters* 17)

The patriarchal mindset that permeates society causes Nina and her mother to fall prey to this kind of thinking. Accordingly, Kapur discusses Nina's desire for marriage on the book's opening page as, “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” (*The Immigrant* 1). Ashok Kumar comments in his book *Novels of Manju Kapur: A Feministic Study*:

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. (Kumar 163- 164)

In Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters*, Virmati’s mother Kasturi observes that marriage is very significant for the growth of a woman. She says: “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). Nina feels infuriated and throws away the values of marriage upheld by her mother. She says:

My 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. (*The Immigrant* 243)

Virmati believes that marriage is the key aim of her existence. She enjoys the sexual pleasures in her relations with Harish. Swarnlata observes thus:

Marriage is not the only thing in life, Viru. The war- the satyagraha movement- because of these things, women are coming out of their homes. Taking jobs, fighting, going to jail. Wake up from your stale dream. (*Difficult Daughters* 151)

Swarnalata is presented as a “New Woman” but Virmati, driven by her emotions, succumbs to the professor's second marriage. She doesn’t feel comfortable

with Harish after marriage. She feels guilty when she looks at the sufferings of his wife Ganga. She suffers from guilt consciousness. She comes to understand that despite being accepted as Harish's wife, she is still regarded as a 'pariah' within the household. He is encouraging and motivates her to go to Lahore to do M.A but her living with Ganga and her children in the same house of Harish creates problems for Virmati. She is involved in the tug of war with Ganga as she struggles to keep Harish on her side. She becomes a tool in the hands of Harish who wanted an educated wife. Virmati's entire life was a string of confrontations and concessions; she had tense relationships with all the members of the family. They were never able to become close enough to really comprehend one another because of Virmati's severe attitude towards Ida and the weight of enormous expectations:

I grew up struggling to be the model daughter. Pressure, pressure to perform day and night. My father liked me looking pretty, neat and well-dressed, with kaajal and a little touch of oil in my sleeked-black hair. But the right appearance was not enough. I had to do well in school, learn classical music, take dance lessons so that I could convert my clumsiness into grace, read all the classics of literature, discuss them intelligently with him, and then exhibit my accomplishments graciously before his assembled guests at parties. (*Difficult Daughters* 279)

Manju Kapur's novel *The Immigrant* presents Nina as the main protagonist of the plot. She marries Ananda who was a dentist of Canada. Manju Kapur comments thus on the marriage of Nina and Ananda:

But she hadn't felt the spark of instant attraction. Was that so necessary in marriage? He was decent, considerate, thoughtful, everything his letters had suggested. Perhaps, given time, he would grow on her. Together they would walk the path of slowly growing respect, mutual dependence, create the habits that tied people like a tree and a vine. (*The Immigrant* 71)

Nina doesn't feel the real fire of love in Ananda but her mom and friends motivate her to marry Ananda. She is excited, feeling that her future lies in settling in

Canada. Nina's departure to Canada is justified by Manju Kapur who highlights the history of diaspora thus:

In the nineteenth century they departed from their northern homes in boat lands, voyaging to Australia, Asia, and the Americas. They left behind countries that had offered neither men nor security, left behind hopeless futures and lonely presents. In the women of the homeland, the waiting men saw helpers, family makers and standard bearers. In the twentieth century it was the Asian woman's turn. The immigrant man needed a bride who would surround him with familiar traditions, habits, attitudes, whose reward was the prosperity of the west and a freedom often not available to her at home. (*The Immigrant* 79)

Nina lives in the world of false hopes and fancies. She crosses the sea to marry a stranger living in the alien land. She lands in Canada but soon all her dreams are shattered. Ananda fails to give her real sexual pleasures after marriage so she fails to conceive. Ananda becomes aggressive and hostile to her. Nina tells him that he was aware of the problem and so "this might be why he had come home to look for a bride. Was this the kind of man he was? Passing off shoddy goods to the innocent east? She did want to know this answer" (*The Immigrant* 186). The cracks appeared in their relationships. Ananda goes for a therapy secretly hurting Nina. She joins the course of Library Science where she comes in contact with Anton and she falls in love with him. She feels relieved by her sexual relations with Anton as she admits:

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. (*The Immigrant* 264)

Nina feels liberated and enjoys her sexual liberty with Anton. "Her life was her own; she didn't owe anybody any explanations" (*The Immigrant* 273). Nina emerges as "New Woman" of Manju Kapur as she finds satisfaction in her extramarital relationship with Anton. Nina soon feels sick of it and suffers depression and psychological anguish when she comes to know the truth that Anton is using her.

It is a chance that during these days her mother dies in India. Nina is in the dilemma as she broods over the situation:

What was there to bring her to India again? With no mother to disappoint, nobody's expectations to meet, the bonds of her marriage assumed a different feel. 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. (*The Immigrant* 26)

Marriage becomes like an unwanted burden with Nina. When she comes back from India she is shocked to know the truth that Ananda had cheated on her.

So the marriage was based on more than one person's lies. Discovering this made it worse. Her transgressions had been against faithful husband, her constant understanding that any exposure would cause ruin and grief. (*The Immigrant* 328)

She moves away from Ananda; she realises that she is not in India "the things that might have made separation in India difficult for Nina were hers to command in Canada" (*The Immigrant* 333). Nina emerges as a liberal, free woman and she is called upon to take her independent decisions of life. Her education helps her to survive in the alien land. Manju Kapur's novel *Custody* addresses themes of marriage, a contentious divorce, and the traumatic experiences of its female characters. Manju Kapur comments thus: "Raman and Shagun's marriage had been arranged along standard lines, she the beauty, and he the one with the brilliant prospects" (*Custody* 14). She further says:

The marriage of beauty and brain seemed to be a wonderful one. *Custody* deals with the beauty of Shagun who is married off at a rather early age and becomes a mother within a year. Being pregnant plunged her into the centre of all attention. She didn't throw up once, her skin glowed, her hair shone, her husband called her Madonna, her mother said she was fruitful like the earth, her in-laws looked proud and fed her almonds and ghee whenever they could get near her. The

birth of a boy added to her glory. She had gotten over the duties of heir producing smoothly. (*Custody* 15)

She again gets pregnant at the age of thirty. She enjoys her freedom and doesn't want to be confined again. She says, "It's not that. I will be thirty. Arjun is just becoming independent; I don't want to start all over again. Always tied to a child, is that what you want?" (17). Shagun was a joyful and content woman in the early years of her marriage as "she had been brought up to marry, to be a wife, mother and daughter in law." In her novel *The Immigrant*, Manju Kapur presented the theme of marriage in the plot. She firmly believes that marriage is an inescapable ritualistic function in the life of each woman. Nina is an educated girl as her mother is in search of an educated boy for her daughter. She is worried about her settlement in life. She had been persuading her daughter Nina to agree to marry for the last eight years. Manju Kapur observes thus:

The major topic of conversation in the last eight years had been Nina's marriage-who, whom, where, how? From where could fresh possibilities be unearthed on the eve of her thirtieth birthday? The lack of these, reflected in her mother's dull, mournful eyes, was what she was going home to. (*The Immigrant* 3)

Manju Kapur discusses the theme of marriage in her novels. Kasturi, the mother of Virmati observes that "it is the duty of every girl to get married" (15). Astha's mother defends the institution of marriage as she says, "When you are married our responsibilities will be over. Do you know the Shastras say if parents die without getting their daughter married, they will be condemned to perpetual rebirth?" (1). In *Home* of Manju Kapur the issue of marriage is predominant. Sona gets married into a very rich business family. The marriage brings new problems in the family. Yashpal and Pyre Lal find it difficult to live in the small house. They plan to demolish the old house and to build the new house which would contain all the modern facilities. They plan and said:

With a growing family, it is very difficult; the separation is impossible. What is the solution?' Demanded Yashpal plaintively, not

dreaming that Pyare Lal had one. Pull down this house and build a modern one, a modern house that would remove the angan and give them all more floor space, with bedrooms that had attached bathrooms. (*Home* 168)

The lovely Shagun's mother worries about her daughter's marriage in her novel *Custody* and instructs her: "Do what you like after you marry?" (*Custody* 11). She argues, "Mothers are eager to get their daughters married, as for them, it is their responsibility and that is what is expected in Indian culture and society" (*Custody* 11). Manju Kapur broke from the traditional theory of marriage, love and sex. Women in her novels are rebellious and love freedom to enjoy their own identity. They revolt against the traditional patriarchal system and express their free ideas and thoughts about love and sex. Manju Kapur focuses on the rebellious nature of her women. Kapur announced in Delhi Literary Club that she had written a "lesbian" novel. She voiced against the marginalised status of women. Kapur depicts her own postmodern concept of love and sex and dramatises the lesbian relationship in the novel. In her novel *A Married Woman* the issues of female gender and sexual identity are depicted through the characters of Astha and her husband Hemant. Astha is restless and soon she is transformed into a lesbian. She becomes careless with everything. Pipeelika becomes a lesbian widow. Astha is lonely at home as her husband is away most of his time at work. Astha gets solace in the lesbian relationship with Pipeelika. They emerge as transgressive figures in the novel. The lesbian women enjoy a secret celebration of sexual pleasures. Kapur comments, "they had been skin on skin, mind on mind" (303). When "Pipee closed her hands around me, I was barely able to breathe from the pleasure, exclaims Astha (Kapur 256). Catharine R. Stimpson states that "Lesbianism represents a commitment of skin, blood, breast, and bone" (Stimpson 397). Astha enjoys sexual freedom, breaking the norms of the society. She revolts against the patriarchal society and conventional heterosexual norms. Ashok Kumar observes thus:

Male sensibilities in India have been revolutionised as Manju Kapur has shown the passions of women for love and lesbianism, an unworkable marriage and its consequent aggravation, and the traumas

of her female heroes, who suffer and die for their success. (Kumar 165)

Astha and Pipee are seen perform the lesbian activity in the closed room thus:

Pipee cradled her in her arms. She could feel her hands on the initial spread of her hips and the narrowness of her back. Taking her time, she gently undid her blouse hooks and her bra, looking at her face as she did so, and as she did so, she felt her back and breasts, especially the nipples. She felt them again and again, in no hurry to get to the end of the process. (*A Married Woman* 230)

The novels of Manju Kapur depict the challenges of modern women in the patriarchal society. Each of her novels presents a seductive story of love, passion and attachment. The books bring up the contentious topic of homosexual relationships. In her interview with Nivedita Mukherjee, Kapur says, “it is an attempt to inject an element of artistic and emotional coherence. Actually a relationship with a woman does not threaten a marriage as much as a relationship with a man” (Kapur 34). Her female characters challenge male dominance and the marginalisation of women. Historically, men have oppressed women, going to great lengths to control and subjugate their minds. Manju Kapur supported this idea that “a woman is never regarded as an autonomous being since she has always been assigned a subordinate and relative position in our society” (23). Astha goes to the Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhya with Pipeelika. She gets an opportunity to spend a few days with Pipee. Ashok Kumar argues thus:

An unsuitable marriage and the associated discomfort have been disclosed by Manju Kapur. She depicts the sufferings that her female protagonists go through, and the deaths that they encounter as a result of, in order to reform Indian masculine perception. She is astounded by the rise of religious zealots who want to use a crusade to raise the country and create fear by presenting evil as a historical necessity. (Kumar 165)

Virmati falls in love with the married professor, she wants to get higher education and hates the traditional marriage. For Virmati, her education becomes an asset in attracting the married professor. Professor Harish motivates Virmati for further studies. Virmati takes Harish as a lover not only as a lover but he refuses to marry her. Whenever Virmati talks about marriage, Harish opposes it and this leads to her depression. She bursts into tears thus:

I broke my engagement because of you, blackened my family's name, am locked up inside my house, got sent to Lahore because no one knows what to do with me. Here I am in the position of being your secret wife, full of shame, wondering what people will say if they find out, not being able to live in peace, study in peace and why? Because I am an idiot. Now you want to prolong the situation. Why don't we get married? You say your family makes no difference but still you want to continue this way. Be honest with me. I can bear anything but this continuous irresolution. Swarna is right; men do take advantage of women! (*Difficult Daughter* 149)

Virmati has to play multiple roles in her life. She is a young aspirant, and a social rebel. She disturbs her family and performs the destructive roles that are social taboos. She becomes pregnant and suffers the trauma of life. Harish is compelled to marry her after so many years of depression and alienation. She gets the child of Harish aborted and goes to Shantiniketan; however, a friend of Harish intervenes and arranges their marriage, bringing her a sense of relief at last:

The poet's parents did the kanya daan, the seven pheras were taken, the couple pronounced man and wife. As Virmati rubbed her eyes, watering from the smoke, she knew, rather than felt that the burden of the past five years had lifted. (*Difficult Daughters* 202)

The novels of Manju Kapur are loaded with the images of trauma; there are images of partition trauma; personal trauma and the images of the wounded psyche of her women characters. Trauma is a psychological wound which grips the psyche of the characters and makes them suffer the psychological ailments such as

depression; frustration and alienation. Freud likens it to a crisis that arises in childhood. It stays subconsciously present in the mind and prevents one from thinking clearly. Consequently, death drive is a worry. Lois Tyson says:

Trauma is also used, of course, to refer to a painful experience that scares us psychologically. Thus, I might experience the childhood trauma of losing a sibling to illness, accidental death, or suicide and, in later life, experience the trauma, or crisis, of being flooded by all the guilt, denial, and conflict I've repressed concerning the death. (Tyson 21)

Women of Manju Kapur suffer from trauma because of the male hegemony; patriarchal oppression, sexual repression and alienation. Gender discrimination is the main cause of trauma for women. Kasturi of *Difficult Daughters* suffers the plight because of male domination. She is portrayed as a fruit bearing young woman. She is forced to give birth to children and each year becomes pregnant being the puppet to her husband. In her eleventh pregnancy she is under acute stress and suffers physical and psychological pain. She is opposed to getting the child aborted but she is bound to suffer the labour pains and trauma. Kasturi goes through another pregnancy. The hakim declared “that he cannot answer for Kasturi’s life if she has any more children” (9). Virmati expresses her desire for higher education; she longs to enjoy liberty revolting against the forces of patriarchy. She is called upon to raise eleven children all by herself. She hates the concept of traditional marriage as she observes, “But for my mother, marriage is the only choice in life. I so wish I could help her feel better about me” (17). The cultural clash in the novel is a crucial element bringing trauma in the lives of the women of Manju Kapur. There are two sets of characters in the plot; Banwari Lal represents the traditional society and culture. Virmati is a “New Woman” who is rebellious and modern in her outlook longing for freedom and enjoyment of sexuality. Nisha in her novel *Home* represents modernity and sexual exuberance. Aamer Hussein observes thus:

Nisha, the seemingly docile central character of *Home*, claims her space halfway through the novel when she demands an education. But

life at university offers little more than cribs to help with her exams. More significantly, she has a clandestine romance with the boy who acquires them. But this is India, and the boy is unsuitable. Nisha has to find an alternative occupation, putting to use her entrepreneurial genes. From these few bricks, Manju Kapur creates a novel full of bright spaces and dark corners; her telling is brisk, unsentimental, and capable of turning domestic drama into suspense. (Hussain 2)

The plot of *Home* is about three generations of people who come in confrontation with each other in the plot. Jyoti Babel argues thus:

Home by Manju Kapur is a tale of three generations, of a traditional cloth merchant family in Delhi. After the partition the family had to leave Lahore and start their lives anew in Delhi. The novel chronicles their lives through three generations and how with the changing times the traditions and values of the family were put to test and changed to accommodate in the modern world. (Babel 1)

When they are unable to bear children, Manju Kapur's women worry. There are two childless sisters in the house, Mrs. Sona Lal and Mrs. Rupa Gupta:

Sona Lal and Rupa Gupta, sisters both, were childless. One was rich, the other poor, one the eldest daughter-in-law of a cloth-shop owner, the other the wife of an educated, badly paid government servant. (*Home* 1)

In her novels, women suffer from displacement and dissolution of self. Manju Kapur observes thus:

Sona protested for her sake that Vicky was being spoiled, in her time nobody had heard of tutors. She didn't raise too many objections though, because in her heart she was grateful to him for her children. That she couldn't bear to see him was another matter. Her womb had opened when he came. (*Home* 65)

Sona is a barren woman. She thinks that she is a misfit in the society as she couldn't produce children. In antiquity women were called unsuccessful when they failed to produce children. Sona feels guilty and suffers from acute depression and trauma. The agony of the past torments her always. She is therefore thankful to her spouse for giving her children. Cathy Caruth comments thus:

Trauma is not experienced as a mere repression of defense, but as a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment. The trauma is a repeated suffering of the event but it is also a continual leaving of its site. The traumatic re-experiencing of the event thus carries with it what Dori Laub calls the "collapse of witnessing" the impossibility of knowing that first constituted it. (Caruth 10)

The traumatic situation is experienced by Rupa as she expresses her love to Nisha:

As Nisha grew, Rupa bestowed careful love on her, mentally standing before the tribunal composed of her sister and brother-in-law, defending herself against neglect on the one hand and stealing the child's heart on the other. The business that had occupied her attention so successfully seemed more meaningful when she saw Nisha peering into the pickle jars, or testing the sweet and salty aam paper drying in the sun under an old muslin sari. (*Home* 91)

Nisha revolts against society in her struggle for change and transformation. This modern tendency leads to confrontation with the existing traditional patriarchal society. The trauma is inevitable as her self is disintegrated in her quest of new identity. This quest affects her personal life. She wants to escape from the existing rigid society as Manju Kapur depicts her thus:

The forlorn misery was Nisha's burden increased with every step made in the direction of her brother's marriage. Had her parents not been so determined to reject Suresh, she could have been reveling in attention as the groom's only real sister, instead of feeling a source of

apology and justification. She wished she could disappear into some hole till the wedding was over. (*Home* 249)

Nisha feels frustrated and depressed as she has to confront disappointment and betrayal in the society. Women of Kapur realise that they have to endure the sufferings in their in-law's house. Nisha is suppressed by the male hegemony and all her hopes and dreams are shattered. Manju Kapur observes thus:

Nisha first touched her mother-in-law's feet, and then moved into the kitchen to see how the maid was managing. She was now a daughter-in-law, she had to anticipate responsibility, not wait for her lack of involvement to be pointed out. (*Home* 321)

Women feel insecure if they fail to produce children fearing that their husbands may take other women as wives. Their spouses might remarry if they are unable to bear children; in such cases, their lives will not be fulfilled. Rupa is haunted with the traumatic experience as she expresses her agony and fears:

Look at me, thought Rupa. I also don't have children, or half the other things she has. From the time we were children, she was the special one, always noticed for her fairness, her prettiness, and every day I had to hear how well she would marry, while I would be lucky to find anybody, dark and ugly I was. (*Home* 27)

Manju Kapur remarks that "A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense" (46). Manju Kapur is a bold writer depicting the patriarchal issues; inter caste marriage, family bonding, and male-female relationship, in the present social set up. She has portrayed her "New Woman" as a victim of circumstances, gender, and domestic abuse. Manju Kapur is a modern woman writer who gives her own theory of body. Her "New Women" use the body as a powerful weapon to survive in male dominated society. They assert their right to govern their body by making choices like getting married, having children, and getting divorced. Germaine Greer concludes in her *Female Eunuch* that "Whatever else we are or may pretend to be, we are certainly our bodies" (Greer 19). The female body and her sexuality is culturally coded, the female body is linked with

honour of the family, community and society. Body and sexuality create tensions in the mind of women of Manju Kapur. Her “New Women” assert their identities only through body. Her *Difficult Daughters* depicts Virmati as a “New Woman” who throws all the social codes of society in training her daughter independently. In the words of Susie Orbach, “She struggles to prepare her daughter for a life of inequality; the mother tries to hold back a child’s desire to be a powerful, self-directed, energetic, productive human being” (Orbach 27). Virmati believes: “One of the benefits of education is that it teaches us to think for ourselves” (102). Being a “New Woman” she wants to lead a free life but her parents warn her that a woman is no more than a body and the noose of patriarchy is not so loose, she cannot escape marriage and the process of reproduction. She resists the colonisation of her body and struggles to become a self-directed woman of a free society. Her adventure to develop a relationship with the Professor turns into a misadventure as “her body was marked by him, she could never look elsewhere, never entertain another choice” (*Difficult Daughters* 163). Her life becomes hellish, she becomes a slave studying alone and working alone, she becomes a silent dove colonised by her powerful Professor. Kapur comments thus:

A woman should be aware, self-control, strong will, self-reliant and rational, having faith in the inner strength of womanhood. A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense. (*Difficult Daughters* 12)

Virmati’s history is recreated by Ida, her daughter who begins her journey to explore her mother's background. Virmati’s dreams and aspirations are conditioned by her cousin sister Shankutla who was a “New Woman”, a rebel and a modern flapper. Virmati’s mother Kasturi was brought up in an orthodox society where marriage was viewed as the primary goal and predetermined fate for a girl:

During Kasturi’s formal schooling it was never forgotten that marriage was her destiny. After she graduated, her education continued at home. Her mother tried to ensure her future happiness by the impeccable nature of her daughter’s qualifications. She was going to please her in-laws. (*Difficult Daughters* 58)

When she told her mother that she wanted to go to Lahore for higher education, Kasturi reprimanded her daughter, saying: “When I was your age, girls only left their house when they married. And beyond a certain age” (111). She urged her to settle down in life and get married, “a woman without her own home and family is a woman without moorings” (111). But Virmati is the product of modernism, consumerism and liberalism. She breaks all the patriarchal shackles and left for Lahore to pursue her own independent life.

Her women are victims of gender biasness and abuse within the home as Kapur thinks: “There is a man within every woman and a woman in every man. When manhood is questioned and womanhood is fragile”(13). Astha is trapped between modernity and patriarchy, being a “New Woman”; She challenges traditional male dominance and embarks on a quest for a more fulfilling life through her lesbian relationship. Kapur depicts the harsh reality of married life in a conventional society, where a woman must erase her individuality and surrender her very existence. Astha says about the value of wife in husband’s life as: “A willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day and an obedient mouth are the essential prerequisites of a married woman” (*A Married Woman* 231).

In Manju Kapur's novels, a woman's body serves as the foundation for distinguishing between the sexes. The body influences personality, with all experiences and behavioral patterns of women being shaped by their physical form. Themes such as patriarchy, sex, sexuality, and the abuse of the body are central to Kapur's works. “Feminists take the traditional socio-cultural perspectives, they argue that “gender differences have little to do with the biological body, and much more to do with differential socialization of boys and girls” (Gubar 125). However, the reality is that the body is shaped by more than just biological factors. Bodies function within social and cultural contexts and are also formed through social and cultural practices and narratives. Contemporary patriarchal theorists have examined how the body conveys social meaning and influences gendered experiences. Foucault in his famous book *History of Sexuality* (1980) and E. Martin in *Cultural Anthropology and Shilling in Sociology* (1993) discuss how the body and sexuality influence the behavioral patterns of women. It is asserted that sexual objectification represents an

additional form of gender-based suppression. Foucault in *In Discipline and Punishment* (1978) that rather than employing violent ways to suppress people, contemporary institutions depend on "“systematic self-surveillance and correction” (Foucault 156). Surprisingly, Manju Kapur’s novels are full of poignant scenes of sexual subjugation. Male-oriented, cultural, and religious organisations systematically intimidate women into submissive roles.

The history of the women writers of the west and India reveals their concern for the woman question. The writers of the post-colonial era reacted against the marginalisation and oppression of women. It was intolerable to think and treat a woman as a commodity or personal property. The “New Woman” emerged who was educated, radical in views, enjoyed liberty and was conscious of her rights. In the modern fiction of the west and in India there is a focus on the themes of sex, marriage, displacement and alienation as the women writers depicted the agony of women who were subjected to oppression and suppression in the patriarchal set up. In this study serious efforts have been made to depict the causes of the growth of “New Woman”, her role in society, her hopes, fears and frustrations. Manju Kapur raised the women question in her fiction; all her plots voice against the male hegemony; male domination; rigidity; orthodox oppression of the patriarchal society. She depicts the difficulties of the Indian women and the struggle for existence. They lead a slavish life as their identity and individuality is bulldozed by the patriarchal forces.

The journey of Manju Kapur from an aspiring writer to an acclaimed novelist is a testament to her unwavering dedication, profound literary talent, and deep engagement with the socio-cultural realities of contemporary India. Kapur’s novels, characterised by their rich narrative style and keen psychological insight, offer exploration of the complexities of gender, identity, and societal norms. Manju Kapur's journey as a novelist is marked by her profound ability to intertwine personal and societal narratives, offering readers an insightful exploration of contemporary Indian life. Through her novels, Kapur delves into the complexities of identity, gender, and cultural transitions, presenting characters that resonate with authenticity and depth. This chapter has traced Kapur's evolution from her early influences and

educational background to her emergence as a prominent voice in Indian English literature. Her works, such as *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, and *Custody*, not only reflect her keen observation of human relationships but also her commitment to addressing pressing social issues. Her ability to create compelling, multi-dimensional characters and situate them within the socio-political landscape of India has cemented her reputation as a novelist of great significance.

Chapter III

Robert K. Merton and the Fictional World of Manju Kapur

The thesis entitled “Socio-Cultural Study of Manju Kapur’s Fiction: A Mertonian Perspective” explores the novels of Manju Kapur relying on the concepts of Robert K. Merton who was the prominent sociologist of America. He was famous for his original innovative ideas on anomie, strain and deviant behaviour. Robert King Merton propounded his social concepts of deviant behaviour and social anomie in his notable works such as *Social Structure and Anomie* (1938) and *Science, Technology, and Society in Seventeenth-Century England*. These concepts are relied on in the investigation of the behaviour of the women characters of Manju Kapur.

Manju Kapur wrote six novels; *A Married Woman*, *Difficult Daughters*, *The Immigrant*, *Home*, *Brothers* and *Custody*, depicting the intricate interplay of tradition and modernity, societal expectations, and individual aspirations within the evolving landscape of Indian society. She deals with the woman question investigating all the important issues confronting the Indian women such as rigidity, patriarchal oppression, male hegemony and objectification of the female body. Women were treated as the “Other” in the Indian society as they were denied the inalienable human rights. The sexual liberty and the remarriage of the widows were taboos in the society. Manju Kapur was inspired by the western feministic ideas and philosophy of Virginia Woolf, Kate Millet and Simone de Beauvoir. She launched a crusade against the oppression and suppression of women and created “New Women” in her novels. Manju Kapur differs from Anita Desai and R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand as she depicts the cause and symptoms of her women suffering from trauma, depression and frustration from deviant behaviour in the society. Robert K. Merton was the prominent sociologist who had written about social issues. In this study, all the novels of Manju Kapur are examined and investigated through the lens of the sociological theories of Robert K. Merton. This new perspective is entertaining and enlightening, deviating from the traditional analysis of the fiction of Manju Kapur.

The works of Manju Kapur depict all these themes in her novels as her women suffer from the psychological ailments such as depression, trauma,

rebelliousness and deviant behaviour. They feel oppressed by the patriarchal forces and struggle for sexual liberty breaking the traditional norms of Indian rigid society. The wounded and battered women of Manju Kapur are the victims of psychological ailments. Nisha suffers from psychological obsession; Virmati is a bewildered Indian woman haunted by the past and the future. Sona and Astha are also suffering from depression. Cathy Caruth in her well-known work *Unexplained Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996) also examines the reasons and consequences of trauma. Merton's theory of abnormal behaviour is employed to investigate the working of their inner mind. Merton introduced the concepts of strain and anomie to examine and understand the deeper psychological aspects of the human mind.

Applying Robert K. Merton's sociological concepts to Manju Kapur's fictional world reveals deeper insights into the social dynamics and individual struggles depicted in her novels. The concepts of anomie and his various modes of adaptations provide a framework for understanding the tensions between societal expectations and personal aspirations. Kapur's characters, much like individuals in Merton's theoretical framework, navigate complex social structures, seeking ways to reconcile their desires with the realities imposed by society. Kapur's characters often experience anomie as they navigate the gap between societal expectations and their personal desires. This is evident in their struggles to achieve autonomy in a restrictive environment, mirroring Merton's concept of strain resulting from the disjunction between cultural goals and institutional means. Kapur explores the pressures exerted by society on individuals, particularly women, to conform to established roles and behaviours. Her works delve into the complexities of family relationships, highlighting conflicts, generational differences, and the impact of cultural expectations on personal choices.

Merton outlined five modes of adaptation that individuals use to respond to cultural goals and institutional means: ritualism, innovation, conformity, rebellion and retreatism. These modes are evident in the diverse responses of Kapur's characters to societal pressures. In the novel *Home*, Nisha initially conforms to her family's expectations by engaging in the family business and preparing for an arranged marriage. Her adherence to traditional roles illustrates conformity to

societal norms. Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* embodies innovation by seeking education and personal freedom, using unconventional means to achieve her goals in a restrictive environment. Astha in *A Married Woman* initially displays ritualism by performing her duties as a wife and mother without questioning the underlying societal expectations, even when they offer little personal fulfilment. In *Custody*, Shagun's decision to leave her marriage and traditional roles signifies retreatism, as she rejects both societal goals and means, withdrawing from the social system. Nina in *The Immigrant* represents rebellion, as she seeks to redefine her identity and purpose by pursuing education and career opportunities in a new cultural context, challenging traditional goals and means.

Manju Kapur published her novel *Difficult Daughters* in 1998 and created a sensation in the domain of Indian fiction. In this novel the protagonist Virmati struggles against the traditional expectations of her family and society. Her desire for education and career conflicts with the societal expectation of marriage and domesticity. This disjunction creates strain, leading Virmati to make choices that defy societal norms. Merton's idea helps explain Virmati's deviance from traditional roles as a response to the lack of legitimate means to achieve her personal goals. The plot of the novel *Difficult Daughters* depicts the challenging struggles of Indian Independence and Kapur had her mother in her mind when she created the character of Virmati. P. Sudhashri says about her:

Virmati, the protagonist, rebels against tradition. Yet she is filled with self doubt. She pleads for studying further and postponement of her marriage. She attempts suicide, when faced with prospect marrying the canal engineer. The family brands her to be restless, sick and selfish and locks her up. (Sudhashri 123)

In the novel *Home* Nisha's pursuit of economic independence and personal freedom is hindered by her family's rigid adherence to traditional roles. The strain between her aspirations and the limited avenues available to her within a patriarchal society exemplifies Merton's notion of anomie. Nisha's eventual establishment of her own business represents a creative adaptation to overcome the strain.

The history of trauma is reconstructed by Ida who is on her journey to know the details of the harrowing past of her mother Virmati. Kasturi, the mother of Virmati, was tied with the patriarchal tradition where marriage was the main goal and destiny of a woman. On the contrary Virmati had come under the spell of liberal views of her cousin Shakuntala. She was rebellious and wanted to enjoy liberty like the western women. Manju Kapur writes thus:

During Kasturi's formal schooling it was never forgotten that marriage was her destiny. After she graduated, her education continued at home. Her mother tried to ensure her future happiness by the impeccable nature of her daughter's qualifications. She was going to please her in-laws. (*Difficult Daughters* 58)

Kapur offers a poignant story spanning three generations in this novel. Kasturi, Ida and Virmati belong to three different generations and all are suffering from the deviant social order because of the male hegemony. The main focus is the depiction of the pathetic life of women. Merton in his book *Social Change in the Modern Era* argued thus:

Social inequality can create situations in which people experience a strain between the goals they should be working towards and the legitimate means they have available to meet these goals. These strains can then put pressure on the individuals into committing crimes and to take extreme liberty. (Merton 23)

Virmati is the victim of her deviant behaviour. She is fed up with the patriarchal oppression and rigidity of the society which doesn't allow women to grow independently. Her transformation is the main concern of the plot. She breaks all the traditional chains and emerges as the "New Woman" of Manju Kapur. Virmati is trapped within the chains of tradition. She realises her problem and struggles to forge her independent identity. It is Virmati's unattained desire to establish her unique identity that inspires her to challenge the prevailing rules and customs of society. Manju probes into the psyche of Indian women who are living in joint families under patriarchal hegemony. Virmati doesn't want to lead the life of her mother, Kasturi

who had been confined to her patriarchal order and her life was centered on domestic duties, marriage, and childbearing. Ida, the daughter of Virmati reconstructs the past of her mother. Her mother, Kasturi believed that it is the duty of each girl to get married to achieve satisfaction in life and bear children. Virmati is sick of the traditional approach of her mom. She has an urge to enjoy the liberty of life. She comes in contact with her cousin Shakuntala who was a rebel in the society. She was a liberal woman and had dared to flout the traditional customs and rituals and morality. On the other hand, Virmati's mother Kasturi had lived and suffered under the oppressive patriarchal society. Manju Kapur has depicted the traumatic experiences of Kasturi who is trapped in the bog of patriarchal oppression of Indian society. She gives birth to eleven children and suffers physical and mental torture in her married life. Her health deteriorates with the passage of time but her husband doesn't bother about her. She suffers from inequality of life and gender discrimination is the root cause of her trauma. She fails to enjoy her equal rights. She does not find her way to speak about equal rights to her husband. Virmati revolts against the traditional view of Kasturi and struggles to enjoy sexual liberty in her life. She takes Harish as her lover who was a married man. Marrying a married man was a postmodern idea prevalent in the western society. Harish impregnates her and she becomes the second wife of Harish. Virmati brings new change in culture and in the structure of society flouting all the norms of traditional patriarchal structure. Merton in his book *Social Change in the Modern Era* observes thus on change:

It is not enough to say that certain key parts of social structures are the master springs from which general social life flows, and that the study of how these parts change is the study of social change. Family structure, the organization of markets, the state, religious hierarchies, schools, the way in which elites have exploited the masses to extract surpluses from them, and the general set of values that govern society's cultural outlook are only a small and overlapping part of the long list of key institutions that have been called central. (Merton 4)

Ida is under the strict control of her mother as she is compelled to follow strict patriarchal norms of the society. Ida belongs to the modern generation who

fights for her independent identity, dignity and self- confidence. She breaks all the norms of the male dominated society to express her liberal ideas in the orthodox society of India. Virmati comes under the influence of her cousin Shakuntala who teaches her new values of modernity and sex: “Virmati listened, drawn towards Shakuntala, to one whose responsibilities went beyond a husband and children” (17). Her style of dressing, her hair style, and her activities disturb Virmati who decides to be an independent woman. She wants to live like her cousin as she learns so many things such as love for beauty and glamour against traditions. Manju Kapur has depicted the struggles of Virmati from tradition and modernity. Virmati forges her new identity expressing her deviant and rebellious behaviour in the novel. Kapur explores the modern life of women through her four adult women; their hollowness and restlessness. Ishita in *Custody* is depicted as the childless divorcee suffering from many psychological ailments such as depression and alienation. The disintegration of the structure of the orthodox society is faithfully highlighted by the novelist.

Virmati encounters Swarn Lata who leads a similar lifestyle. She emerges as a great orator in the meeting of the Punjab Women's Student Conference: “Heavy applause broke out as Swarna finished speaking” (145). Swarna continues her struggles expressing her new ideas about marriage and the freedom of women. She exhorts Virmati and says, “We have plenty of married women working with us. I'm married, aren't I?” (252). There is a parallel between the careers of Shakuntala and Swarna. Both are rebellious women as both struggle to get a new identity in the rigid society of India. Virmati is soon repelled by the political activities at the end of her journey of life. She says: “I am not like these women. They are using their minds, organizing, participating in conferences, being politically active, while my time is spent being in love” (142). She chooses her own style of life as she breaks off relations: “And Swarna dropped out of her life” (252). Ida is an educated girl who is divorced and childless. Her quest for sexual freedom brings mental anguish to her as she plagued her mother, “No matter how I might rationalize otherwise, I feel my existence as a single woman reverberate desolately” (3). Ida is a typical “New Woman” of Manju Kapur in the novel. She is the chief narrator and a modern girl worried about her own growth and least bothered about her family. Her father puts

pressure on her to acquire the traits of an ideal girl but she revolts against the code of man made values. Her real love for independence and individuality emerges when she opposes the will of her husband Prabhakar to abort the child. In her craze to express her individuality and independence she divorces her husband in her passion to liberate her. She breaks up her marital bond and struggles to get her rights. She wants to decide all her matters of life independently. She recollects how her parents had put pressure on her to “bridge the contradictions in her life by marrying a man who was also an academic” and how it ended up in a “disastrous marriage” (258). She often suffers from the real void in her life, “I was nothing, husbandless, childless. I felt myself hovering like a pencil notation on the margins of society” (258). Manju Kapur's female characters grapple with psychological disorders. Their feelings of anxiety and fear disrupt their mental functioning, with anxiety stemming from concerns about future events and fear being a response to present situations. These issues are prevalent among all the women in Kapur's works.

In her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Cathy Caruth explores psychological ailments in depth. She argues that traumatic memories can manifest as nightmares, flashbacks, or intrusive memories. The key difference between a flashback and an intrusive memory is that a flashback involves reliving the past event, causing a person to lose touch with their present reality, whereas intrusive memories are recognised by the individual but still disrupt their current state of mind. In Manju Kapur's novels, her female characters are consistently plagued by haunting, nightmarish memories. In the opening of the novel, Ida is seen at her mother's funeral, where she openly declares her desire not to follow in her mother's footsteps:

The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother. Now she was gone and I stared at the fire that rose from her shriveled body, dry-eyed, leaden, half dead myself, while my relatives clustered around the pyre and wept. (*Difficult Daughters* 1)

She likely felt that her mother was deprived of the ability to take decisions in her life and sought a more liberated existence for herself. The difference of opinion

between the youth and the elderly is quite evident. Reflecting on her mother, she pieces together her mother's challenging and painful past, recalling the memories linked to it. With an "excitement of discovery" (258), She reveals her mom's history by visiting her maternal home, meeting her loved ones and acquaintances in Amritsar, and proficiently crafting a narrative about it. when she says, "I can sink into her past and make it mine. In searching for a woman I could know I have pierced together material from memories that were muddled, partial and contradictory" (280). She also examines her relations with her mom, contrasts her own outlook on life with her mother's, and delves into her mom's spirit as she remarks, "This book weaves a connection between my mother and me, each word a brick in a mansion I made with my head and my heart. Now line in it, and leave me. Do not haunt me anymore" (Kapur 280).

Difficult Daughters of Manju Kapur dramatises the theme of disruption of male hegemony. Virmati is the eldest daughter of Kasturi who is saddled with the responsibility of giving birth to so many children to please her husband. The birth of her baby Parvati brings emotional relief to her. Virmati was so much attached with her siblings that she looked worried and depressed all the time in her house. She says:

If they didn't eat their meals, on her return home from school she would hunt out the offending brother or sister and shove the cold food down their throats; it was weary work and she was almost always tired and harassed. (*Difficult Daughters* 6)

Women had not any power to take decisions about their pregnancy. Kasturi is the victim of patriarchy in the world of Manju Kapur. Men were free to decide the fate of women. Kasturi plays the traditional role and upholds the orthodox values of the rigid Indian society. She denies the right to education to her daughter Virmati and believes that education is not important but the marriage is very important for the growth of her daughter. She insists Virmati to get married at a very young age. She opines that education will lead to her empowerment and eventually her education will be detrimental to her marital life. She inculcates in her the orthodox ideas of

rigid patriarchy and dampens her spirit to get higher education. She doesn't like her daughter to grow modern and progressive. Her marriage with Inderjit who is a canal engineer is postponed and she joins the college to pursue her higher study opposing her mother. She leaves her home in her undaunted spirit and struggles to get happiness through higher education as "to education, freedom and the bright lights of Lahore colleges" (15). Destiny follows Virmati as her quest for higher education leads her to suffer alienation in life. She is charmed by the magnetic appearance of Professor Harish Chandra who has a charismatic personality and poetic sensibility. She is distracted during her lectures and deviates from her track and falls in love with the married man. Harish is dissatisfied with his illiterate wife Ganga and soon he comes under the spell of Virmati. She rejects the marriage proposal of Inderjit and begins her illicit relationship with Professor Harish in violation of the code of morality. The illicit relationship leads to her total devastation. She becomes a psychic wreck; she suffers from depression; frustration and alienation. Merton observes that the deviant behaviour of an individual becomes the root cause of his depression and alienation. He says in *Social Change in the Modern Era* thus:

It is important to note that one social fact can possibly have negative consequences for another social fact. From this, he developed the idea of dysfunction. Thus, his theory is that - similar to how societal structures or institutions could contribute to the maintenance of certain other parts of the society; they could also most definitely have negative consequences for them. (Merton 78)

Her parents come to know about the illicit sexual affair of Virmati; they ill-treat her and use pressure to arrange her marriage with Inderjit. But she opposes and expresses her deviant behaviour thus: "And not marry. I don't want to marry the boy, I do not like the boy" (87). Kasturi takes the matter seriously and threatens her to end her life if she rejects Inderjit. She warns her that she would consume poison if she denies marriage with Inderjit. She says "Remember, you are going to be married next month, if I have to swallow poison to make you do it" (60). Harish doesn't bother the problem of Virmati and continues writing the love letters to her. Virmati is physically and psychically tormented in her love relationship with Harish. Virmati finds herself

in a very awkward situation and is depicted suffering from alienation, emotional estrangement and disappointment. Virmati tries to argue with Harish but he convinces her by observing thus, “Darling Vir, I know how difficult it is for you, but you must be firm. Soon things will be alright. Then you will see. We will one day be together”(67). Harish is depicted as a male chauvinist who uses all the fair and foul means to keep her under his dominance. Virmati is in the whirlpool of chaos and disorder. She emerges as a split personality caught between her attachment to the rigid culture and her longing to enjoy sexual liberty. Being guilt ridden, she becomes a psychic wreck. She had betrayed her family in her quest for women emancipation. Manju Kapur comments thus, “Caught in a whirlpool of mental chaos, she decides to commit suicide. Now that she was actually going to merge her body with the canal, she felt her confusion clearing” (76). Death Consciousness is very common in rebellious and deviant human beings. Virmati often contemplated suicide as she lost hope of marrying Harish. Freud asserts about suicide and death, “Death is the great Unknown” and the “gravest of all misfortunes.” He additionally asserts that death is the “main aim of all life” (Freud 123). Vickroy, in her work *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (2002), defines "trauma narratives" as "fictional narratives that help readers to access traumatic experience" (1). Freud suggests that a man's sense of beauty and inner stability are disrupted when he faces external attacks. An individual falls into a state of unconsciousness though “it also remains unconsciously active” (Freud 47). For Freud, ‘the unconscious’ is an integral part of the mind, just like the others “psychic co-systems” (114) namely ‘the conscious’ and ‘the preconscious’. Freud further states that the “repressed does not constitute the whole of the unconscious. The unconscious is the more extensive; the repressed is part of the unconscious” (Freud 47).

However, Virmati emerges as the real difficult daughter of the modern times. Virmati becomes the cause of her agonising plight. She loses everything; her name and reputation in her longing to assert her individuality. She liberates herself but she has to pay the heavy price for this ambition. She expresses her passion to enjoy liberty thus to her cousin Shakuntala: “I want to be like you, Pehnji. I wish I too could do things. But I am not clever” (17-18). Shakuntala inspires her to shatter all

the factors inhibiting her growth and emancipation and for change and transformation. She is motivated to reject her marginalised status in the society. She argues thus:

Times are changing, and women are moving out of the house, so why not you? These people don't really understand Viru, how much satisfaction there can be in leading your own life, in being independent. Here we are fighting for the freedom of the nation, but women are still supposed to marry, and nothing else. (*Difficult Daughters* 17)

Virmati is inspired by her roommate Swarna who teaches her the new values of modernity and sexuality. "She stared at Swarna. What a girl! Her opinions seemed to come from inside herself, her thoughts, ideas and feelings blended without any horrible sense of dislocation" (135). Like, Virmati follows the code of amorality of Shakuntala and Swarnalatha in her quest for identity, survival, and emancipation. Virmati emerges as a resolute and an aggressive liberal woman after the influence of Swarna. They teach her the value of higher education in life to gain freedom from the destructive patriarchal society. She could get real emancipation and freedom only through her higher education. Education is an effective tool to get freedom from the social, and cultural restraints blocking progress. Education helps women to rise in the social ladder and change the social structure. Merton says in *Social Change in the Modern Era* thus:

Even in the nineteenth century, much less today, it is impossible to explain the relative backwardness and poverty of the majority of the world in terms of traditionalism and failure to modernize. The structure of the society changes with the strong education and cultural changes. (Merton 5)

Manju Kapur had highlighted the forces of transformation and the need for cultural change. Education changes the status of women in the power structure of the patriarchal society. Education brings about positive alterations in the social framework. Education helps women to ameliorate their economic condition. Virmati

is aware of the pregnancy of Ganga and she feels deceived: "In this moment of weakness it seemed I could not all conscience ignore the claims of those around me" (97). Professor Harish gives a misleading justification to Virmati who feels mentally disturbed. He says, "Co-wives are part of our social traditions. I don't live with her in any meaningful way" (112). Virmati is shocked to know the depraved mind of Harish who tells lies to her about the pregnancy of his wife Ganga to her. However, Virmati acts strongly and is determined to free her from the false illusion of "useless love and a doubtful marriage" (122). She avoids interference in his life. She is overpowered by guilt because of her pregnancy. Harish motivates her to abort the baby but she is determined to give birth to the baby. She believes that her education is her "Passport to independence" (140) and that could "broaden her horizons" (167). Harish continues chasing her and she is terrified by her destiny in the form of the professor. Harish wishes to keep her under his control in his love relationship. He refuses to marry her giving her the real psychological torture. Simone de Beauvoir in her famous book *The Second Sex* contends thus:

Since patriarchal times women have in general been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men, a position comparable in many respects with that of racial minorities in spite of the fact women constitute numerically at least half of the human race, and further that the secondary standing is not imposed of necessity by natural feminine characteristics but rather by strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control of men. (Beauvoir 9)

The interesting trait of the character of Virmati is her dogged determination to throw away all the shackles of male hegemony. She emerges as a progressive woman; a resolute woman and the real "New Woman". She avoids her meetings with Harish and refuses to continue her illicit relationship with him. Harish persuades her to accept the relationship but she says, "Curse me, berate me, and not punish me so harshly as to deny me yourself. If I have sinned against you, it has never been in spirit, my darling never that, my love and devotion has remained ever yours" (106). Virmati acts in the determined way and completely sheds off her inherited

culture and often requests Harish to give her social status of a married woman. She says, "Marry me, she said, trying to push him away, marry me and make it clear to everybody" (127). Her hopes are dashed and her inner strength is lost as she describes her mental strength "strong to bear the pain, silently without anyone knowing" (101). Krishna Rathore comment thus:

Virmati looks like the emancipated women of the late Victorian Age. In her confrontation with her lover Harish she looks fragile and passive but she voices her agony and protests against the male hegemony. She was indeed free to record her experiences in her diaries or confide in one or two intimate women friends. There are strong taboos against sharing them with men. It was her sole duty to make her marriage successful even if the husband strayed. (Rathore 54)

Virmati experiences the psychological trauma as she is caught in the whirlpool of her lust for liberty and her craze to get Harish as her husband. Ganga was her stumbling block who was the legal wife of Harish. In desperation she burnt all the love letters of Harish. She articulates her stance to Harish and says, "Just as you must do your duty to your family, and your wife, so too. I must do my duty to mine. I too want a fresh start. It will be a great relief for me to leave this house" (107). It was her passion to pursue her education that helped her transformation. She goes to Lahore where she leads a life from subjugation to empowerment. She decides not to acquire the traits of an ideal woman. She goes to Nahan and stays there and it is here she gets solace; peace of mind and real satisfaction of life. But at the end of the novel Virmati longs for her blind love for Harish and ends in her marriage with him. She laments thus: "I should not, cannot, will not marry you. It will not be fair. And now she had married him but the old words were still springing to her lips, so many futile noises in the air" (212). The intellectual companionship of the professor leads to her maturity and she throws her rebellious attitude. Her married life brings depression in her life; she is regarded as the secondary married woman in the society. She is condemned as the second wife of Harish. She suffers alienation, marginalisation and insecurity. Virmati misconstrues that shedding off one's

inherited traditional values and cultural ethos would lead to the path of modernity and liberalism. There was a time when Harish adored her but he abandons her now. Her freedom is curbed, her dreams fettered, identity shattered, and caged within the ambit of an orthodox society. Virmati had wasted her life in loveless marriage with a married professor and had got the wrath of the family. She confesses, “I am not like these women. They are using their minds organizing, participating in conferences, politically active, where my time is being spent in love, wasting it” (142).

Merton observes that the individuals often are led by their passions to achieve their goals: the goals they should be working towards (such as success in love and education) and the legitimate means they have available to meet those goals. “These strains can then pressurize individuals into committing anti-social activities.” (Merton 34). Virmati commits the social crime in marrying a married man. *A Married Woman* of Manju Kapur is another seminal work depicting the deviant behaviour of women. The main focus of Manju Kapur in this novel is to depict the struggle between individual freedom of women and the patriarchal pressure on their life. Female gender and sexual identity of women are explored by Manju Kapur. The women are depicted as abnormal, rebellious and deviant. They feel sick of patriarchal oppression. They express their deviant behaviour as they revolt against the institution of marriage and indulge in lesbian relationship. Manju Kapur dramatises the emergence of “New Woman” who breaks with the traditional norms of Indian society. She believes that the real happiness and sexual pleasures could be enjoyed in lesbian love. The main focus of the novel is on Pipee’s lesbian relationship with Astha. Pipeelika is a lesbian widow and Astha feels restless and depressed. Soon she becomes careless and restless in life in her craze to disrupt the traditional values of life. Astha gets married but soon feels lonely and dissatisfied with her domestic life. She belongs to the middle class family but soon feels stifled while living in her traditional environment. The mother of Astha observes thus when she grows up:

There is a time for everything, the girl is blossoming now. When the fruit is ripe it has to be picked. Later she might get into the wrong company and we will be left wringing our hands. If she marries at this

age, she will have no problem adjusting. We too are not so young that we can afford to wait. (*A Married Woman* 20)

Astha was in her final year and was married to Hemant who was MBA and belonged to an upper class living in Lodhi Colony of Delhi. Manju Kapur depicts the traditional psyche of each mother. In many traditions, arranging a daughter's marriage is seen as a sacred duty of the parents, and according to ancient scriptures, performing it in a timely manner is believed to lead them to deliverance. Astha's mother declares thus: "When you are married, our responsibilities will be over. Do you know the shastras say if parents die without getting their daughter married, they will be condemned to perpetual rebirth?" (*A Married Woman* 1).

Astha believes she is living the good life after getting married in the first few months, but she soon has two kids, Anuradha and Himanshu. But she becomes aware of her subservient position in the family, she becomes restless. She falls in the trap of her friend Pipee who says, "You are not alone; we all experience it in one way or another?" (217). When Astha revolts against the traditional sexual activity with her husband at night; she loses her charm of life and soon loses the sense for home, duty, wifehood and motherhood. Her husband is all the time busy with his work and she decides to pursue her career in education. Her husband Hemant doesn't bother the problems of Astha as she finds no charm in her sexual relations with him. She finds the real solace of life in her lesbian relationship with Pipee. She comes under the spell of Pipee and is in a bind and can't get out. She emerges as a new transgressive Indian woman. Manju Kapur herself had admitted in her lecture in Delhi Literary Club that she had been working on a "Lesbian novel". She had stated that to be a lesbian woman is to be a rebel. Merton talks of the deviant behaviour of the individuals who become rebellious and threaten the norms of the society. Merton observes thus in *Social Change in the Modern Era*:

Deviance is any behaviour that violates social norms, and is usually of sufficient severity to warrant disapproval from the majority of society. Deviance can be criminal or non-criminal. The sociological discipline

that deals with behaviour violates social norms of the society. (Merton 123)

Geeti Thadani equates lesbian to the myth of tolerance. She contends that lesbians don't exist in India but the time has changed now. The girls are sick of their married life and feel safe in their lesbian relationships. The sexual relation of two women is often considered outrageous in the society but Manju Kapur depicts the social and sexual compulsion of Astha and Pipee to revolt against the traditional norms of Indian society. The lesbians enjoy secret celebration of their sexual attraction to each other. Manju Kapur has commented thus on the lesbian love of Astha and Pipee thus: "There was nothing between them, as they had been skin on skin, mind on mind" (303). Pipee expresses her passionate involvement with Astha when she says, "When she closed her hands around me, I was barely able to breathe from the pleasure" (256). Catherine Stimpson argues that "Lesbianism represents a commitment of skin, blood, and bone" (Stimpson 197). Ironically, the sexual romance of Pipee and Astha is restricted though they spend a lot of time together. The novel takes a turn when Pipee migrates to America at the end of the novel. She creates lesbian panic in the life of Astha. Merton observes that in a fit of deviant behaviour an individual often becomes a threat in the society as he becomes harmful for others. Suicide and homicide are the main social threats when the individuals like Astha and Pipee indulge into anti-social activities. Depression is a very common mental disease of the people suffering from anomie. Astha yearns for something more than just being a wife and a mother. This is an expression of her rebellious and perverted mind. She had been the hope of her parents; their future. Astha's mother prayed and hoped that she would get a nice husband. Her father was also proud of her and lavished his daughter with exceptional attention. He had often slapped her many times to set her right and to check her rebellious actions. Manju Kapur writes, "The tears came, but she wouldn't act sorry, would rather die than reveal how unloved and misunderstood she felt" (*A Married Woman* 2). Manju Kapur has recorded the voices of marginalised women and the story of Astha is a touching story of an Indian woman who defies the restrictions of her middle class family. She has an exceptional courage to break through the barrier in search of emotional satisfaction and self

identity. Manju Kapur had depicted her vision of love; the platonic love and pervert love in her plot. Astha gets a sense of security through her lesbian love relationship with Pipee expressing her post-feminist outlook. She had been interested in reading “mushy novels and thoughts of marriage” (8) when she was of sixteen years of age. She came in contact with Bunty who was a lovely and impressive soldier. He visited her house frequently and she couldn’t stop thinking about him, day and night. She wrote letters to Bunty at his boarding school in her urge to maintain the fantasy of love at first sight. Her flirting came to an end when her mother caught her. She feels devastated but soon Rohan enters in her life; an object of her sexual desires. But soon she learns that Rohan would leave India and would be moving to Oxford to continue her education. Astha develops a wide range of relationships as she seeks to discover her identity. She loses her faith in human nature as her marriage is consummated. Manju Kapur describes the social compulsions of women in these words, “Wives have to dance to all sorts of tunes of their husbands” (44). After marriage Astha feels sick and despondent as she had to wait all day for her husband to arrive. “Her future now seemed very pedestrian” (247). She becomes a teacher in Delhi and enjoys her teaching job. She is very active to forge her identity in social spheres; her activism is to change her social and traditional identity. Her mother opposes her plan to go the Babri Masjid because she believes in the tolerance of Hindu culture. Astha comes in contact with Aijaz who is a Muslim activist. She has an urge to reclaim her religious identity. She falls into the trap of sexual relationship. In her connection with Pipee, she appears to have defied both the limits of middle-class life and conventional heterosexual norms. Ashok Kumar comments thus:

Male sensibilities in India have been revolutionised as Manju Kapur has shown the passions of women for love and lesbianism, an unworkable marriage and its consequent aggravation, and the traumas of their female heroines who suffer and die for their successes. (Kumar 165)

Astha frequently visits Pipee when she needs sexual pleasures. Joseph Bristow observes that, “sexual satisfaction is a basic human need” (12). She enjoys

indulging in the lesbian love. Astha would not mind “destabilizing the entire sex regulation system” (Mill 345). Ashok Kumar has commented thus on the deviant behaviour of women of Manju Kapur:

A lesbian is the wrath of all women compared to the point of exploding. Often emergence at an early age, she acts in consonance with her inner constraint to be a more complete and free human being than her society-may be then, but certainly later-cares to allow her. When these demands and behaviours are not fulfilled, she finds herself at odds with not only others around her but also with herself over time. (Kumar 165)

Astha suffers from inner void as she struggles to get sexual satisfaction in her lesbian relationship with Pipee. “There was no aphrodisiac more powerful than stalking, no education more effective than curiosity” (218). Astha is threatened by the male hegemony of her husband Hemant and she becomes crazy to break from the traditional love relationship to achieve her full human freedom. She is caught between the restraints of Indian society and the fetters of traditional morality. Kumar comments thus:

An unsuitable marriage and the associated discomfort have been disclosed by Manju Kapur. She depicts the sufferings that her female protagonists go through, and the deaths that they encounter as a result of, in order to reform Indian masculine perception. She is astounded by the rise of religious zealots who want to use a crusade to raise the country and create fear by presenting evil as a historical necessity. (Kumar 165)

Astha receives a sense of fulfilment from Pipee that she never received from her husband. When she came close to Pipee her heart raced like a girl’s passions when exposed to her physical love. If Astha could not connect Pipee she “felt terrible the whole time” (230). Astha finds her alone and at war with all those around her. She is also at war with her as she has been unable to accept the limits and oppression imposed on her by the traditions of society. She suffers anguish and acquires a sense

of shame and feels dejected as she fails to live up to the expectations of her husband. She is compelled to forge her individual path of life and sexuality. She spends most of her time alone as Hemant is away and Astha longs for company and peace of mind. She is torn between accepting society's opinion of her and seeing the harm she has been subjected to because of the sexist system in place. Pipee makes Astha believe that she can lead an amazing life away from home because she has already achieved her full potential and hence she can never go wrong. Pipee has a better understanding of the psyche of Astha than her husband Hemant. She emerges as a loving wife to the abused wife in the society. Once they were inside of Pipee's apartment when they realised the real strength and terror of their lesbian love:

Pipee cradled her in her arms. She could feel her hands on the initial spread of her hips and the narrowness of her back. Taking her time, she gently undid her blouse hooks and her bra, looking at her face as she did so, and as she did so, she felt her back and breasts, especially the nipples. She felt them again and again, in no hurry to get to the end of the process. (*A Married Woman* 123)

Manju Kapur has described the married life of a woman in the traditional society of India; she has to bury her identity and is supposed to give up her very existence: "A willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet during the day and obedient criteria for a married woman, Astha learns" (*A Married Woman* 231). Pipee and Astha experience anguish as they come to know about the death of Aijaz. Astha realises that "many parts of her marriage to herself reflected power than love" (*A Married Woman* 233). Astha discovers her real self in her sexual relation with Pipee as Pipee advises her thus: "Have an exhibition, create something of your own" (289).

Home (2006) of Manju Kapur presents two sisters Sona and Rupa. They are married women and the novelist describes the complication of arranged marriages in a joint family. The women suffer the economic problems after their marriages. They are worried about the harmony and security of their life. Manju Kapur comments thus:

In order to remain financially secure, and ensure the family harmony that underpinned that security, marriages were arranged with great care. The bride had to bring a dowry, come from the same background, and understand the value of togetherness. (*Home* 3)

Nisha is the lovely daughter of Sona and Yashpal, and the granddaughter of Banwari Lal. The entire narrative is centred on her. She has been victim of discrimination since her childhood. She was tormented and sexually abused in her young age by her cousin Vicky. Vicky, the son of Sona's sister-in-law, comes under her care after the death of his mother Sunita. Vicky and Nisha grow together; they play together. But in her early life Nisha gets mentally disturbed because of her mother's indifferent attitude and incestuous abuse. She suffers mental agony silently but nobody could understand the cause of her mental agony. She suffers a miserable life and tries to cope up with the continuous harassment by Vicky. Nisha is sent to Rupa's house for a change and to overcome the depression of life. The environment of her home was stifling. Premnath and Rupa understand the miserable condition of Nisha. They come to the conclusion Vicky had made her life hellish as she is always terrified by his presence. Merton argues, "A social structure may be dysfunctional for the system as a whole and yet continue to exist as part of this society" (89). As a young child, Nisha becomes the focus of attention; she returns home after spending eleven years at her aunt's home to be with her grandmother. She scores seventy percent marks in humanities and is granted permission to continue her study. Nisha is a manglik girl and is fated to marry only a manglik boy. Arpita Ghosh observes that "In the novels of Manju Kapur education for a daughter is seen as an alternate option of marriage" (Ghosh 16). She gets admission in Durga Bai College to study English Literature. Manju Kapur says: "Working was out of question and marriage was around the corner" (141). Nisha comes in contact with Suresh of Khalsa College of Engineering. Suresh is a poor boy and belongs to the lower class of the society. Nisha changes after her meeting with Suresh and soon she falls in love with him. They become friends and roam about the lawns freely and express their independence. Nisha emerges as a confident and adventurous woman. She emerges as a modern woman enjoying her own life and deciding to take her own decisions. Her mother scolds her thus:

Who gave you permission to cut your hair, suddenly you have become so independent, you decide things on your own, where did you find the money, the time, the beauty parlor. Where did you find all these things? (*Home* 149)

Nisha is conscious of her study and she discourages Suresh to meet her. She tells Suresh: "I can't meet you. I have to study; I have to get a second division at least" (151). The parents of Nisha don't like Suresh and her relationship with Suresh becomes a source of her agony. He tries his best to convince them that his love and intention is pure. He further says, "He only wanted Nisha. No dowry and no fancy wedding, he didn't even care if she was a manglik" (199). Nisha is moved by his nobility and defends him and she says, "Who cares about caste these days? What you really want is to sell me in the market" (199). She expresses her anguish in these words: "Sell me and be done with it. What are you waiting for?" (199). Nisha is a modern woman who expresses her passion to disrupt the society and its age-old traditions. She displays her independence of choice in her traditional family. In any case, she doesn't wish to be like a rubber doll in her home and be put up for sale. Yashpal feels guilty and confesses that as a father he is not fit for Nisha and says, "Nisha, dear daughter, leave all thoughts of this dirty low caste man, what can he give you, command to what we can arrange for you?" (199). Nisha's brother humiliates her and calls her an untrustworthy woman. Nisha loses her temper and expresses her rebellious spirit when she says, "Who are you to decide whether I am trustworthy?" (198). This critical and aggressive comment of Nisha reveals her love for freedom and the spirit to fight with the gender discrimination. She is rebellious; deviant; critical and liberal. Wankhede argues that, "Her courage is praiseworthy in struggling with the meanness of life to find her place in an uninformed society" (Wankhede 151). She silently suffers and remains in her own home as "a prisoner of her deed, a prisoner of their words" (200). The fact that she is never permitted to step outside makes her oppressed. When she walks out to meet Suresh, her uncle Prem Nath and brother Raju go with her. Through the figure of Nisha, Manju Kapur presents the idea of a contemporary, rebellious woman living in the postcolonial era.

She raises the voice of all women oppressed by the patriarchy. Nisha argues with her uncle thus, “Uncle this is the modern age. What harm is there if first we got to know each other? How can I tell him to send his family to talk to my family if I don’t know him first?” (*Home* 201). Suresh tells her boldly that he will not marry her and goes away leaving her. Nisha’s marriage does not happen as her parents block her way. Her estrangement from Suresh gives her the real psychological pain, suffering and anxiety. She becomes restless and sleepless as the memories of her love with Suresh haunt her day and night. Her three years of love relationship with Suresh collapses and she has to compromise in her life by accepting Arvind as husband. She suffers from physical and psychological pain. She suffers from eczema and loses her charm of life. She lives like a prisoner in her own house as she says:

She played the part of the king in chess. She needed to be protected as without her there could be no game. The moves concerning her were carefully planned, but she herself was powerless, quiescent, mute and waiting. (*Home* 217)

Nisha finished her graduation and found her alone and idle in her home. She decided to join a fashion designing course to pass her time since she had been waiting for a matching husband. Her mother rejects her proposal. Nisha lost her zest for life over time and was forced to stay tied at home practising nothing. Nisha soon realises that she needs to do something since she hates the life of a prisoner. The walls of home are giving her the real torture. Manju Kapur portrays her tortured psyche. Nisha revolts against the patriarchal society and pleads to her father that “I have seen girls working in shops, why should it be only Ajay, Vijay and Raju? There must be something I too can do” (267). Nisha emerges as a determined, rebellious and deviant woman of Manju Kapur who fights against the rigid traditions of patriarchy. She raises the voice of equality and speaks for equal rights denied to her. She says, “The men were occupied from morning to night. She needed an equally absorbing occupation. There must be other things in the world” (*Home* 277).

Manju Kapur’s novel *The Immigrant* (2011) depicts the themes of cultural dislocation and the displacement of the characters. The main focus is on Nina who is

thirty one year old spinster living with her old mother in Delhi. She marries Ananda, dentist of Canada and flies abroad with her husband to begin her new married life. Nina feels alienated in the alien land; her husband doesn't talk much to her. She is haunted by old memories of her old Indian culture and individualism. Manju Kapur focuses on the role of women living at home and the emergence of new modern ideas. Nina feels uprooted in Canada and this consciousness brings total transformation in her personality. The plot unfolds the story of two immigrants Nina and Ananda as they suffer dissolution of self. Manju Kapur has explored the wounded psyche of the diaspora. They struggle to construct a new identity in the alien land. In the first part of the novel Nina lived in India in an orthodox society. Manju Kapur describes the anguish of Nina's married life. The plot explores the consciousness of the middle class Indians and Nina is at the centre of the plot. Nina is introduced thus:

Nina was almost thirty; Friends and colleagues consoled her by remarking on her radiant complexion and her black hair, but such comfort was cold. Nina's skin knew it was thirty, broadcasting the fact at certain angles in front of the mirror. Her spirit felt sixty as she walked from the bus stop to the single room where she lived with her mother. Her heart felt a hundred as it surveyed the many years of helpless longing it had known. (*The Immigrant* 1)

The mother of Nina is anxious to marry Nina and wants her to settle abroad. She says: "If you are married to an NRI or someone in the foreign services, you could live abroad nicely" (1). Manju Kapur explores the consciousness of the Indian women who are in search of the green pastures dreaming of settlement and prosperity abroad. But the truth is incredibly hard to face. Migration leads to their alienation, cultural displacement, and trauma. The Indians going abroad had to confront the harsh realities of an alien city; new culture and confront the problem of adjustment. Ananda experiences all these traumatic experiences in his life. He was a reputed dentist in Dehradun and had never thought that he would migrate to an alien land. His uncle was in Canada but he had never dreamt that he would migrate there. Manju Kapur comment thus:

Because from the moment of his birth Ananda had been surrounded by the ritual of his caste before he left home, his parents did their best to reinforce the practice of a lifetime. He was a Brahmin; his body must never be polluted by dead flesh. Low caste boys in the college hostel might try and tempt him towards non-veg food and cigarettes and alcohol. Should he deviate from the pure habits they had installed in him, his mother's heart would break. (*The Immigrant* 14)

Ananda's parents perished in a car accident, and as he had lived in Halifax for the last twenty years, his mother's brother compelled him to travel to Canada. In India he will suffer poverty and insecurity of life. In Canada he could begin his new journey of life and would get many opportunities in life to grow and to prosper. His sister reaches him to see off from Agra and says, "Remember if you don't like it, you can always come back" (18).

Ananda reached Halifax on the 15th of August. His uncle welcomed him and said, "Why do you think that there is such a brain drain in India? He argued that India does not value its minds –unlike here. Otherwise you think we are not patriots? But there even the simple task of daily life can bleed you dry" (18). Ananda walked in the streets of Canada and feels disgusted as he sees the empty spaces in the streets. He compares these streets with the crowded streets of India. He feels that there is no hustle and bustle in the streets of Canada. He says, "Where are the people? Always the first thing to strike our countrymen. You will get used to it" (19). Nancy, the wife of his uncle taught him the manners as she gave the breakfast to him and soon Ananda feels homesick. He has to perform all jobs; he has to make his own bed and explains to his cousin Lenny thus, "In India we had a maid who did all this. I mainly studied" (21). He doesn't feel comfortable as he is haunted by the immigrant psyche. He suffers from nostalgia and this gives birth to his rebellious and depressed and deviant behaviour. He feels a deep sense of loss as he admits, "He lost all experiences all around him." Dr. Sharma forces him to become a cosmopolitan. He says:

Look at me. I am a citizen of the world. In other words, every summer they went to Europe. In Rome, Florence, Paris, Venice, London, Amsterdam, Munich in art galleries, theaters and museums he exposed his family to the finest artifacts of western civilization. (*The Immigrant* 26)

Ananda suffers anguish as he couldn't celebrate the festivals of Holi and Diwali. He expresses his cultural displacement thus:

Ananda would have preferred not to know when Diwali and Holi fell. With his parents he had eaten special foods on those days, prayed with them before the gods on Janamashtmi, Dussehra, Diwali, Ram Navami, Holi and hundred other smaller occasions. There was no way he could replicate any ceremony on his own, he preferred complete rejection. (*The Immigrant* 27)

Ananda was surprised to see his uncle celebrating Diwali with his children, and he noticed small images of Ram, Sita, Lakshman, and Hanuman displayed on a raised platform. His uncle Mr. Sharma expressed his cultural disintegration thus to him:

Twenty years ago there was no Indian club. I am one of the founding members. I realised that if I forget everything of mine, then who was I? When the children came, it became even more important to keep in touch. (*The Immigrant* 28)

The root cause of deviant behaviour of Ananda is his loss of cultural roots in the alien land. He feels uprooted in Canada. He lost all the cultural values; started taking alcohol regularly and felt depressed as he had given up his old values. He broke all taboos and discovered he is undergoing a transformation. After obtaining his foreign degree, he entered a new phase of life with new jobs, appointments, and responsibilities. He began to consider his wedding "If Ananda marries a local girl, he would find himself in a difficult situation when come to a new country, one has to

come wholeheartedly otherwise one could be very miserable” (36). Merton comments thus:

Individuals at the bottom of society could respond to this strain in a number of ways. Different orientations toward society’s goals and differential access to the means to achieve those goals combine to create different categories of deviance. (Merton 89)

Ananda suffers from rootlessness and anomie. Ananda is in a dilemma over the issue of marriage. Nancy felt a deep sympathy for Indian immigrants who were forced to work hard in society. Marrying a white woman would be like marrying the country with your entire body, Ananda brooded. He was also wondering if being Hindu would prevent him from getting married in a church. Ananda's sister looked for and courted Nina, an Indian girl, on his behalf. She must battle her isolation, annoyance, and the western worldview.

Manju Kapur focuses on weddings between NRIs—individuals who are married but uprooted and relocate to a foreign country. They all suffer from anxiety, tension and memories of the past. They are engaged to rediscover their lost selves. Nina is fully upset as there is no future for her; no promise of cultural satisfaction. Their marriage fails to give them children. She feels alienated like other Indians caught between the values of the East and the West. Ananda calls her “the perfect mix of east and west” (85). Nina is the worst hit woman; she feels isolated. She has left her home and career. She cries, “I miss job- I miss doing things. I feel like a shadow. What am I but your wife” (237). Nina suffers from the feeling of loss, her distress resulting to cry in the presence of Beth. Everything has turned awkward as she says, “I used to be a teacher, and in fact I taught for ten years before I came here. And now I do nothing. I have not even been able to conceive.” She articulates her despondency thus, “Am I locked into stereotypical expectations? I don’t know” (232). Nina travels to Halifax, and her first time flying in Toronto has not gone well. Her disordered mental state is depicted thus by Manju Kapur:

Rag fills her, why were people so silent about the humiliations they faced on the west? She was a teacher at a university yet this woman,

probably school pass, can imprison her cell like room, scare her and condemn her. Though she was addressed as “maam”, no respect conveyed. (*The Immigrant* 106)

Nina lost her real Indian identity; she emerged as a displaced person in the alien land suffering from mental disorder and depression in her life. Her deviant behaviour is the outcome of her cultural displacement. Merton argued that anomie doesn't result from unregulated goals but from the dissociation from the cultural roots of human beings. Nina suffers from anomie because of her cultural collapse.

The novel *Custody* (2011) of Manju Kapur presents the heartrending life of a rebellious woman; her loss of love and sufferings caused by the betrayal. The main focus of the novel is on Raman and Shagun; the couple that seems to have all the comforts. He works hard, is a good man, and has a high-pressure, high-paying career in marketing. His wife is gorgeous and gives birth to a male baby Arjun and a girl Roohi. She is a carbon copy of her ordinary looking father. Arjun takes after his beautiful mother. Shagun is happy in the beginning with her marriage but soon she feels bored and lonely due to the long absence of Raman on professional tours and trips. Shagun remains away from her husband and the children become the real victims of the conflicts and the deviant behaviour of their parents. Shagun becomes adventurous and accepts the free spirit of life. She invites the wrath of her husband as he finds her disloyalty and infidelity. She herself is responsible for ruining her married life. Shagun is tired of looking after her children alone in the family as she expresses her agony thus: “After marriage there had been a child. Then the claims of husband, family and friends made a career hard to justify family and friends especially since money was not an issue” (11). Shagun throws away the chains of morality and patriarchy in her craze to enjoy sexual liberty and independence. She comes in contact with Ashok and develops sexual relations with him. Ashok gives real freedom to Shagun and encourages her to express her views freely. Unlike Raman who had ignored her completely, Ashok looks after her and is concerned about her. Manju Kapur writes thus:

Shagun-the cheating spouse- the spouse with the looks is at best a one-dimensional character. She is a negative character, the one stepped out on her husband and marriage. To make matters worse it's her husband's boss that she steps out with. Shagun came across as a harsh, spoilt and selfish person." (*Custody* 3)

The mother of Raman always doubted her character. She says, "How stunningly beautiful she is," realised frightened Mrs. Kaushik, can such a woman really be a homemaker?" (33). Shagun lived in a different flat after marriage, which was disliked by her mother-in-law. Raman's mother hates Shagun because she had built a barrier between the mother and the son. Her mother-in-law says, "A pretty daughter-in-law, the son dancing attendance on her, an angry disappointed, such a situation would lead to daily tension" (23). The mother of Raman is disgusted by the liberties taken by Shagun who is behaving like a new woman. She is sick of her and when she thinks of the married life of Raman she feels very bad. She expresses her agony thus:

The happy togetherness in her brother-in-law's family showed Raman's mother how much she was missing and she took this knowledge badly, blaming her daughter-in-law for the loneliness she felt. (*Custody* 255)

Shagun's mother notices a glow on her face in the absence of her spouse. She repeatedly asks her daughter, but she never receives a response. When she finds out about her extramarital affair with Ashok, she is shocked. She expresses her pain to the daughter and cautions her to beware of the society's rage. But Shagun doesn't bother as she emerges as a new woman and enjoys disrupting the traditional values of love, life and sex. She cries out: "Shagun! I couldn't sleep all night. What will happen to you? To the children? And Raman? His family is everything to him" (40). Shagun is mad in her love with Ashok; she doesn't care at all and gives a stunning answer, "Mama! Stop going on it is hard enough as it is. Am I to stay married to Raman because you love him so much?" (40). Raman develops chest pain when he comes to know of her infidelity and cheating. Shagun does not bother and goes to

Ashok leaving her husband crying and dying. He is shocked when she files the suit and asks for the divorce and marries Ashok.

There is another woman character Ishita who suffers as her marriage collapses and she suffers the mental agony of breaks. She suffers from her barrenness. Kapur has exposed the rotten system of legal process in India giving mental torture to women. Kapur has taken up the issues of infidelity; family shame and social propriety in the novel. The plot presents the emergence of “New Woman”. The women characters are involved in the legal battle and the result is disastrous. They suffer the ‘tyranny of blood’ and their trauma is the product as they are torn between two mothers, and to countries” (23). The cycle of tension and stress between Shagun and Raman is heart-rending in the novel. The life of children is complicated by new stepmothers and stepfathers due to the second marriages of their parents. While Ashok offers a more ambiguous form of care, Ishita finds it difficult to substitute her biological mom. Shagun’s infidelity is scandalous. Manju Kapur is concerned with the woman’s pursuit for self-identity; self-fulfilment and self-recognition. The complexity of the middle class is explored and the main issue is the emancipation of women. Merton argues thus:

When the individuals are selfish and aggressive they break the chains of the cultures of society and express their rebelliousness to enjoy freedom and sexuality. It is argued that individuals in the lower rung of society can respond to this strain in a number of ways. Different goals and different access to the means to achieve those goals combine to create different categories of deviance. (Merton 90)

Shagun and Ishita are rebellious women as they disrupt the social structure in their passion to violate the social code of morality. Manju Kapur has dramatised the anguish of women who fail to maintain their family. Both Shagun and Raman fail to make their marriage successful. They are trapped in the vicious cycle of money; power and glamour and become disinterested in raising their children in the right way. They are crazy to rise to the top of success but suffer the stress of life. They get involved in marriage and divorce and the issue of the custody of children wastes their

youth and their domestic happiness. The fight between the mother and the father ruins the life of the siblings.

Brothers is the latest novel by Manju Kapur. Tapti Gaina is the main character in the novel and through her Manju Kapur narrates the tale of the discrimination of women and the main cause of their anomie. Tapti is an attractive, sensible working lady but she is plagued by self-doubt. The plot depicts the societal pressures on the sensibility of women and their internal dissonance. The storyline spans from the 1930s to the 2010s and Manju Kapur gives the comprehensive view of the changing status of women and the growth of the rebellious spirit in them. The women struggle to end social injustices such as child marriage, widow remarriage and purdah customs. Mithari is burdened with the social evils of child marriage; Virpal and Mithari had been six and five years of age when they got married. They return to “their parent’s home to wait out the years until puberty” (72). Dhanpal’s wife Gulabi is afraid that her husband would leave her a widow if he is sent to war, so she begged him not to go. Dhanpal argues, “You have a woman’s brain. What do you understand that you ask for such promises? This is a war, there will be fighting. The only thing I can promise is that I will discover neither my caste nor my name” (79). As the plot progresses Gulabi’s fear of becoming a widow is intensified. Virpal’s son Kishen Singh passes away after a few months after his marriage. Dhanpal’s son Himmat takes advantage of her loneliness as he says: “In her shapelessness she was no different from the covered figures in his village, yet she managed to move him in unfamiliar ways” (123). Manju Kapur had depicted the theme of widowhood expressing the mental disorder of the widows. Widowhood is a threat to all women as the laws of society are very rigid. They are not allowed to remarry and are forced to lead their life in isolation cut off from the society. Their hair is cut and they are thrown into a lonely room to spend the rest of their life. Widowhood has been constructed as a fragile phase in which a woman is led to believe she is wrecked. Manju Kapur has depicted the mental anguish of the widow thus after the death of Kishen Singh:

As for the young wife, she lay paralyzed by desolation. From now she would be deprived of the protective presence that stood between her

and the world. Her life was over, they said. Where does one go, how does one behave if one's life is over? This was the lesson she had to learn. (*Brothers* 114)

Women gradually turned rebellious and broke the shackles of society and patriarchy. Mrs Ahlawat, the mother of Tapti, was also a widow. She played a greater role in the household than Kishen Singh's ex wife. In the late 1970s, a new women movement started as women launched crusade against patriarchal oppression as they expressed their desires to remarry and to enjoy sexual liberty. Vina Mazumdar says thus:

The revival of the women's movement in the late 1970s brought new dynamism and directions to women's studies. Issues of violence – domestic and social, sexual exploitation in old and new forms; identification of complex structures of domination and their reassertion in new forms. (Mazumdar 44)

Himmat and Sonal's marriage is an example of the ambitions of new woman of Manju Kapur. This union leads to political advancement. He married Sonal after forcing his child bride to divorce him. She emerges as the wife of a minister and the daughter of a politician. She belongs to the creamy layer of the society but she fails to break the traditional conventions of rigid patriarchy.

In the fiction of Manju Kapur there is a shift from the oppressed women to strong independent and rebellious women as they are fired with passions to enjoy sexual liberty and to enjoy their own independent identity in the society. Merton observes that social disorder is brought about by the deviant nature of the people. Merton contends thus:

Most people strive to achieve culturally recognised goals. A state of anomie develops when access to these goals is blocked to entire groups of people or individuals. The result is a deviant behaviour characterized by rebellion, retreat, ritualism, innovation, and/or conformity. Crime results predominantly from innovation. (Merton 123)

All women of Manju Kapur such as Nisha, Sona, Astha, Virmati, Kasturi, Ishita and Swarna struggle to fight against the rigid patriarchy and emerge as “New Women” of Manju Kapur; they are rebellious; deviant; suffering from anomie and spirited women to enjoy love; life and sexuality. They launch a crusade against the rigid patriarchal oppression and male hegemony. They suffer from mental anguish and depression and are the victims of all the important symptoms such as anomie, alienation, rebelliousness and aggression.

To conclude, the intersection of Robert K. Merton's theory of anomie with the fictional works of Manju Kapur has been explored. Merton's theory, which describes anomie as the disjunction between culturally prescribed goals and the legitimate means to achieve them, provides a compelling framework for analysing Kapur's characters and their societal contexts. Kapur's novels vividly portray individuals grappling with societal expectations and personal ambitions, reflecting the strains that Merton described. Characters such as Virmati, Shagun, Astha and Nina illustrate various adaptations to these pressures, from conformity to rebellion. Merton's various modes of individual available adaptations—conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion—enable a refined understanding of Kapur's characters' behaviours and choices.

Chapter IV

Fetters of Tradition and Quest for Identity

Manju Kapur's characters, particularly her female protagonists, are often depicted grappling with the rigid societal norms and expectations that seek to confine them within predefined roles. These traditional constraints, deeply entrenched in cultural and familial values, act as fetters that hinder personal growth and autonomy. Kapur's novels explore themes like marriage, sexuality, middle class and upper class relationships, and the family unit. She has depicted the struggles of women in life as in all her novels women are always under stress because of patriarchal despotism and gender inequality. Each novel of Manju Kapur is focused on the quest for identity of her women as they struggle to break the chains of society. They are trapped in the den of patriarchy but they struggle to hunt for their independent spaces. Interestingly, the fictional world of Manju Kapur is dominated by her middle class women and the men are marginalised. They exist only to suppress women and as the representative of male hegemony. They are always under a dilemma to confront the harsh social realities. They are forced to face the recurring problems of love; life and sexuality; they are motivated to revolt against the society to forge a new identity in society. They aspire to abandon present life and enter into new life, as they feel dissatisfied with their existence. They keep on moving and suffer depression and alienation in their quest for new identity. Manju Kapur has realised that male domination is the root cause of sufferings of women. In her revolutionary book *Caste as Woman* (1995), Vrinda Nabar addressed the importance of tradition in our social lives. She has investigated how tradition and patriarchy have affected the collective unconscious of the Indians. According to her, prejudice against women in India starts at birth and "gender" is a social construct. The yearning for a male kid and gender infanticide has undoubtedly been prevalent practices in Indian society. Kamla Bhasin and Nighat Said Khan have given the concept of feminism on the pattern of Indianness in *Feminism and Its Relevance in South Asia*, "An awareness of women's oppression and exploitation in society, at work and within the family, and conscious action by women and men to change this situation" (Choudhry 4). The status of

Indian women in the medieval society had been decided by the patriarchal set up and nobody dared to go against it. In the Gupta period, the status of woman was very low, she was not allowed the property rights, education was denied to her and her duty was to serve her husband in her life till death and even after death. However, feminists in India during the post-colonial era are fighting for gender equality, which includes equal political rights, equal access to healthcare and education, and the ability to work for equal pay.

Manju Kapur explored the real intricacies of the social set up of pre independence India and post independence India. She wrote six novels *Difficult Daughters*, *The Immigrant*, *Home*, *A Married Woman*, *Brothers* and *Custody*, spanning from 1947 to the latest time. She was a reputed lecturer in Delhi University and was well aware of the problems of women of India. All her novels depict the intricate interplay of tradition and modernity, societal expectations, and individual aspirations within the evolving landscape of Indian society. She has raised the women's question in all her novels and launched the crusade against the oppressive patriarchy of Indian society and male hegemony. A critical analysis of her novels revealed that various issues have been raised to fight for the freedom of Indian women from the fetters of dead and rigid rules and norms of the Indian society like: marriage: women as child bearing machine; child marriage; widowhood and oppression of women; supremacy of patriarch: denial of higher education; stifling environment of the family; marginalisation of women; rigidity; backwardness; resistance to change; economic dependence of women; chained in the four walls of the house; and the angel of the home.

Manju Kapur was challenged to deal with all these traditional issues with the spirit of her passion to bring about the cultural transformation In Indian society, women's struggles are widespread. Even after many years of independence, they still do not enjoy equal status and equal rights. Kapur has examined and explored the ideas of the western feminism and has read the works of Foucault's in *History of Sexuality*, E. Martin's *Cultural Anthropology*, *A Room of One's Own* of Virginia Woolf and *Sexual Politics* of Kate Millet. Manju Kapur has realised that the Indian society is old, rigid and stagnant and needed total ramification. The values are dead

and stereotyped and no progress could be made without the total transformation of society. She discarded all the old and dead customs and the rituals of Indian society. She followed the ideas of Virginia Woolf and created the galaxy of women characters who struggle to pursue higher education following the feministic ideas of Virginia Woolf. The first foremost objective of all her women is to forge an independent identity breaking the chains of the contemporary society. The main focus of each novel of Manju Kapur is the dramatisation of the conflict between the ambitions of women and the fight with the oppressive forces of patriarchy. In each novel there is a dominating patriarch insisting on the dead values of life and promoting the dead culture. But in each novel there is the rise of “New Woman” celebrating her liberty and propagating cultural values. Her struggle is challenging and often her woman suffers from the multiple psychological ailments such as depression; alienation; divorce and separation. But through her plots Manju Kapur vindicates the woman question and depicts the struggle of her women to break the fetters of the traditional society. Each novel is a dramatisation of the conflict between traditional values and modern views.

All the novels of Manju Kapur are focused on the theme of marriage depicting the stifling environment for the women. She firmly believed that all problems of women are due to the rigid and orthodox views of Indian society. She seriously explored the issues of child marriage; widowhood and the oppressive policies of the despotic patriarch who treated women as the “other”. They had no identity and were chained in the four walls of their home. They were denied all rights and were only considered as the child bearing machines. They were denied higher education; were not allowed to go out to work in the offices and their economic dependence on their husbands was the root cause of their fractured identity in the society.

Manju Kapur published her debut novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998) presenting three women Kasturi, Virmati and Ida. The plot is set in the male-dominated society. Marriage is a prominent theme in the fiction of Manju Kapur. This institution is called marriage that projects, evaluates, and experiences relationships in a variety of shades. The women marry because of societal pressure,

there are others who feel suffocated within the institution of marriage and in the end get freedom from it. They seek divorce to get freedom from the chains of marriage. Marriage is considered as the union of two families; the union of two individuals. Marriage is considered as the sacred institution in India that connects two individuals in relationships of husband and wife, as mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. A young girl marries and leaves her parents and enters into a new family. Her entry disturbs the social order and she is considered as the bought property of the bridegroom and his parents. The Indian society gives them absolute rights over the married girl; they are free to treat her the way they like. This social and legal liberty is misused by the father who emerges as the oppressive patriarchal and unfortunately all join to oppress and exploit the newly married girls. Bond of marriage inevitably leads to the marginalisation and loss of identity of the married girls. J.S. Mill wrote the book *The Subjection of Women* in which he talked about an ideal relationship in marriage:

What marriage may be in the case of two persons of cultivated faculties identical in opinion and purposes, between whom exists the best kind of equality, similarly of powers and capacities with reciprocal superiority over them-so that each can enjoy the luxury of looking up to the other, and can have alternatively the pleasure of leading a being led in the path of development. I maintain with the proud conviction that and this only, is the ideal marriage. (Mill 235)

Marriage is the dominating theme in the novels of Manju Kapur; each novel begins with the marriage of the heroine and she begins her quest for identity in the rigid and orthodox society ruled by the despotic patriarch. Each novel is a heartrending tale of sufferings and trauma of women depicting the fractured identity of the women characters. Indian cultural society provides different reasons for women's approach; her role is fixed in her dealing with others and she is under obligation to strictly follow the rules and the norms of Indian society. The parents of each girl are motivated to marry their daughter to get rid of the social criticism and thus marriage is a social necessity; "a social force" according to Bernard Shaw. A girl is married off "at the right time" as an unmarried girl in Indian society is considered as a burden on her parents. Child marriage is allowed and Manju Kapur

has exposed the cruelties of the Indian parents who are the slaves of the old and rigid traditions of the society. The essence of the issue is highlighted in each of Manju Kapur's novels. The way a mother responds to the topic of marriage is a prevalent concern in the institution of marriage, which unites individuals as husband and wife. In her novel, *A Married Woman* the mother of Astha argues, "When you are married our responsibilities will be over. Do you know the Shastras say if parents die without getting their daughter married, they will be condemned to perpetual rebirth?" (1). In her novel *The Immigrant* Nina's mother is anxious to get a husband for her educated daughter. She articulates her anxiety and restlessness thus:

The major topic of conversation in the last eight years had been Nina's marriage-who, whom, where, how? ... From where could fresh possibilities be unearthed on the eve of her thirtieth birthday? The lack of these, reflected in her mother's dull, mournful eyes, was what she was going home to. (*The Immigrant* 3)

Kasturi in *Difficult Daughters* feels that "it is the duty of every girl to get married" (15). Sona marries into a wealthy business family in her novel *Home*, while Rupa marries into a normal middle-class family. In her novel *Custody*, the mother of Shagun is always worried about the marriage of her daughter. She frequently asks her, "Do what you like after you marry" (11). In her latest novel *Brothers*, mother of Tapti is worried about her marriage. Interestingly, mothers in all her novels are anxious to get their daughters married and are impatient to feel unburdened. This is the basic social law and each mother is supposed to follow this law religiously. The marriage of a daughter is not a subject of ceremonial celebration for the parents in India, but a social practice rooted in the ethos and culture of society. It is the moral responsibility of each mother to get her daughter married at the right age to avoid the social stigma. The parents feel relieved mentally and morally. This social idea and practice is deeply rooted in the culture of the rigid Indian society for the unmarried girl is considered as dependent and a weaker self. She is unable to survive in the harsh society without the support and help of a husband. Parents give huge dowry to the bridegroom to take the girl and to feed her for life. They strictly follow the ritual as "Man for war and Woman for hearth" is considered in Indian society. Marriage in

a way is compensation to what the unmarried girl doesn't possess; she gets family, love, ornaments, dresses and home after marriage. "Marriage to all the characters, therefore different meanings" (Kapur 23). The female characters of Manju Kapur breathe in the clichéd stifling environment of her new home and are forced to live the life within traditionally conservative confines.

The plot of *Difficult Daughters* is set against the backdrop of the Indian Freedom Movement. Virmati is presented as a defiant and rebellious woman who fights for her right to pursue higher education. Her mother Kasturi is a traditional woman rooted in the rigid culture and is the child bearing machine. She gives birth to her eleven children and suffers the anguish of weak and deteriorating health and constant threat of mental disturbance. The plight of Kasturi is depicted thus:

Every day, Kasturi entered the dark and slippery bathroom to check whether there was any promising reddish-looking mucus between her thighs. Nothing, always nothing and tears gathered and flowed in the only privacy she knew. Her life seemed such a burden, her body so difficult to carry. Her sister-in-law's words echoed in her ears, "Breeding like cats and dogs' Harvest time again". (*Difficult Daughters* 7)

Kasturi suffers physical and psychological torture as she is condemned to give birth to eleven children. She is almost on the verge of death as she says, "I am going to die, Mataji this time I know" but all in the family are insensitive to her physical and mental anguish. She had "nausea, cramps, blackouts and headaches but her husband and her mother-in-law didn't take her physical pain seriously" (7). Manju Kapur has depicted the sufferings of Kasturi thus:

Kasturi couldn't remember a time when she was not tired, when her feet and leg didn't ache. Her back curved in towards the base of her spine and carrying her children was a strain, even when they were very young. Her stomach was soft and spongy, her breasts long and unattractive. Her hair barely snaked down to mid-back its length and thickness gone with her baby. Her teeth bled when she chewed her

morning neem twig, and she could feel some of them shaking. She had filled the house and her in-laws had wanted, but with another child there would be nothing left of her. (*Difficult Daughters* 7)

Her daughter Virmati had closely watched the devastating condition of her mom. She decided to break from the traditions and the spirit of rebellion brewed in her mind. Virmati comes under the influence of her educated and liberal cousin Shakuntala Penji who is called Mem by Kasturi. The plot revolves around Virmati who is a young Punjabi girl belonging to a bourgeois family believing in the rigid culture of the Arya Samaj of Amritsar. The novel is an excruciating tale of love, duty, sadness, adjustment and compromise. She is presented as a "New Woman" who revolts against the rigid traditions; expresses her passion for higher education as she goes to Lahore; her sensuality and sexual liberty is the main focus as she begins an illicit relationship with the married Professor Harish. She is passionate to liberate her from the stifling environment of her prison-like home and adopts Shakuntala as her role model. Once while taking an evening walk Shakuntala tells Virmati:

These people don't really understand Viru, how much satisfaction there can be in leading your own life, in being independent. Here we are, fighting for the freedom of the nation, but women are still supposed to marry, and nothing else. (*Difficult Daughters* 17)

Virmati is inspired by her cousin Shakuntala to pursue her study further. She goes to Lahore expressing her freedom for the first time in the family, flouting the norms of the rigid family. Shakuntala tells her that, "We travel, entertain ourselves in the evenings, follow each other's work, read papers, and attend seminars. One of them is even going abroad for higher studies" (*Difficult Daughters* 17). Virmati is anxious to follow her cousin as she learns many new things from her. She gets a new meaning of study, glamour and progressive modern ideas and the need to break from the chains of prison life in her home. Manju Kapur writes, "Shankutala's visit plants the seeds of aspiration in Virmati" (18). She dreams to become independent like her cousin and to lead a liberal life. She hopes, "May be I will also one day come to Lahore, Penji, she wept. I wish I too could to things. But I am not clever" (18). Her

mother Kasturi hates the idea of higher education. She wants Virmati to learn sewing and stitching to do well after marriage. Virmati finds her mom making thread at the spinning wheel. Virmati sits next to her mom and tells her that she is not interested in marriage as she wants to pursue higher education.

Kasturi tries her best to discourage Virmati to pursue higher education in Lahore. There is an unending conflict between marriage and study. Kasturi reprimands her thus: “Now it is you who are eating my head. What good are Shaku’s degrees when she is not settled? Will they look after her when she is old?” (21). She further said, “At your age I was already expecting you, not fighting with my mother” (21). Virmati goes to Lahore and falls in the trap of sexuality as her passion for sexuality creates problems in her life. She falls in love with the married professor Harish and the very purpose of her education is defeated. It is explored that her reason for education was to break away from her stifling environment of her home. Her education is the main reason to attract the married professor who is fed up with the dull and stupid wife Ganga. Ganga is dedicated to her husband Harish and his family but there are a lot of differences between Harish and his wife Ganga; their match is incompatible. He is educated and progressive but Ganga is regressive. Harish wants good intellectual company but Ganga is a mediocre girl devoid of aesthetic tastes. Harish suffers a loveless marriage. He finds Virmati spirited, imaginative, romantic, sexy, passionate and intellectual. Harish is the victim of the tradition of child marriage. He curses the tradition and writes a letter to Virmati to expresses his anguish thus:

Who is responsible for this state of affairs? Society, which deems that their sons should be educated, but not their daughters. Society that decides that children-babies really should be married at the age of two and three as we were. As a result, both of us needlessly suffer for no fault of ours. (*Difficult Daughters* 103)

Virmati wants Harish not only as her lover but also as her husband. Whenever she mentions about marriage Harish takes a back seat and becomes the cause of her frustration. She expresses her inner urge to marry him and burst out thus:

I break my engagement because of you, blacken my family's name, am locked up inside my house, get sent to Lahore because no one knows what to do with me. Here I am in the position of being a secret wife, full of shame, wondering what people will say if they find out, not being able to live in peace, study in peace and why? Because I am an idiot. Now you want to prolong the situation. Why don't we get married? You say your family makes no difference but still you want to continue this way. Be honest with me. I can bear anything but this continuous irresolution. Swarna is right; men do take advantage of women. (*Difficult Daughters* 148)

Maneeta Kahlon writes about Virmati's situation thus, "Virmati is caught between familial and romantic love. Her family has been shown to be taking all important decisions of her life on her behalf; still they don't understand her love for the Professor" (12). Virmati is caught in the trap expressing her sexual liberty and developing her relationship with married Harish. She is a young ambitious girl and a social rebel; she invites a dispute with the social taboos. She suffers a dilemma when in reality her dream of getting Professor Harish is shattered. She waits for a long time but Harish is not ready to marry her. She also suffers the trauma of aborting her child. Finally she goes to Shantiniketan but one of Harish's friends intervenes and gets them married at last. After marriage with Harish she doesn't get the real peace of mind or the domestic happiness but it is a sigh of relief:

The poet's parents did the kanya daan, the seven pheras were taken. The couple was pronounced man and wife. As Virmati rubbed her eyes, watching from the smoke, she knew, rather than felt, that the burden of the past five years had lifted. (*Difficult Daughters* 202)

Marriage with Harish gave her satisfaction as the guilt was lifted from her soul. Marriage seemed to her the ultimate aim of existence. Her roommate Swarnlata tells her thus:

Marriage is not the only thing in life, Viru. The war-the Satyagraha Movement-because of these things women are coming out of their

homes. Taking jobs, fighting, and going to jail. Wake up from your stale dream. (*Difficult Daughters* 151)

For Virmati, Swaranlata serves as a positive role model of an independent woman, who is living in the world of false dreams and illusions thinking of marriage with married professor Harish. It is a difficult task for the difficult daughter. After learning of the sufferings endured by Ganga, the professor's first wife, she feels bad about marrying someone who has treated his first wife unfairly. Although she is accepted by the professor, she understands that she was treated like a 'pariah' in the house. Virmati is cursed because of her wrongdoings towards Ganga and her offspring. Virmati suffers guilt and indignities because of her love. She is forced to adjust in the new environment; she suffers incessant mental anguish and restlessness. She stopped having anything that Harish didn't eat. Her plight is an example that projects the dilemma of married women. She is forced to live with Ganga and her children and living in Harish's house is like a tug of war to keep Harish by her side. Her education helps her to get the upper hand when compared to Ganga. Her predicament is that she has been used by Harish to fulfil his physical needs and wishes. Ida learns the lesson from her mother and says: "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother" (1). Virmati was a difficult daughter for Kasturi and Ida was even more so for Virmati, "Difficult is not all about moulding an individual according to the wishes of the family and society. It is going against the norms of either family or society or both that is to be difficult for everyone" (23).

Manju Kapur's novel *A Married Woman* also deals with the theme of marriage and the traumatic experiences of women trapped in the vicious cycle of patriarchy and male hegemony. Astha is the central woman protagonist married to Hemant, an MBA from America. The plot depicts the heartrending love story of Astha. In the beginning of the novel Manju Kapur comments, "Astha was brought up properly, as befits a woman, with large supplements of fear" (1). The dark mood of the novel is hinted at the beginning of the plot. However, life seems to be pleasant in the beginning. On their honeymoon Hemant comes to know that Astha loves to write poetry and he also admires his wife, "You certainly have a good imagination, you put things well" (42). Astha thinks that she is the luckiest married girl as she thinks, "Her

husband was going to encourage her writing. May be she could become poetess as well as a painter. Her life was opening up before her in golden vistas” (42). Astha is presented as a middle class girl; artistic; dreamer; and obedient. Her parents are not rich but they are ambitious. Her mother is happy since she has got a wonderful educated husband. After the honeymoon she engages herself into becoming a good daughter-in-law and wife. She starts performing the domestic chores. Hemant and his family have a good opinion of Astha who gives birth to Anuradha. She is satisfied but Hemant expresses his desire to have a son when he says, “I want to have my son soon; I want to be as much a part of his life as Papaji is of mine” (61). He continues, “Of course we will have a son, and if not, we needn’t stop at two” (61). Astha had thought that her husband was educated in America and so these things of birth of sons didn’t matter to him but she failed to understand the Indian psyche of her husband. He was also rooted in the traditional patriarchy as he comments, “I was so pleased Anu was a girl. But that doesn’t mean we should not try for a boy. I am the only son” (61). When Astha becomes pregnant once more, her mother insists that the child must be male. She tells Astha, “God willing it will be a boy. I have asked for Swamiji’s advice as to what offerings to make?” (63). She talks of the double standard of morality of Indian society, “You are such an innocent. What people say and what they do are two different things. Besides, why is Hemant working so hard? For whom, if not his son?” (67).

Soon Astha understands the stark reality of life and of her relationship with her husband Hemant. She understands the realities of her life as a daughter; a wife; a daughter-in-law and a mother. She had lost her identity as Hemant was indifferent to her. Something strange occurs between the birth of her daughter Anuradha and her son Himanshu. She observes:

Between Anuradha’s and Himanshu’s birth Hemant changed from being an all American father to being an all-Indian one and Astha changed from being a woman who only wanted love to a woman who valued independence. Besides, there was the pleasure of interacting with minds instead of needs. (*A Married Woman*70)

This change created the conflicts between Astha and Hemant and led to the discontentment in their married life. The attitude of Hemant changed as he had started ignoring Astha and she in return experienced alienation in life. She had been waiting for him, longed to enjoy his company but he was indifferent and was busy in his own world of making dollars. Astha spent her free time writing poems and wrote “Changes” and articulated her inner torments. She wrote thus:

The eventual release from pain

In the tearing relentless separation

From those in habit loved. Can come so slowly

It seems there will never be a day of final peace and tranquillity.

Who promise me, that if I did gaze upon reality?

Accept it, embrace it, befriend it.

I would never suffer again. But no matter how many times I have the doorways from my soul.

To let the chill light in. The darkness grows silently.

To hide me in the break of the day. (*A Married Woman* 80)

Astha wrote about two hundred poems to express her turbulent mind. She was feeling depressed as her husband was insensitive to her. There was no love between them; no understanding and no rapport with him. She spent her time in her paintings to express her heart. She would spend her free time in “scribbling poems; she wrote about gardens and flowers, the silent, dark faces of the gardeners tending plants” (78). Astha was a wounded psyche; the world was dark to her as she longed for love and companionship of her husband day and night. She wrote about love, desire, dissatisfaction, longing, rejection and desperation. Hemant didn’t praise her or appreciate her but rather he sarcastically remarked thus exhibiting his male domination, “Good heavens, Az, they are all about cages and birds, and mice, and suffering in situations that are not even clear. There is not one happy poem here”

(81). Hemant failed to realise that her poems displayed her suffocation in the marriage. Each poem was an expression of her pent up emotions; of her sick and wounded heart; about her perpetual headaches and mental agony. Astha suffered from emotional crisis when she got the news of the death of her father. She was restless to find her mother busy in the Ashram and ignoring her and taking her as the burden in her life. She had been the only child and she would feel guilty being not able to fulfil her mother's needs in old age. Her mother refuses to live with her saying that "It is Hemant's house" (87). Astha loses her balance of mind when she comes to know that the books of her father had been disposed off without her consent she bursts out:

Then who am I? The tenant? We could have found room, we have built bookshelves done something, we could have at least discussed it...But together her husband and her mother had deprived her of the dearest part of her father, and continued before her eyes to be obvious of their crimes. (*A Married Woman* 87)

The story of Astha is of a married woman who was given many psychological shocks. She tried her best to understand the nature of her money minded and selfish husband but she failed miserably. She had the intellectual and artistic sensibility but Hemant was a senseless; loveless and emotionless man. He was proud of his male power and superiority and treated Astha as a second class woman. Manju Kapur comments thus, "Discussing her feelings with Hemant usually led to argument, distance, and greater misery. In the struggle to express herself she found temporary relief" (78). Astha wanted Hemant to help her mother and bring her back from the Ashram but he replied that he had no time as there were many things in "his plate." Astha was oppressed as her mother had been living and suffering alone in the Ashram. She realised her loneliness and understands the real nature of her selfish husband:

The boat could not be rocked. She should paint on a canvas and put it up on the wall, and stare at it day and night...Hands that had grasped money, and felt it pass grasped money, and felt it pass through their

fingers were the ones capable of rocking the boats. Hers were not. (*A Married Woman* 99)

Astha is disappointed at the indifferent attitude of her good husband; she realised that her happy married life was deceptive. Hemant doesn't value her opinions and she has no liberty in her own house. She is leading a slavish life as Hemant has poor opinion about her and often he belittles her. During these days of her crisis; she comes in contact with Aijaz who joins her school for the rehearsal of the street drama. She falls in love with him; she is under his spell as he gives respect and appreciates her poetic talent. But Aijaz is killed in an unfortunate accident while performing a play on the issue of demolition of Babri Masjid. His tragic death gives Astha the purpose of life. This is the turning point of her life; she becomes an activist; a painter and a woman demanding her place in her own house. "Finally she sealed herself; she shut the door, and if disturbed too often locked it. In this way a certain uneasy privacy was granted her" (157). Hemant opposes her project; her mother-in-law objects and all join together to condemn her but she is determined and thinks of her state thus:

Her mind refused to rest, roaming restlessly among the things that made up her life, her home, the children, husband, painting, the Sampradayakta Mukti Manch. Was it too much for a woman to handle; was her mother-in-law right? But why? Her children were well taken care of, she had trustworthy servants, and she had someone who cooked better than she. She had left her teaching. And yet she was chained. (*A Married Woman* 190)

She comes in contact with Pipeelika; the widow of Aijaz and develops lesbian relation with her to break from the old convention and to hit at her husband who had ill-treated her. She took revenge from him in her passion to enjoy lesbian sexuality. She didn't need him at all as all her sexual needs were fulfilled by Pipeelika. The story of Astha is a heartrending tale of married woman who is oppressed and persecuted by her patriarchal husband. She breaks all the chains of traditions and emerges as a "New Woman" of Manju Kapur. She is deeply attached with Pipeelika Khan and feels the loss of her life without her. She says:

Mechanically she changed, brushed her teeth, put cream, got into her side of the bed, pulled the sheet up, and turning to the very edge and lay absolutely still. Motion of any kind was painful for her. Her mind, heart and body felt numb. It continued like this for days. She felt stretched thin, thin across the globe. (*A Married Woman* 307)

Christopher Rollason argues thus, “The women in India have indeed their successes in half a century of independence but if there is to be a true female independence, too much remains to be done. The fight autonomy remains an unfinished combat” (23). In her novel *Home*, Manju Kapur presents again the touching story of two sisters Sona and Rupa. Sona is married to the eldest son of Banwari Lal, who is an oppressive patriarch. He is a cloth merchant. Rupa is married to a poor government servant. This is the story of the rich and the poor married sisters and about how marriages can alter equations with the individuals within and outside of society. Nisha is another important woman character in the novel who is the daughter of Sona. Nisha is not allowed to marry the boy she loves as her lover belonged to the lower caste. But unfortunately she develops eczema and the parents fail to get a boy for her as nobody is willing to marry her. Nisha is under acute depression and starts teaching in a school and later on she starts her own business of readymade clothes called *Nisha Creations*. She becomes successful in the business world to the chagrin of her family. They pressurised her to get married and at last she had to submit to their will. Soon she becomes the mother of twins. Her marriage ruins her dream to become the most successful business woman in the world. Her business suffers when she becomes pregnant. Manju Kapur writes thus:

Nisha didn't say that *Pooja's Creations* was probably occupying the space of a baby. Strange how distant she felt from it. Her workshop was a dream away, with the baby kicking inside her; she felt no regret, no sadness, only a faint nostalgia mediated through the immensity of her belly. (*Home* 334)

Nisha feels restless during her pregnancy but her Masi tells her, “You know, beti, you can always restart business. You have shown a flair for it. But this time with

your baby, this will not come again” (333). Marriage is important for a woman to get a respectable place in this society and motherhood gives her true respect and status. A woman is supposed to sacrifice her aspirations and ambitions after marriage. She is supposed to become a faithful and loving *Bahu* and a good mother. She should sacrifice all her comforts for the welfare of her family. As Kapur comments:

Ten months after Nisha’s marriage, twins were born. One girl, one boy. Her duty was over-God had been kind, however hard it was to believe; the mother-in-law sitting next to her held the fragile boy in the lap. Just like the grandfather, she murmured; the more robust girl lay balanced on her mother’s knees, eyes shut, cradle cap stuck to her scalp. Nisha clutched her daughter tightly to her breast. Her milk began to spurt and stain her blouse. She quietly adjusted her palla and looked up. Surrounding her were friends, relatives, husband, babies. All the time she thought, all mine. (*Home* 336)

The plot of the novel *Home* is focused on the life and family of Lala Banwari Lal who is a typical patriarch of Indian society deeply rooted in dead tradition and customs. He rigidly believes in the joint family. He had two sons; Yashpal and Pyare Lal and a daughter Sunita who is married. Yashpal falls in love with Sona who is intolerable to his rigid mother. She expresses her discontentment thus, “She would prefer eating poison to allowing her son to marry a girl of his choice” (9). She argues that the girl might have done magic on her son. She wouldn’t bring any dowry to her. She is jealous of the arrival of a new female in their home. She wails and calls the girl a witch.

Sona is the most persecuted married woman in the novel. She couldn’t conceive for ten years and became the victim of bitterness of her mother-in-law. When Sona and her Mataji are alone in the house as all had gone to attend Sunita’s funeral, she says: “What can you know of a mother’s feelings? All of you do is enjoy life, no children, no sorrow, only a husband to dance around you” (18). Sona has to swallow all these indignities and humiliations of her traditional rigid mother-in-law. She feels disturbed inside and a sense of desperation, dissatisfaction and emptiness surrounds her:

She tried to calm herself, closing eyes to concentrate on the favourite image of God, the little Krishna...please, I am growing old, bless us with a child girl or boy, I do not care, but I cannot bear the emptiness in my heart. (*Home* 18)

All attempts to teach Nisha the traditional values of the family of Banwari Lal go in vain. Nisha emerges as a free and liberal woman in her married life as she ventures into her business world. In the family of Banwari Lal, there is a change of power from one female to the other. Sona, who had enjoyed the power, shifts it to her daughter-in-law Pooja. *Home* novel beautifully expresses the power struggle between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law. Sona is another woman character leading a restless life being barren. She is childless even after ten years of her marriage and she feels jealous of her sister-in-law Sushila who is blessed with two sons. Manju Kapur has dramatised the psychic restlessness and mental anxieties of Sona. At last Sona discloses the news of her pregnancy to Rupa, "Rupa received the information stoically. Her mind leaped to the little baby in her sister's arms" (32). Rupa is presented as a modern woman not much concerned about children. She ignores the news and is seen busy with her own world of pickles and chutneys thus:

She was now supplying pickles and sweet chutneys to local restaurants as well as shops, and had hired a woman to help her. She wished to own a car, she wished to go on more holidays and above all, she wished she had enough money to buy out the tenant who was causing her husband and father-in-law much tension. More than an elusive baby, Rupa focused her attention on financial success. (*Home* 32)

Manju Kapur in her novel *Home* discusses the issue of gender identity synonymous with motherhood. Rupa is not serious about giving birth to babies and revolts against the traditional concept of motherhood given by Manu of motherhood. Rupa epitomises a break from the traditional concepts of motherhood as she is satisfied with her business and money values. Manju Kapur highlights the change which is inevitable with the growth of modernism through the character of Rupa. As Sudhir Kakar observes thus:

The absolute and all encompassing social importance of motherhood, the ubiquitous variety of motherhood myths and the function of offspring in rural and religious life-all give to motherhood in Indian culture a particularly inconvertible legitimacy. (Kakar 67)

Neither she nor her husband feels like outcasts in a culture that views women negatively for not having children, nor do they have any regrets about not having kids. Nisha emerges as a new woman as she rejects the traditional approach to life thus: "Uncle, this is the modern age...what harm is there if first we got to know each other? How can I tell him to send his family, if I don't know him first" (*Home* 201).

The Immigrant (2006) of Manju Kapur is focused on mother-daughter and man -woman relationships. Nina's mother is a typical Indian mother who is in search of an educated husband for her daughter. After the death of her husband there was no choice left but to move to the house of her grandparents in Lucknow. Nina and her mom struggled and suffered for years before Nina got a job and settled in Delhi. Nina resents the meekness of her mom and is anxious to get the security of life:

The grandmother resented the daughter-in-law's existence. Nina resented her mother's meekness, the mother put up with everything because Nina's security depended on her patience. Nina obsessively imagined the day when the two of them would leave this small town hell. Seven years and six months to find this room in Jangpura Extension, and bring her mother to live with her. In Delhi Nina hoped her mother would lead a fuller life; in Delhi her mother imagined a husband could be found who would give her darling the home she deserved. (*The Immigrant* 6)

In Jangpura, both women try to get their identity as they manage without the help and support of any male in the family. But the quest for a home and a husband continues. Nina's mother becomes desperate to find a suitable groom for her daughter as she wants to be relieved from the social responsibilities. Manju Kapur describes the plight of women thus:

Both of them were fated to lead lives devoid of men. The mother had fallen through the bad karma of marrying a prince who would die young. The only thing she had to look forward to was her daughter's marriage, after which she would suffer more loneliness. At least the mother had hope. She had nothing. (*The Immigrant* 7)

Nina could see the mental anguish of her mother thus: "Every glance at the sad pathetic face, pinched cheeks, badly dyed hair, eyes blinking behind spectacles marred her happiness. She had been her mother's life since her father's death, now that life was going 10000 miles away" (102). Nina's marriage with NRI leaves her mother lonely. She is far away from her mother and this separation is the root cause of her sufferings. When she hears of the death of her mother she is broken in the mind and the spirit. She was sure her mother must be worried about her happiness in her last moments of life. She bursts out in pain thus:

She was sure her mother's last thoughts had been of her. Had she felt alone, frightened? She had been found dead by her old friend, the landlady. Around and around her heart these images circled, that hand reaching for a glass of water, those feet groping for their slippers, the glass slipping and breaking, the brushing against the jug as the body sank back on bed. (*The Immigrant* 321)

Her mother had promised her that she would once visit her after the birth of her baby in Halifax but this remained an unfulfilled dream of her mother. Nina feels guilty as she couldn't do anything for her mother who died alone in her rented room. Nina becomes alone too in Canada and she begins to take independent decisions in her life separating from Ananda. The immigrant suffers from the loss of identity as he swings between two cultures. She suffers from cultural displacement and lives with fractured identity. Ananda suffers from displacement and cultural dislocation in Canada. He fails to end up this predicament and remains in double identity. Manju Kapur observes thus: "These immigrants live in their minds. Outwardly they adjust well. Educated and English speaking, they allow misleading assumptions about a heart that is divided" (120). Ananda develops the colonial mind and justifies

whatever had happened with Nina at the airport. His mind is so rusted that he fails to distinguish between moral and immoral. He justifies the western values and condemns the Indian values, "Some people get into false marriages in order to gain entry, or stay on; they were just making sure that was the case. If it had never happened, there would be no need for such questioning" (109). Nina feels sick and desperate as her living in Canada doesn't give her any peace of mind. She recollects the golden days that she had spent in the company of her mother in India. Her marriage with Ananda didn't give her moral and spiritual satisfaction. She suffered alienation and rejection as her life had been loveless and charmless. She develops an irritable behaviour and this type of deviant behaviour is common among the immigrants. She shows her anger and aggression thus:

Rags fill her, why were people so silent about the humiliation they faced in the west? She was a teacher at a university, yet this women high school pass can imprison her in a cell-like room, scare her and condemn her. Though she was addressed as "maam," but no respect is conveyed. (*The Immigrant* 106)

Nina has to live with her fractured identity in Canada. She feels that she is always humiliated by the Canadians. They treated her as inferior but she was an educated girl. She was a reputed teacher in an Indian university but her status in Canada was inferior. She was black and all the whites hated her. She expresses her agony thus, "I am the wrong color. I came from the wrong place; of all the passengers the only one not allowed to sail through immigration, made to feel like an illegal alien"(107). Nina is puzzled about her identity and expresses her agony thus:

At present all she is, is a wife, and a wife is alone for many hours. There will come a day when even books are powerless to distract. With the house and its convenience can no longer completely charm and compensate. Then she realises she is an immigrant for life. (*The Immigrant* 122)

Nina suffers from the sense of loss in Canada. She feels that she had lost everything. She feels sick of the empty streets of Canada and expresses her agony

thus: “I miss home, I miss a job, and I miss doing things. I feel like a shadow. What am I but your wife?” (237).

The novel *Custody* of Manju Kapur also deals with marriage and relationships and the plight of women characters. Shagun’s mother plays a vital role in the plot of the novel. The plot begins with the life of a beautiful couple Raman and Shagun. Raman is “a corporate man with a strong belief in hard work” (2). Shagun is “a pretty daughter-in-law” (23). Shagun had married Raman in an arranged marriage having complied with all the formalities of the society. Manju Kapur writes, “Raman and Shagun’s marriage had been managed along standard lines, she the beauty, and he the one with brilliant prospects” (14). Before marriage Shagun had different ambitions but after her marriage there is total transformation in her life. She becomes a proud mother of a son and a daughter. But in her inner heart she looks depressed and dissatisfied as she is forced to lead a dull and monotonous life. When Mr. Ashok Khanna entered in her life there was a spectacular change in the behaviour of Shagun. Ashok, the boss of Raman was an Indian boy brought up under the impact of western culture. When he saw Shagun for the first time he fell in love with her attractive appearance. Shagun too responded to his love and came under the spell of Ashok breaking the barriers of the traditional society and following her ambition of sexual liberty. Raman spent most of his time in his multinational company day and night. He had no time for Shagun who felt lonely all the time chained in the four walls of the house along with her children. She is a beautiful and gorgeous woman and often gets many offers to do modelling but her marriage with Raman had clipped her wings. She was forced to be stuck in the kitchen. Her marriage had become a “Lakshman Rekha” for her but in her lust for her sexual liberty she crosses the boundaries of patriarchy and develops intimate relations with Ashok. She enjoys liberty and adventure in her intimacy with Ashok; he encourages her to express her views openly and appreciates her talent. Manju Kapur depicts her selfish character thus:

Shagun the cheating spouse –the spouse with the looks is at best one-dimensional character. She is a negative selfish character, the one who stepped out on her husband and her marriage. To make matters worse

it's her husband's boss that she steps out with. Shagun came across as a brash, spoilt and selfish person. (*Custody* 3)

The mother of Raman always doubts the sexual intentions of Shagun. She had been watching her movements anxiously as she observed, "How stunningly beautiful she is, realised frightened Mrs. Kaushik, can such a woman really be a homemaker?" (22). But Raman was not concerned and didn't take the warnings of his mother seriously. He simply told his mother that everything was normal and there was no cause of worry. Shagun lived in a separate house after her marriage, which Mrs. Kaushik never liked. Raman's mother always feared that Shagun had constructed a wall between mother and son and says, "A pretty daughter -in-law, the son dancing attendance on her, and an angry disappointed mother such a situation would lead to daily tension" (23). When Raman's mother comes in contact with the family of Nandan she feels very upset and feels restless. She says, "The happy togetherness in her brother-in-law's family showed Raman's mother how much she was missing and she took this knowledge badly, blaming her daughter-in-law for the loneliness she felt" (25). Raman tried his best to convince his mom that "Not every couple were Nandan, so willing to adjust" (25). Raman had no problem with Shagun but his mother doesn't like the sexual flirtations of Shagun. She says, "Their eyes were like those of a lynx, their gaze tried to pierce your being, their interference in your life knew no limits" (34). Shagun feels stifled in the oppressive environment of Raman's house. She writes letters to her mother and tells her of her alienations and plight through her letters living abroad. Shagun is an obstinate daughter as she is passionate to enjoy her sexual liberty and acts like a new woman of Manju Kapur. She wants to break the chains of oppressive patriarchy and revolts against her oppressive male hegemony. She decided to seek divorce from her husband Raman and is ready to bear the consequences. There is a dirty process of divorce between Shagun and Raman and the battle to take custody of the children. She says, "How convenient it was to have her mother as a postbox" and decided to take her own independent decisions. When Shagun leaves Raman for Ashok, her mother feels sorry for Raman as she is sick of sexual liberties enjoyed by her daughter. Mrs. Sabharwal fails to control the activities of Shagun who insists in seeking the divorce from Raman. Mrs. Sabharwal

conveys her agony to daughter as she is worried about her children. She warns of the wrath of society as she says, “Shagun, I couldn’t sleep all night. What will happen to you? To the children? And Raman? His family is everything to him” (40). Shagun is very blunt and independent. She gives a blunt answer thus, “Mama, stop going on it is hard enough as it is. Am I to stay married with Raman because you love him so much?” (40). Raman develops a chest pain when he comes to know the sexual relations of his wife with Ashok. But Shagun is least bothered and goes on expressing her passionate love with Ashok and divorces Raman and goes to her lover Ashok and marries him expressing her new liberal consciousness. Raman marries Ishita who is given the custody of Roohi as the court gives the custody to her. Ishita is medically unfit to become a mother but she turns out to be the real mother of Roohi. Shagun gets the custody of her son Arjun but loses Roohi to Ishita. Thus the novel deals with the complications of marriage and relationships and the issue of divorce. Shagun emerges as the “New Woman” who breaks the chains in her quest of her happiness in her married life.

Brothers (2016) was her last novel dealing with the theme of gender issues. The plot is dedicated to bringing up gender sensitive topics as Manju Kapur is raising the women’s question. Briefly, the novel is the story of two brothers, their search for power and status. Manju Kapur has made the home a place where women may feel safe. The novelist has followed the paths of Indian women’s movements to map out how their lives and actions evolved over time. Tapti Gaina emerges as the major woman character oppressed by gender discrimination. She is an attractive and intelligent woman but she is plagued by self-doubt. Her struggle to break from the tyranny of old customs of society is very interesting. She confronts all the societal pressures boldly and fights for her liberation. The span of the novel is the period from 1930s to the 2010s and Manju Kapur gives the comprehensive changes in the social structure of society of India. Women are seen struggling to end the injustices and discriminations oppressing them since ages. The plot deals with the themes of child marriage, purdah system and widow remarriage. In the novel the first generation of Gulabi and Mithari is burdened by the evil of child marriage and oppression of women as Kapur writes, “Virpal and Mithari, both children of village

sarpanches, had been six and five when they married, immediately after the ceremony the bride returned to her parent's home to wait out the years until puberty" (72). Gulabi who is the wife of Dhanpal belongs to the same era and is always haunted by her fears of divorce from her husband. She doesn't want him to go to war as she wouldn't like to be a widow. She begged him not to go to war. But Dhanpal is bound by his duty and says, "This is war, there will be fighting" (79).

Manju Kapur has depicted the plight of women living in the society as they are haunted by the plight of widowhood. Gulabi's psychological anguish is depicted who is haunted by her fear of widowhood. Kishen Singh who was the son of Virpal dies after a few months of his marriage. His wife, Guddo leads a tortured life as the widows were not allowed to remarry. Men like Himmat and Dhanpal take advantage of her loneliness by saying things like "in her shapelessness she was no different from the covered figures in his village, yet she managed to move him in an unfamiliar way" (123). Widowhood had been the curse in the Indian society as they would often become the victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. The life of a widow is miserable as each widow feels wrecked. She is depicted as fragile, fighting to save her honour in Indian society. Manju Kapur has depicted the miserable condition of a widow thus:

As the young wife, she lay paralysed by desolation. From now she would be deprived of the protective presence that stood between her and the world. Her life was over, they said. Where does one go, how does one behave if one's life is over? This was the lesson she had to learn. (*Brothers* 114)

Tapti's mother, Mrs Ahlawat is also a widow in the novel. She plays a very significant role in deciding the future of Tapti Gaina. Vina Mazumdar comments thus:

The revival of the women's movement in the late 1970s brought new dynamism and directions of women studies. Issues of violence-domestic and social, sexual exploitation in old and new forms;

identification of complex structures of domination and their reassertion in new forms. (Mazumdar 44)

The plot of the novel is focused on the theme of marriage as the union of Himmat and Sonal is pivotal in the plot. Sonal becomes an important step in his political movement. The novel is an illustration of traditional and contemporary types of exploitation; he married Sonal after forcing his child bride to divorce him. Tapti is presented as the modern woman. Himmat plans her marriage to Mangal; his younger brother. Tapti is independent and aware of the rights of women and about the emergence of women empowerment. She has two girls; therefore she is free from the pressure of providing a male successor. Without telling her partner, she uses birth control and finds happiness in her single life:

She needed space to distance herself from Mangal's desires. Like an oyster reaching to grain sand, she vowed to establish a professional life, become someone who could not even remotely be constructed as a stay-at-home breeder of male children. (*Brothers* 266)

The conspicuous thing about Tapti is her trait of self-reliance as there is an urge in her to learn and to improve her life. She is the star heroine of Manju Kapur who successfully breaks from the barriers of the rigid society. She lacks freedom when it comes to parenthood and her own body. But she has to grapple with the problems of gender discrimination. Her plight is depicted thus:

Tears gathered in Tapti's eyes. What was she, a machine that would go on producing children until she got a son? At twenty-four she felt there was nothing left of her youth, so swallowed up by babies was she, and it hurt her that he saw nothing of how she was feeling, his main concern not her, but his seed, his name. (*Brothers* 268)

Manju Kapur had read the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa who believed that the female body determines the identity of women. Bapsi Sidhwa's in her famous novel *The Pakistani Bride* deals with the oppression of women in the patriarchal Pakistani society. According to Barkty, "Women's oppression under male domination not only

consists solely in depriving women of political and legal rights but also extends into the structure of our society and the contents of our culture and permeates our consciousness” (63). Bapsi Sidhwa also explores the wounded psyche of women thus as observed by Sangeeta Ray:

Women the world over, through the ages, asked to be murdered, raped, exploited, enslaved, to get importunately impregnated, beaten-up, bullied, disinherited. It was an immutable law of nature. What had the tribal girl done to deserve such grotesque retribution? Had she fallen in love with the wrong man? (Ray 216)

Manju Kapur’s fiction is a combination of two cultures; pre-colonial and postcolonial periods of India. Her woman such as Kasturi represents pre-colonial consciousness; she is satisfied with the abuse of her female body and allows her to become the child producing machine giving birth to eleven children. Her beliefs and ideas are typically pre-colonial. But Manju Kapur was not satisfied with the creation of such docile, oppressed and slavish characters. She created Virmati, Ida, Swaranlata, Shakuntala, Astha, and Pipeelika depicting the post-colonial consciousness. All these women are deviant and rebellious as they struggle to break the chains of society. They emerge as “New Women” of Manju Kapur; educated; liberal; aggressive and independent. Virmati revolts against the patriarchal society; seeks higher education; goes to Lahore to explore a new world of love, romance and sexuality. Her sexual relation with Harish is real and is modern, symbolising the emergence of a new consciousness of women. She is not much concerned of her loss of chastity but is worried about real love; reorganisation; appreciation and for her independent space. Astha is leading a slavish life in the world of her husband Hemant who doesn’t appreciate her poetic talent and her art of painting. He is busy in his own world of the corporate sector but she breaks the chains and enters into the world of Aijaz and Pipeelika to enjoy real love and emotional satisfaction.

Astha and Pipeelika’s lesbian relation is the reality of contemporary society as it is used as a weapon to wreck the rigid patriarchy. Lesbian love symbolises the urge of women to seek sexual pleasures freely and without any male oppression. The

domestic violence in Indian society is common and lesbian love of two girls gives the freedom from any male hegemony and male oppression. Sexual violence against women is a social reality. Astha appears to be a true rebel. She has given a new definition to the struggling Indian women behind veils to come out and fight for their own 'self'. When her mother questions Astha why she left her husband, it reflects the belief of conservative Indian society which demands oppression and submission from women. Manju Kapur, like Shobha De, delves into the minds of female characters to explore the power, vulnerability, struggle, and existential misfortunes of women. She has focused her attention as a post-colonial author on illustrating human relationships—particularly those between men and women—and the workings of the female psyche. Her women carry with them a sense of loneliness, alienation, and an unsatisfied void, like lost souls fumbling in the dark. Her women are products of a contemporary society that grants women unrestricted freedom, enabling them to explore previously unexplored regions in order to find psychological fulfilment.

Manju Kapur was aware of the wave of empowerment and transformation of women after Independence. She created women suppressed by the oppressive patriarchy and women who launched a crusade against male hegemony. Kasturi was chained to the oppressive rules of the society but her daughter Virmati emerges as a "New Woman" as she does not follow the traditional norms and marries a married professor Harish. Virmati's mother Kasturi was brought up in an orthodox society where marriage was the only destination and destiny of a girl:

During Kasturi's formal schooling it was never forgotten that marriage was her destiny. After she graduated, her education continued at home. Her mother tried to ensure her future happiness by the impeccable nature of her daughter's qualifications. She was going to please her in-laws. (*Difficult Daughters* 58)

When Virmati asks her mother that she would like to go to Lahore for higher studies, Kasturi scolds her and says, "When I was your age, girls only left their house when they married. And beyond a certain age" (111). She urged her to settle down in life and get married, "a woman without her own home and family is a woman without

moorings" (111). But Virmati is the product of modernism, consumerism and liberalism; she breaks all the patriarchal shackles and leaves for Lahore to pursue her own independent life. Virmati exhibits the spirit of "New Woman" with her assertion of individuality, passion for education, love and innovation. Her women are victims of gender discrimination and domestic violence as Kapur says, "There is a man within every woman and a woman in every man. When manhood is questioned and womanhood is fragile"(13). Being a "New Woman", Astha is caught between modernity and patriarchy. She rebels against traditional male dominance and embarks on a journey for a deeper contentment in her lesbian bond. Kapur depicts the realities of married life in a conventional society, where a woman must erase her identity and give up her whole existence for the sake of others.

To conclude, Women of Manju Kapur give the true picture of the plight of women who were marginalised. They were considered as the "other" by the patriarchs like Banwari Lal. Manju Kapur raises the woman question following the guidelines of Virginia Woolf who contended that women should seek higher education to get identity in the society. Virmati, Astha and Nisha are educated women. Money is an important factor for women to get an independent identity in the society. Nisha devotes to her clothes business; Astha joins the teaching job to earn money. As a result of women's subjugation and subsequent oppression, Manju Kapur argues that the feminist consciousness is a consciousness of victimisation by the dominant males in society. She departed from the "angel of the house" theme and presented women in different unconventional situations giving new women who think independently and act independently. Manju Kapur discards the "marriage plot" and projects a heroine like Astha who is sexually active outside of marriage, she has her own identity. Kapur never allowed Virmati any assertion of power or freedom. She breaks one chain but is locked in another chain by her lover, Professor Harish. Manju Kapur observes thus, "Even years of studying and working alone do not give her the confidence to strike independent roots and grow. Eventually marriage to the man of her choice in no triumphs either" (*Difficult Daughters* 12). "Fetters of tradition" and the "Quest for identity" in Manju Kapur's fiction reveal a profound narrative of personal and societal struggle. Kapur's characters, especially her female protagonists, embody the tension between adhering to traditional societal

norms and pursuing personal aspirations and autonomy. Through her characters Kapur critically examines how the rigid constraints of tradition often conflict with their desires for independence. This thematic exploration not only highlights the oppressive nature of these societal expectations but also reflects the broader cultural shifts and challenges in contemporary India. Kapur provides a valuable insight to understand the ongoing struggle between cultural heritage and personal freedom, making a significant contribution to literature and society.

Chapter V

The World of Women and Manju Kapur's Novels

Manju Kapur is a post-colonial Indian woman novelist who depicted the traumatic life of Indian women before the partition and after the partition. Like her contemporaries such as Shobha De, Anita Desai, Githa Hariharan, and Jhumpa Lahiri Manju Kapur explores the wounded psyche of her women in her fiction. Her fictional world is populated by a galaxy of women struggling to fight with the rigid and oppressive patriarchal forces. Each of her novels moves around the themes of marriage, family issues, mother-daughter relationship, man-woman relationship, sexuality, lesbianism, separation and sexual liberty. The novels of Manju Kapur depict the dilemma of women living in a hostile Indian society. Like Angela Carter, Monica Ali, Khaled Hosseini and Bapsi Sidhwa, the fiction of Manju Kapur deals with the themes of feminism, patriarchy, sexuality and representation of the female body. Manju Kapur has authentically portrayed the suffering of the female heroines who had to deal with ruthless patriarchy while trying to find their individuality in a hostile colonised society. The repressive patriarchy, women's struggle for existence, their loss of identities, their sexuality, and their frantic attempt to flee the harsh reality of the terrible married life are the main topics of this study. The patriarchal system has a crucial role in controlling women's behaviour. There is still a harmful patriarchal power that harms women. In many areas of Indian society, women were subservient to men. Women experienced assault, domination, oppression, exploitation, humiliation, and discrimination. According to Manju Kapur, women face prejudice due to social constructs such as gender, rather than intrinsic disparities in biology or sex. "Sex is considered a fact - one is born with either male or female genitalia. Gender is considered a social construction - it grants meaning to the fact of sex. Conversely, it could be said that only after specific meanings came to be attached to the sexes, did sex differences become pertinent" (Geetha 202). Gender based discriminatory practices and exploitation was widespread in the Indian pre-colonial and post colonial society. Gender differences were promoted by patriarchal laws.

In a family where men predominate, patriarchy literally refers to the father's rule. Men—the patriarchs—are viewed as superior to women in this social and ideological construct. Sylvia Walby in her famous work *Theorising Patriarchy* calls it “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (Walby 12). Patriarchy is based on an unequal, hierarchical power structure where men control women's sexuality, fertility, and production. The dynamic and complicated nature of gender relations has changed over time as a result of shifts in patriarchy. Since societies vary in terms of class, caste, religion, geography, ethnicity, and sociocultural norms, similarly vary the practices applied to control and subjugate women. “Patriarchal ideas blur the distinction between sex and gender and assume that all socio-economic and political distinctions between men and women are rooted in biology or anatomy” (Heywood 248). Patriarchal gendering has the effect of associating males with male roles and women with female roles. In all other respects, both inside and outside the home, women are viewed as men's subordinates. That is to say, a societal system that privileges men's activity and superiority over women's passivity and inferiority defines both female and male roles. In other words, gender is perceived as a social construct that is based only on an individual's biological sex classification. This research will investigate how the female characters in a patriarchal culture endure mental anguish and psychological pain due to experiences of sexism. The female protagonists in each of the novels examined for this study experience physical and sexual abuse, harassment, and psychological dilemma. The female characters in Manju Kapur's works find themselves trapped in a male-dominated system that marginalises, abuses, and uses women. Beauty, sexual attractiveness, and subordination to male dominance are the only means of surviving in such a society. Manju Kapur is a passionate feminist attempting to portray in her novels the subtlety of themes of sensibility of Indian women; their quest for self assertion and the marginalised status of women in the oppressive patriarchal set up. Her themes include the existential crisis in the social environment where males are the rulers and the females are the ruled. Her women are swayed by problems of loneliness, alienation, pessimism and depression. Her women are highly individualistic and sensitive. Her women search for independent spaces and suffer the trauma of life. Manju Kapur excels in portraying the inner conflicts of

female gender and their struggle for freedom and quest for identity. All her women suffer from economic and social oppression; the women are silent and remain only as puppets dancing on the strings held by men. They have to adapt to their environments.

Manju Kapur wrote six novels in her lifetime and each novel is focused on the marriage and man woman relations while living in the rigid patriarchal society. Manju Kapur launches a crusade against the rigid forces of patriarchy through her women characters depicting their fighting for freedom and revealing inner pain and sufferings. However, they put them in the most uncomfortable existential circumstances in their quest to achieve independence and sexual liberation. The women encounter unfathomable mental tension, neurotic despair, and difficulties in their sexual lives. E. John aptly highlights the trapped condition of the female protagonists of Manju Kapur:

Women have been the victims of patriarchal sexual practices whether through the exploitation of the land lords, during caste atrocities, in marital rape, in state policies concerning reproduction or as bearers of violent marks political change and transformation. (John 121)

Marriage is the nucleus in all her novels and all the problems of women are linked with the marriage of women. Marriage is depicted as the social necessity in her novels; it is the “Social Force” which a woman living in the patriarchal society of India is bound to follow sooner or later. Manju Kapur has given the comprehensive aspect of marriage including child marriage; widowhood; divorces; separation and the urge of women to break from the destructive chains of marriage. Women are of two types; the traditional women like Kasturi chained in the patriarchy and submitting to the social norms established by male controlled society.

Her debut novel *Difficult Daughters* portrays the three generations of women; Kasturi, Virmati and Ida. Kasturi is portrayed as self-sacrificing, suppressed, submissive, and passive. Kasturi is an educated woman but is depending on her husband for her survival. Her desire is that her daughters would receive basic education and be resilient in the face of societal challenges, rather than rebel against

the established norms. She and her husband, Suraj Parkash, firmly believe that girls should only have a basic education to enable them to care for their families and children. In the early section of the plot Kasturi is depicted as a neurotic and depressed woman who is fed up with the pregnancies. Manju Kapur explores the inner turbulent world of Kasturi as she faces unwanted pregnancies resulting in continuous illness and trauma. The novelist comments thus, "Her life seemed such a burden, her body so difficult to carry. Her sister-in-law's words echoed in her ears." When she says, "Breeding like cats and dogs. Harvest time again"(7). Kasturi is always physically; weak and tired; her legs are always in pain and she feels headache the entire day. Manju Kapur writes about her conditions thus:

For the eleventh time it had started, the heaviness in her belly, morning and evening nausea, bile in her throat while eating, her hair falling out in clumps, giddiness when she got up suddenly. How trapped could nature make a woman? She turned to God, so bountiful with his gifts, and prayed ferociously for the miracle of miscarriage!
(*Difficult Daughters* 7)

The fiction of Manju Kapur depicts the plight of women trapped in the bog of destructive patriarchy. They struggle to break the fetters of patriarchal society and are in search of identity against the rigid societal and cultural norms. Each novel is focused on the portrayal of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships. Manju Kapur delves deep into the minds of each Indian woman and explores every aspect of their life in simple and lyrical language. She reflects the disputes of family; social and family relationships in her novels. Each novel of Manju Kapur depicts the stereotyped image of her women; passive docile; fearing and a slave to patriarchy. Manju Kapur perceives the condition of women in male controlled society. She believed that a woman had to accept her own fate. Whether her husband is a prince or just an ordinary man, she is always at his mercy and has no control over her destiny. Her novels depict the struggle of women to forge an identity in rigid society as they become rebels and break the established conventions of the society in establishing extra-marital relations. Virmati is crazy to pursue her higher education. She insists and joins the college in Lahore and soon comes in contact with a married professor

Harish. She flouts all the rigid conventions and comes under the influence of her cousin Shakuntala who is a postmodern liberal woman. Manju Kapur captures the turmoil of passion and suffering, joy and sadness, guilt and rage in her book. She delves inside Virmati's repressed and restless personality, as she is compelled to live under Harish's sexual control. Virmati turns into a psychological wreck due to the harshness of the societal structure; she tries courageously to use her independence to avoid her destined end but always feels estranged. The wife must accept her fate while the husband makes decisions based on his own convenience. Virmati comes under the influence of her cousin and she is portrayed as a rebellious woman who struggles for freedom in her quest for new identity in the rigid society to escape from the oppression and suppression of male dominated society. Manju Kapur explores her consciousness thus:

Virmati looking at her glamorous cousin marvelled at the change Lahore had wrought in her. What did it matter that Shakuntala's features were not good? She looked better than merely pretty. She looked vibrant and intelligent, as though she had a life of her own. Her manner was expansive, she didn't look shyly around from approval when she spoke or acted. (*Difficult Daughters* 16)

Virmati comes under the influence of her cousin Shakuntala and becomes rebellious and restless to break the chains of patriarchy. She feels sexually passionate and develops sexual relations with a married professor Harish and eventually she suffers alienation, frustration, and the corrosion of self. She surrenders completely to Harish who enjoys sexual pleasures with her. Harish had been fed up with his illiterate and dullard wife Ganga and finds Virmati exotic, lovely and liberal. Virmati misuses her liberty since she is far away from her relatives and parents as there was no check on her activities. She loses her path to liberation just for Harish who gives her real freedom. When she comes to know about the pregnancy of his wife Ganga she feels shattered as all her rosy dreams collapse. She decides to devote to her study B.T. from Lahore. She often persuades Harish to marry her but he puts her off and ignores her. Her situation becomes worse when she becomes pregnant with Harish.

She tries to contact him but he is not found anywhere. She finds herself alienated at such a difficult time. Her condition has been described thus:

She had murdered her sleep. How Harish's face had glowed as he murmured tasted almost the multitudinous seas incarnadine making the green one red so that she stretched –out vowel sounds seemed to contain the mysteries of life. (*Difficult Daughters* 162)

Virmati is in the trap of Harish who doesn't allow her to marry Inderjeet, a canal engineer and emotionally blackmails her. She is so much depressed that she wants to commit suicide to escape from the miseries of life. Freud observes thus on suicide ideation. Freud in his book *Unconscious* observes thus, "Death is the great Unknown and the gravest of all misfortunes". He further argues that "death is the main aim of all life" (Freud 123). Her parents pressurise her for marriage and they rescue her from the canal of Tarsikka. Manju Kapur has excavated the inner landscape of Virmati who is in the grip of acute trauma. Trauma is, therefore, a close and personal experience of a lethal event which can lead to the death of a victim or the death of its loved one. Trauma is something that transcends social norms and expectations. It hits a person hard right away, but it stays in their mind forever. Its frequency varies throughout the victim's body and psyche, but it never leaves them. Cathy Caruth aptly says:

In a catastrophic age, that is, trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures: not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others but rather, within the traumas of contemporary history, as our ability to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves. (Caruth 11)

Caruth interprets trauma in the context of cultural clash between different cultures that create psychic anguishes for traumatised victims. The only ray of happiness in the life of Virmati comes when she gets the job of a teacher in Nahan. She becomes the headmistress and gets some time to forget the ugly incidents of life. But the repeated visit of the professor brings her bad reputation in the school. She is so much sick of her life and the job that she finally decides to leave her job, her home

and school. She wishes to change her mindset and wants to seek the depth of spirituality. But it is a chance that she meets Harish's friend who helps her to marry Harish. She doesn't realise that the real troubles would begin after her marriage with Harish. She had false dreams of her married life with Harish but soon she finds herself trapped in the den of quarrels and fights. Harish's wife Ganga doesn't allow Virmati to talk or mix with the family and even she is not allowed to enter into the kitchen to make food. Virmati is treated as the "other" in the family and her heart is broken. She is considered as the second wife of Harish. When her bond is broken with her family, she is not allowed to attend her father's funeral; however her husband is accepted everywhere. Virmati becomes suppressed when she gives birth to her baby. Virmati feels that a woman has no authority in Indian society. She is under acute trauma as she is helpless and depressed. She lost her identity and is leading a lonely life. Freud remarks thus in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*:

The symptomatic picture presented by traumatic neurosis approaches that of hysteria in the wealth of its similar motor symptoms, but surpasses it as a rule in its strongly marked signs of subjective ailment as well as in the evidence it gives of a far more comprehensive general enfeeblement and disturbance of the mental capacities. (Freud 36)

Virmati's daughter Ida is born like a clean slate. She brings new life to the life of Virmati. Kapur writes, "She wants to name her Bharti but Harish calls her Ida: Bharti suggested Virmati as a name, No, but why? I thought with the birth of our country" (276). Ida denies the male dominance completely. Ida is the main narrator of the novel who lives her life as a single divorced woman. Ida fails to develop an understanding with her mother and goes to Amritsar to dig out the past of her mother. In her journey to Amritsar she realises for the first time that she is lonely and depressed being the childless and divorcee. Ida struggles for autonomy and wants to forge an independent identity in the plot. She clearly states that she will not compromise with the dull life of her mother. She is crazy about her sexual liberty and she wants to lead a freer life than her mother's in external terms. Ida hates her mother as Kapur observes, "The only thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother" (1).

She feels proud of her mother when she comes to know about the days of Lahore of her mother. Ida comes to know about her mother Virmati after her death:

You know, my mother was always sick, and Virmati, as eldest, had to run the house and look after us. We depended on her; but she was free with her tongue and her hands. One tight slap she would give for nothing. She would lash out if we didn't listen. We need to run from when she came. She was the only sister, but she acted very bossy. We were scared of her. She never rested or played with us, she always had some work. She was so keen to study, bap re, First F.A. then B.A. then B.T on top of her. Even after her marriage, she went for an M.A. to Government College Lahore. (*Difficult Daughters* 5)

She refuses to follow the command of her mom and father and wants to follow her own independent life. She was ravenous in love and wanted affection from her mother. But she had no time to express her affection, appreciation and gratefulness to her daughter. She had been in her pregnancies and couldn't realise Virmati's craving for love. It was natural for Virmati to long for the love and affection of her mother but she had been neglected and she had felt lonely in the family all the time. She turned mentally sick and found love outside the family. This was the main reason why Virmati took the hasty decision to begin her licentious love affair with married Harish. She had been looking after her brothers and sisters like the second mother. She expresses her slavish life thus:

At times Virmati yearned for affection, for some sign that she was special. However, when she put her head next to the youngest baby, feeding in the mother's arms, Kasturi would get irritated and push her away. "Have you seen to their food-milk-clothes-studies? Arre, you think there is all the time in sitting around, doing nothing? You know they don't listen to her; you are the eldest. If you don't see the things, who will? (*Difficult Daughters* 7)

Lajwanti is genuinely concerned about Kasturi when she asks her husband:

Your poor brother is going every month to Dalhousie. In fixing his wife's health he will ruin his own. All the burden of running the shop falls on you while he is away, but you are a saint and will never say anything about your two children, standing in front of that woman, and her eleven children. (*Difficult Daughters* 13)

Ida is liberal and rebellious by nature and refuses to compromise with her husband Prabhakar though Virmati argues her to be calm and agreeable in dealing with her husband. Virmati motivates her to get the child aborted and after that she never conceives again in future. She begins hating her husband and seeks divorce from him in desperation. Virmati also expresses her inner turmoil to Harish thus:

I broke my engagement because of you, blackened my family's name, am locked up inside my house, got sent to Lahore because no one knows what to do with me. Here I am in the position of being your secret wife, full of shame, wondering what people will say if they find out, not being able to live in peace, study in peace...and why? Because I am an idiot. Now you want to prolong the situation. Why don't we get married? You say your family makes no difference but still you want to continue this way. Be honest with me. I can bear anything but this continues irresolution. Swarna is right, men do take advantage of women. (*Difficult Daughters* 149)

Virmati pursues her studies and gets the degree of M.Sc in Chemistry and becomes a science teacher in a college in Lahore. Manju Kapur portrays Sahkuntala as an independent and liberal woman; defiant and rebellious; and assertive. She had a poor opinion about marriage and relationships. Shakuntala says:

These people didn't really understand Viru, how much satisfaction that can be in leading your own life, in being independent. Here we are fighting for the freedom of the Nation, but women are still supposed to marry, and nothing else. (*Difficult Daughters* 17)

Shakuntala emerges as the "New Woman" of Manju Kapur; she is liberal deviant, rebellious, anti-patriarchal and assertive. She studies, teaches and is a strict

Gandhian. She is free, frank and meaningful with her friends whose activities she reports thus: “We travel, entertain ourselves in the evening, follow each other’s work, read papers, attend seminars” (15). All these liberal ideas crowd in the mind of Virmati and soon she considers her role model and follows her style of life religiously. Virmati wants to lead the independent and liberal life of her cousin. She is anxious to enjoy the sexual liberty breaking all the traditional norms of the patriarchal society of her parents. She hates to be chained in the four walls of the house and goes to Lahore in search of her identity. She wears new modern dresses and discards her traditional kurta and salwar. She changes her perception of life and becomes modern and fashionable. She learns the tips to look beautiful and emerges as the “New Woman” of Manju Kapur. Her roommate Swaranlata also feeds her with liberal ideas. She is doing M.A. and is a part of the freedom fighter group and also the captain of the college. Virmati’s role models are Shakuntala and Swaranlata. She expresses her conflict of mind after meeting with Swaranlata thus:

Virmati stared at Swarna. What a girl! Her opinion seemed to come from inside herself. Her thoughts, ideas and feelings blended without any horrible sense of dislocation. She was committed and articulate. Would the professor want her to be like Swarna? She didn’t want to do anything that would alter the professor’s undying love for her. May be she could secretly be like Swarna from the inside. (*Difficult Daughters* 135)

In the college function Virmati is inspired by the patriotic and fervent speeches of her cousin and Swaranlata. Virmati hears Swarna's speech, which emphasises the importance of women's involvement in the independence cause. Swarna insists Virmati to join her but she has no personal freedom and strength to join them. She expresses her helplessness thus: “I wish I could come Swarna, but I’m married” (252). Swarna argues with her but Virmati is scared of the wrath of her husband. Virmati refuses to join the group.

Ganga is another depressing woman of Manju Kapur, the first wife of Harish. She is a simple and unromantic girl; loveless and unadventurous, mediocre and

illiterate. Harish hates her and comes in contact with Virmati who excites him by her sensational personality and bold ideas. She is simple, a caretaker and a mother. She doesn't take part in any discussion and through her Kapur depicts the plight of uneducated women. Harish says:

I do what I can for everybody, however to satisfy all of you, I am supposed to live my life tied to a woman with whom I have nothing in common who can't even read. Who keeps a Ghungat in front of my friends? (*Difficult Daughters* 209)

Gradually Virmati comes to know the reality about Ganga and her relationship with Harish. The parents of Ganga were traditional as they didn't give significance to education. They believed that the job of a girl is to give children to her husband and to do the household chores. Education is insignificant in the life of a girl; it is the sheer wastage of time and money. Harish's marriage with Virmati gives a psychological jolt to Ganga who feels depressed for in spite of her dedication to her husband she was neglected and her husband cheated on her. The second marriage of her husband shatters her completely; she is always fighting and becomes irritable and aggressive when she looks at Virmati. Kapur describes her plight thus:

From washing his clothes to polishing his shoes to tidying his desk; dusting his precious books, filling his fountain pens with ink, putting his records back in their jackets, mending his clothes stitching his shirt and kurtas, hemming his dhotis, seeing that they were properly starched. Ganga did it all. (*Difficult Daughters* 216)

Women like Ganga are not allowed to take independent decisions as they are tied to the rope of patriarchy. She is dominated by male hegemony as Ganga is not allowed to wear things of her choice. She says, "He doesn't like blue. I wear nothing blue" (42). Ganga has to wear only that dress liked by her husband. Her sacrifice fails to earn her husband's love and attention. Manju Kapur creates a flawless documentation of the emotional upheaval, ceaseless weeping, unwavering quiet, apathetic beliefs, fascination with demise, and turmoil experienced by Virmati and Ganga as they navigate varied issues of isolation and emptiness. A new identity is

announced by Virmati, who appears with a prophetic voice. However, even in this place, she struggles with her restlessness and constant sense of nostalgia for the past. Women of Manju Kapur desire to construct a new universe for themselves where they are free to breathe and live because their existential effort to open up fresh possibilities for her is not succeeding. The novelist examines the shattered psyche of a married woman playing her responsibilities as wife in a ridiculous domestic drama, demonstrating her journey towards transformation. Manju Kapur explores the contemporary mindset of women who aspire to leave the world of despair and passivity behind and enter their own glamorous, dynamic world. They no longer want to be treated like puppets on a string, bent to meet the expectations of others. They like to breach the law in order to experience freedom, adventure, and dignity and in their struggle they suffer alienation, anxiety and depression. They make choices and commit social blunders and suffer trauma and despair. Their struggle results in their loss of self as they become sick and morbid, moody and psychic wrecks. They do discover a new world where they are free to breathe and live in isolation confronting all the absurdities of human existence. Kapur's women characters open new paths and love to be bulldozed by the external societal and patriarchal forces. This may be called a new Indian existential approach of the Indian novelists. The writer also sympathises with other women characters that have made their lives tragic to fulfil the demanding roles of wives and mothers. Manju Kapur portrays the life of an ordinary Indian woman with humble backgrounds, trapped between the burden of home and work place, child bearing and nurturing, struggling with age old culture and tradition, which projects woman as a weak sex.

A Married Woman (2002), of Manju Kapur explores the psyche of married women who are confronted with the problems of life. The main heroine in the novel is Astha who is depicted as a married woman. Manju Kapur explores the complexities of marriage; the disappointment in love and marriage and the loss of identity of the heroine. She marries Hemant who is MBA and is employed in the corporate sector. Astha is a woman of aesthetic tastes as she loves poems; writes poems and painting. She loves to write poetry and Hemant appreciates her thus in the beginning, "You certainly have a good imagination, you put things well" (Kapur 42).

This little praise makes her happy and she says, "Her husband was going to encourage her writing. Maybe she could become poetess as well as a painter. Her life was opening up before her in golden vistas" (42). Once back from honeymoon, Astha is engaged in her domestic chores like a devoted wife of Hemant. She gives birth to her daughter Anurdha and feels very happy as her family is complete but Hemant turns out to be a rigid Indian prude and wants her to give birth to a male child. She is surprised to observe the typical patriarchal nature of Hemant and observes thus: "I want to have my son; I want to be as much a part of his life as Papaji is of mine" (61). Hemant expresses his strong wish to be the father of a male child, "Of course we will have a son, and if we don't needn't stop at two" (61). In the beginning Astha is on good terms with Hemant who allows her to join the teaching job to pass time. He has been caring and loving as he gives her every facility at home. But this love and care are artificial. Soon his real self is exposed. Hemant becomes anxious and demanding and his intellectual weakness comes into the limelight when he criticises Astha's poems and restraints her from publishing her poems: "If others read those poems, they might actually think you weren't happy" (81). Astha is not aware of her creative potential. Astha is an enduring and sacrificing wife of Hemant who underestimates her and ignores her. She is married to an educated man to lead a happy life after her marriage with a man who is educated in Oxford. Her parents believe that "if parents die without getting their daughters, they will be condemned to perpetual rebirth?" (1). They never give her liberty to Astha and this is evident when she says, "Astha was brought up properly, as befits a woman with large supplements of fear" (1). Astha accepts Hemant as guided by her parents. But after marriage she discovered that a married woman is nothing but an unpaid maidservant in the family. She has to perform multiple roles; she has to give birth to children; she has to raise the children and her husband is engrossed to make money. She is feeling suffocated in the stifling environment of the house. She is trapped in the family structure sacrificing her own small demands; "always adjusting to everybody's needs" (227). She has become merely a sex object for Hemant. She has described her position in the family like "A willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day and an obedient mount" (231). She feels humiliated and this leads to terrible stress and frustration of Astha who is broken in body and in spirit. Betty Friedan observed

in her book *The Feminine Mystic* thus: “For woman, as for man, the need for self-fulfilment-the autonomy, self-realization, independence, individuality, self-realization –is as important as the sexual need” (Friedan 282).

In her early life, she is considered as the burden on her parents but soon she thinks of love and imagines the presence of a young boy who would hold her in his arms. She imagines a handsome young man who would love her and she would enjoy the sexual pleasures with her. In her teenage, she falls in love with Rohan. She thought of him day and night and enjoys the sensation of love and sex in her imagination. Soon she gets lost in the world of Rohan and enjoys sexual pleasures with him. But this love relationship with Rohan finished within a month as Rohan left India and moved to Oxford for higher studies. Then entered Hemant in her life and she married him to settle down. Astha is neglected by Hemant who is busy all the time in his corporate world. She feels lonely and rejected; she feels segregated. Being lonely and frustrated, she comes in contact with Aijaz who is a social activist. He appreciates her and gives her proper respect. He helps her to come out of her claustrophobic existence. She is happy as all her paintings are displayed in an exhibition and sold. She contributed her money for a social cause and gets moral satisfaction. Astha devotes her creative talent in painting and goes to Ayodhya to see the seeds of harmony there. Hemant had given the verdict representing his rigid patriarchy thus, “As my wife, you think it proper to run around, abandoning home, leaving the children to servants” (188). A procession is organised to establish harmony in the city and the procession was organised by *The Street Theatre Group*. Astha comes in contact with Pipeelika; the widow of Aijaz. She feels great love and sympathy for Pipeelika and a powerful love bond between them begin.

Astha was neglected by her husband Hemant and she had felt lonely and depressed. Pipeelika is also feeling alienated from her society and is forced to live alone after the death of her husband. Manju Kapur depicts the lesbian love to express the impact of western culture on Indian women. Astha and Pipeelika emerge as new women of Manju Kapur who are rebellious and deviant in their behaviour breaking the traditions of patriarchy. Astha’s new relationship becomes a challenge for Hemant and her family. Astha and Pipeelika both love together and a deep emotional

bonding develops between them. Astha's marriage is on the verge of disintegration but soon Pipeelika leaves India to pursue her study abroad and the link of love is broken. Astha has to come back home to her family. Kapur explores various issues emerging out of social disorder in the nation. She depicts the status of Indian women who are regarded as the holy cow. In acute frustration Astha observes thus: "Finally she steeled herself, she shut the door, and if disturbed too often locked it. In this way, a certain uneasy privacy was granted her" (157). Astha found her uneasy privacy. It was only an "uneasy privacy" that she found in her home. But her lesbian relationship with Pipeelika opened new doors to explore her new identity. She enjoyed a new space in the world of Pipeelika for the first time. In the company of Pipeelika Astha felt free and lively but "When she was with Hemant she felt like a woman of straw, her inner life dead" (287). This emotional bond of Pipeelika and Astha explores a new dimension of love and romance to her. They crave for each other and a new dimension of physical love and sexuality is established. This lesbian relationship made them enjoy the independence of life; it helped them to break from the traditional convention of rigid patriarchy. In this relationship Aijaz is at the centre as both Astha and Pipeelika fell in love with him. He encouraged Astha to pursue painting and dedicate her life to a higher purpose. Astha fell in love with him, but he tragically died in a fire. Her tragic death brings Astha and Pipeelika close to each other as they explore a new world of love; sex and romance. As their meetings are frequent, Astha "started to fantasize about touching her, imagining her hair between her fingers" (225). Both these women have constructed their own unique world where no man, except the memories of Aijaz, is allowed. Astha for the first time explores the real meaning of love and fulfilment through their lesbian relationship:

Maybe this is what good marriages are like. To be able to express what comes into your head, and know it will be understood as you mean it. To be more yourself because all of you are able to live in a way the other responds to. (*A Married Woman* 260)

Long cherished dream of Astha is fulfilled in the lesbian love of Pipeelika. She gets an independent space for the first time in the world of Pipeelika. She fears

that it might be taken away as she says, “ Why can’t I live here forever with her, forget I have a life outside this room, this bed, these arms, this mind that sees me the way I am and loves me still” (261). She gives a shock to Pipeelika when she goes back to her world of Hemant to shoulder the responsibilities. She confessed to Pipeelika thus, “My whole life is a fabric of lies; you are the one true thing I have” (242). The novel *A Married Woman* is the heartrending story of an Indian woman trapped in the bog of patriarchy and is bound to suffer the alienation, depression, and restlessness. Manju Kapur has depicted their anxiety, discomfort, defiance and discontentment. They suffer because of their troubled relationships. And they suffer from negativity and in desperation are bound to find the new world of lesbian love to overcome the depression of life. Restlessness inspires them to enjoy absolute liberty to break the chains of patriarchy.

Manju Kapur’s novel *Home* (2006) deals with the problem of marriage and interplay of human relations while living in the family. The title of the novel is symbolic of typical patriarchal living of the Indian married women in their home. The plot of the novel is focused on the married life of two sisters Sona and Rupa. Sona is wedded with the eldest son of Banwari Lal; the famous cloth merchant of the city. In the early years, Rupa is happy with married life as she is looked after by her father-in-law and husband but she suffers from her limited income as her husband is the government servant. She expresses her agony and says, “We are cursed Didi, what to do? It is our fate. Perhaps it is just as well we don’t have children that man will trouble us life after life” (1). Sona is disliked by her mother-in-law who is prejudiced against her from the day first of her marriage. She expresses her venom thus:

The girl must have done black magic to ensnare him; otherwise, would he go against his own family after seeing her face for a second? Tell him not to bother leaving the house. I myself will disappear to make way for the wretch he prefers before us all. (*Home* 16)

Sona had been leading a traumatic life for so many years as she had been barren. Manju Kapur has highlighted the plight of Indian woman who is forced to

live in a home without children. She expresses her psychological agony thus in tormenting language:

She shared the general belief in her bad Karma. Let her present misery expiate the sins of her past life. All she wished was to leave this world; it was only her son who kept her back. Here she clutched Vicky to her bosom, her face contorting with tears and tenderness. The boy remained there passively, while Sona looked on. She, know children were recompensed for everything. (*Home* 17)

Sunita, the daughter of Banwari Lal is killed in an accident in the kitchen and it was a great tragedy in the family. His wife is extremely upset but Sona is unconcerned. Her mother-in-law hates Sona and humiliates her, “You think sleep is possible? What can you know of a mother’s feeling? All you do is to enjoy life, no children, no sorrow, only a husband to dance around you” (18). Sona is feeling lonely and dispirited, enduring all the indignities in her home. She is considered unlucky woman by all in the family but all her efforts were in vain as she didn’t conceive in her life. Sona suffers from the trauma of life as she expresses her agony thus:

Here Sona pressed her hands to her breasts; they felt good, large and full, but their weight only increased her wretchedness. How could she accept they would never be used for more than one purpose? She tried to calm herself by praying, closing her eyes to concentrate on her favorite image of God, the little Krishna, looking so naughty, so mischievous, so adorable- please, I am going old, bless us with a child, girl or boy, I don’t care, but I cannot bear the emptiness in my heart? (*Home* 19)

Sona gives birth to Nisha after ten years of her marriage and the plot centers around her. Manju Kapur depicts the sufferings of the Indian woman who struggles to get a husband of her own choice. Nisha falls in love with a boy belonging to the lower caste but her parents oppose her affair and don’t allow her to marry the boy she loved.

This novel of Manju Kapur is an interesting study of the traumatic experiences of the women characters. All the women characters are the victims of cultural trauma and psychological trauma. Patriarchy, gender and caste lead to trauma in the life of women characters. Freud and Breuer joined together in their investigation of traumatic dissociation and used the term “hysteria”. Freud contended in 1896 that “a precocious experience of sexual relations...resulting from sexual or person is the specific cause of hysteria not merely an agent provocateur” (Freud 54). Freud, Breuer and Janet joined together and made experiments to explore the causes of hysteria. They came to the conclusion that the traumatic experiences produced an altered state of consciousness. The plot of the novel depicts the conflict between two sets of characters. Banwari Lal is a shrewd and hard working cloth merchant representing the traditional society of India. Her granddaughter represents the new currents of transformation as she rejects the traditional lifestyle. Interestingly, she wants to subvert the old system. The new generation represented by Nisha believes in renovation and modernisation. The emergence of the jean culture and stitched salwar forces the family to adapt to the new wave of fashion. The sons are struggling in the business and the daughters are confined to their family home. All become victims of envy and jealousies and are conducting experiments in making pickles or in pursuit of higher education. *Home* is the novel containing the elements of kindness, compromise, trauma, and struggles of women characters in search of new identity. Two important incidents; the sudden and unexpected tragic death of Sunita and the entry of Vicky in the family bring clashes in the family. Yashpal’s passionate love with Sona further leads to the loss of peace in the family. Pyare Lal has arranged marriage. The death of Banwari Lal leads to family tensions; the shop is modernised and the house is changed into flats. The business is fragmenting and this has an impact on all the characters. Nisha is worst affected by these forces of change. *Home* becomes a site of manipulation, repression and sexual abuse. The novel depicts the traumatic stories of weddings; barren life of married women; sexual repression; male domination; deaths and arranged marriages; cooking and bickering of women of the joint family. The traumatic plight of Nisha is described thus by Aamer Hussein:

Nisha, the seemingly docile central character of *Home*, claims her space halfway through the novel when she demands an education. But life at university offers little more than cribs to help with her exams. More significantly, she has a clandestine romance with the boy who acquires them. But this is India, and the boy is unsuitable. Nisha has to find an alternative occupation, putting to use her entrepreneurial genes. From these few bricks, Manju Kapur creates a novel full of bright spaces and dark corners; her telling is brisk, unsentimental and capable of turning domestic drama into suspense. (Hussain 2)

Nisha is oppressed by her parents but she demands education and struggles to get social awareness. In this novel women get identity and status on the basis of their power to produce children. Men think that a woman is perfect only when she gives birth to children. Sona is humiliated because she is barren. Rupa and Sona worry when they don't become mothers. Infertility is the main source of trauma in the lives of women. The recollection of the past memories is a source of trauma in the lives of women characters. Manju Kapur observes thus:

Sona presented for form's sake that Vicky was being spoiled, in her time nobody had heard of tutors. She didn't raise too many objections though, because in her heart he was grateful to him for her children. That she couldn't bear to see him was another matter. Her womb had opened when he came. (*Home* 65)

The traumatic situation is felt by Rupa when she expresses her love and affection for Nisha:

As Nisha grew, Rupa bestowed careful love on her, mentally standing before the tribunal composed of her sister and brother-in-law defending her against one another. The business that had occupied her attention so successfully seemed more meaningful when she was Nisha peering into the pickle jars, or testing the sweet and salty aam paper drying in the sun under an old muslin sari. (*Home* 91)

Sona cannot enjoy the domestic felicity being subjected to the terror of the miseries of life. Her life becomes meaningless due to her harrowing past. Manju Kapur highlights her miserable and traumatic condition thus:

The misery Sona felt at Raju's performance was exacerbated on parent-teacher day. Every year he did a little worse, belying his promises and her hopes and expectations. This perpetual disappointment drove to violence. (*Home* 97)

The character of Nisha is a case study of trauma. She is always in turmoil as she suffers from the failures of love; life and sex. She tries to escape from the terrors of life but the haunting past puts pressure on her wounded psyche. Manju Kapur depicts her trauma thus:

The forlorn misery that was Nisha's burden increased with every step made in the direction of her brother's marriage. Had her parents not been so determined to reject Suresh, she could have been reveling in attention as the groom's only real sister, instead of feeling a source of apology and justification. She wished she could disappear into some hole till the wedding was over. (*Home* 249)

Manju Kapur's novel *The Immigrant* is another study of the psyche of the wounded women characters. The plot deals with the dislocation of culture dealing with thirty one year old unmarried girl, Nina who lives with her widowed mother in Delhi. Manju Kapur introduces her thus:

Nina was almost thirty; Friends and colleagues consoled her by remarking on her radiant complexion and her black hair, but such comfort was cold. Nina's skin knew it was thirty, broadcasting the fact at certain angles in front of the mirror. Her spirit felt sixty as she walked from the bus stop to the single room where she lived with her mother. Her heart felt a hundred as it surveyed the many years of hopeless longing it had known. (*The Immigrant* 1)

Nina is married to a Canadian dentist Ananda belonging to Halifax. Manju Kapur explores the cultural trauma of Nina who feels alienated and depressed in the alien land. Nina feels uprooted; feels cut off from the roots of her homeland and finds emptiness in her life. Manju Kapur writes thus about her stress:

Now Nina longed to put her burden down and escape into a life similar to the one she had known years ago. Daily this longing grew more intense, and each time came it fed into it, until she began to think she was no longer fit for this city. (*The Immigrant* 61)

The past memories haunted her and soon became the cause of her trauma. Trauma is, therefore, a close and personal experience of a lethal event which can lead to the death of a victim or the death of its loved one. Trauma is something that transcends social norms and expectations. It hits a person hard right away, but it stays in their mind forever. Its frequency varies throughout the victim's body and psyche, but it never leaves them. Nina feels uncertain in the colonial world; she gives her home and her country to build a new life. The consequences of this change are disastrous as she struggled to adapt to her new diasporic life. Her entire universe is called into question. Her marriage is threatened by the truth, and she starts to suffer in her new, precarious life in Canada.

Nina suffers from the loss of identity in the alien land of Canada and this dilemma becomes the root cause of her psychological trauma. Nina is forced to have a double identity as she is forced to perceive the world through the consciousness of colonisers. Nina suffers from social invisibility and feels inferior. She had brought many saris with her, but the colonial mindset prevented her from wearing them. In order to reflect her colonial identity, she started dressing in jeans rather than a salwar, suit, and sari. There is a total change in the personality and perspective of Nina and she develops a fresh perception of love, life, and sex and moves ahead imitating the colonial people. She gets a new identity in her new land and struggles to adjust his personality according to the new culture. She suffers from the dilemma as she is rooted in her Indian culture and her new identity of the western culture gives her psychological anguish as she recollects the Indian festivals like Holi and Diwali. She

feels a sense of loss as she admits: “At home it was much clearer; I feel so lost here” (229). Nina expresses her sense of loss in the touching words thus: “Feeling lost is inevitable in a new place and if you are a woman without a job, far away from your own friends and family, it must be doubly hard” (229). Nina doesn’t enjoy peace of mind in the alien land as she is unable to get any fixed identity. Her appearance and look remain the same as where she was born. She cannot escape the personality of her native land. In Canada, she gains new qualities of new cultures to enrich her personality but her identity is fragmented and not pure or absolute. It is a mixture of two cultures as she fails to change her fundamental appearance. She tries her best to look Canadian imitating the whites but she remains an Indian girl longing for her old happy days of university teaching in India. She confesses thus her loss:

Everything is very strange; I used to be a teacher, in fact I taught for ten years before I came here. And I do nothing. I have not been able to conceive. Am I locked into stereotypical expectations? I don’t know.
(*The Immigrant* 229)

Nina lives with the sense of loss and with a sense of strangeness and uncertainty. She tries her best to change her but in the new world she fails to get the proper recognition and appreciation of her talents. There is a conflict in her mind and she enters into her sexual adventures in entering into new sexual relations with Anton to escape from the boredom of Ananda’s sexual life. Manju Kapur writes thus:

Nina and Anton found it convenient to have sex on Wednesday afternoon...By now Nina had grown to love the room in which Anton lived. The walls were painted black, so was the furniture...The room was in perpetual shadow, blurring the distance between the night and day, between sex and fulfilment. (*The Immigrant* 276)

Nina’s identity swings between two cultures; she has to live with the fractured identity. She makes various experiments to enjoy peace and bliss of life but she fails miserably. She fails to become the mother and this guilt intensifies her trauma. Her husband Ananda remains busy in his own world and Nina is locked in a room spending time in reading books and sexual dysfunction becomes the main

cause of her strain. She had dreams of becoming a mother and being parents of a child but it didn't happen. She had to change her living by adopting the new culture. She had to confront many difficulties living alone and missing people of her own homeland, missing her mother and her independence, and other things. Manju Kapur writes thus: "These immigrants live in two minds. Outwardly they adjust well. Educated and English speaking they allow misleading assignments about a heart that is divided" (Kapur 120). Nina thinks that a new world would give her new joys; material comfort and security of life but all her expectations and dreams are shattered when she experiences the dilemma to fulfil the expectations of both; the new society and his own family. Manju Kapur observed thus:

In the new country they work lengthy hours to get entrance into the system; into society, into establishing a healthy bank account. Years pass like this, ungrudged years because they can see their all sustaining dream of a better life coming true. (*The Immigrant* 120)

Being an immigrant Nina is threatened by the loss of identity; she may fanaticise something and often she gets frightened. She thinks that if she fulfils those expectations then she may become a part of the new culture. She takes these demands as the parameters of her future success. She breaks up from her husband for her future success. Manju Kapur depicts the traumatic experiences of Nina who explores the immigrant consciousness at the end of the novel and makes the historical statement thus:

Perhaps that was the ultimate immigrant experience. Not that any one thing was steady enough to attach yourself to the rest of your life, but that you found different ways to belong, ways not necessarily lasting, but ones that made your journey less lonely for a while. When something failed it was a signal to move on. For an immigrant there was no going back. When one was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home. Pull your shallow roots and move. Find a new place, new friends, and new family. It had been possible once, it would be possible again. (*The Immigrant* 334)

Manju Kapur's novel *Custody* (2011) again depicts the plight and harrowing experience of women trapped in the bog of Indian patriarchy. The plot of the novel is set in thriving middle class colonies of Delhi and Manju Kapur explores the challenges of marriage; divorce and the uncertainty of life. The very title of the novel *Custody* has symbolic meaning describing the plight of the children who are bound to suffer after the breakup of the marital relationship. Raman is a hard working marketing executive at a global drinks company. Shagun is a wonderful wife of Raman conspicuous of her vivid beauty and her two loving children; Arjun and Roohi. Her marriage was arranged following standard lines and according to the patriarchal traditions; "he the one with brilliant prospects" (14). Shagun's hopes and aspirations and ambitions were different before marriage but after marriage with Raman she is fully transformed. She becomes proud and pretentious in her behaviour; sexy and liberal and always in search of new relationships. She is fed up with the routine of her husband Raman who is busy all the time in his corporate sector. The novel deals with the new theme of love and divorce of the couple; the plight of the children and the litigation to get the custody of children after the divorce. The dissolution of marriage is common in India. Manju Kapur had excavated the truncated life of Shagun who confronts the realities of life after her divorce. Interestingly Shagun represents beauty and Raman has a brainy vision of life. He is rational and money minded. God blessed Shagun a good earning husband and two loving children; her family is complete but the modern women are dissatisfied in their craze for novelty and adventure. Manju Kapur observes thus:

Being pregnant plunged her into the centre of all attention. She didn't throw up once, her skin glowed, her hair shone, her husband called her Madonna, her mother said she was fruitful like the earth, her mother-in-law looked proud and fed her almonds and ghee whenever they could get near her. The birth of a boy added to her glory. She had gotten over the duties of her producing smoothly. (*Custody* 15)

The problem of Shagun is her lust for liberty and change as she is not satisfied with the present life. She loves liberty and sex adventures and doesn't want to be bound. She says, "It's not that. I will be thirty. Arjun is just becoming

independent. I don't want to start all over again. Always tied to a child, is that what you want?"(17). Shagun comes under the influence of Ashok "whose reputation was based on his ability to get the best out of people, even the most dispirited campaign appeared more lively when he blessed it with his attention. That was why his salary was in the astronomical region of fifty lakhs a year" (23). Raman is on his business tour most of his time leaving his wife alone feeling alienated and distracted. Everything changes when Shagun comes in contact with Ashok. Raman is crazy to know the secret love affair of his wife with his boss. Raman feels the distance growing between him and his wife; He begins doubting his wife as he expresses his agony thus, "He found himself phoning home at odd hours, asking the servants more questions than necessary. As he began to find out how much she vanished after her children returned from school, he accosted her" (45). Raman is a typical Indian husband as he engages the detectives to spy on his wife to find the truth of her sexual liberties with Ashok. Manju Kapur depicts the male hegemony when she writes, "Raman might resort to violence against his wife, hard to imagine, but still yesterday it had also been hard to imagine her daughter going astray" (37). Her mother is extremely disturbed as she confronts her, "Why do you want to destroy my peace? You have to tell me who he is. What kind of person will take you away from your husband, such a good man?" (37). Shagun was in Raman's house just because of her children. She is in conflict and suffers acute anguish. She wants to enjoy sexual liberty with Ashok but at the same time she is worried about the future of her children. Shagun knows that her mom has great regards and love for Raman; they were like love birds but she had crossed the barriers of love and sexuality. For the first time she gives vent to her turbulent heart to her mom thus:

Shagun wrapped her arms around her, whispered how sorry she was, really she hadn't wanted to do anything to hurt her husband, she too was afraid. But now these things had happened, she was already more deeply in love than ever in her life, more ecstatic, more miserable. She knew what her mother felt about Raman, but she herself didn't care if she lived or died. (*Custody* 39)

The women of Manju Kapur are stress ridden and are mentally sick. They are deviant characters and suffer from the sickness of mind. Their stress and struggle give them headaches. It is a symbol of torture as they suffer incessant conflicts in their life. Astha, Nina, Virmati, Shagun and Nisha suffer from headaches because of their inner turmoil and conflict in the family. Ashok has spent an independent life but when he proposes Shagun to marry her she resists saying: "How will they like it when they grow up and realise their mother is a divorcee" (81). Ashok hates this attitude and says:

What is there to realise? This is why I hate this fucking place. This observation with what others think. By the time your children grow up the whole world will have changed. Certainly this benighted country. Things are changing fast as it is. Ten years ago you couldn't get a coke, a pizza or burger here. Things are moving fast. Traditional versus modern values, individual versus society. I just want to take you away from here. This narrow social set-up is all you know- that is why you are afraid. But it will be fine...we only have one life to live and everybody wants to live it the best way they can. (*Custody* 81)

Shagun is sick of her motherhood as it chains her; she cannot enjoy sexual pleasures as she confesses to Ashok, "If only I were not a mother, how easy it would be. To leave him, to live with you, just be happy" (84). Ironically Ishita is suffering because of her infertility. Her married life is on the verge of collapse as she couldn't conceive. She had an arranged marriage and "from the day of her wedding she had thought of this family as hers, revealing in the togetherness, sharing, and companionship. Now instead of love all around her, there would be rejection" (61). She is given the best treatment in the hospitals but she fails to conceive and thus the entire family begins to hate her, "It didn't take long for the loving atmosphere around Ishita to grow up so thin that it became hard for to breathe" (66). Her husband Suryakant stops talking to her and she is driven mad suffering from the psychological trauma. Manju Kapur writes, "Last night, he moved into his parent's bedroom. She felt degraded, a non-person, certainly non-person. He was determined there should be

nothing left between them” (69). Ishita feels uprooted from her own house for having blocked her fallopian tubes. It was a sin not to conceive so she was divorced. Manju Kapur has depicted the multidimensional faces of the life of women. Shagun is burdened with the motherhood; Ishita spends five lakh rupees to get pregnant and Shagun has to fight litigation to get the custody of her children. She gets the custody of her son Arjun and Raman gets Roohi in custody by the court after litigation.

Raman tries his best to persuade Shagun not to destroy the family and asks for her forgiveness and says “It’s not your life alone. Think of the children. By now this plea was beginning to sound like a cracked record. Think of children, the children. She didn’t want to think of them” (95). Manju Kapur has depicted the truncated life of her women characters that destroy their family in the quest of love and sex. It is the story of love, sex, liberty and divorces and of the disintegration of family. The plot is social and at the same time it is a crusade against divorces; true to the universal angst of modern marriage.

Manju Kapur’s novel *Brothers* (2016) explores the dynamics of a family of Tapti Gaina and the plot is packed with the elements of betrayal, treachery, murder, struggle for independence, and ambition. It is the touching story of two men; Tapti’s husband and his brother. The novel is set in the tumultuous period of emergency. Two brothers struggle to fulfil their ambition; treachery, and heartache within the dynamics of family. Both the brothers are engaged in their power struggle and their mutual conflicts. Dhamini reviews the novel *Brothers* and observed thus:

The title of the book may well be *Brothers* but make no mistake, this book is about a woman, and it is the lives of women, especially the unnamed ones who serve as silent, veiled foils to their husbands and sons, that remain with you long after you have finished reading.
(Dhamini 1)

In the beginning two brothers are presented struggling in their quest for individuality but soon Manju Kapur presents the theme of gender identity and multiple sisters as they each confront the existential realities. In most of her novels Manju depicts her educated women of the middle class struggling for emancipation

and empowerment. They long to enjoy freedom outside home and seriously attempt to free themselves from the clutches of their patriarchal husbands and children. They are in dilemma whether to surrender to the patriarchy or to revolt against the established norms of the family. The plot of the novel *Brothers* unfolds the story of four women, Gulabi, Mithari, Tapti Gaina, Mansi and Mridula who depend upon each other for survival in the harsh patriarchal structure. Male hegemony oppresses both men and women. She depicts the way that both sexes attempt to emotionally dominate one another before succumbing to fate and destiny. She had depicted the transformation of Jat culture giving background of student politics and party politics. The plot unfolds the power struggle of brothers in Lalbanga near Ajmer; there are historical episodes of Freedom Struggle; Emergency and the emergence of political assassination. The Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Himmat Singh Gaina is murdered by his own brother Mangal Singh Gaina. His wife Tapti Gaina explores the new identity of her life. She is depicted as intelligent; confident; daring and politically aware of her rights but in spite of all these traits she suffers victimhood. The plot is epic and is divided into four sections. Tapti, Virpal, Himmat and Mangal have covered a period of eighty years from 1930 to 2010. The novel is a saga of three generations-grandfather, son and grandchildren.

Virpal and Dhanpal moved in different direction as they are engaged in the power struggle. Virpal reaches to Join Gandhi to revolt against the British rule. On the contrary Dhanpal joins the British army to fight the Germans in Africa. Virpal is disappeared and Dhanpal shoulders the burden of the family. Virpal is sent into jail. Mithari and Gulabo play vital role as they are like slaves who are dedicated to produce sons to carry on the Gaina tribe. Himmat singh Gaina is the eldest son and Mangal is the younger son. Dhanpal devotes his life to educate Mangal and to help him to grow. He runs away from him in his youth leaving his child wife Mithari. She has to suffer the alienation and is leading the life of a married widow for twenty five years. He returns to the village and takes away his wife to Ajmer and gives her love, comfort and affection. Her son, whose name was Kishen Singh, dies in mishapening. Guddo, the widow of Kishen Singh suffers the stroke of paralysis. Himmat is in sexual relationship with the widow of Kishen Singh. They meet at the

staircase. She doesn't prevent him, "Each tear was now an invitation to enter her life, no matter how sad the process. That was what he wanted that access, that invitation" (*Brothers* 132). Manju Kapur has depicted the plight of a widow in the touching and the lyrical language thus, "What happiness can I possibly have? He feels if he had lived in the time of the great Hindu reformers. He was willing to marry her; he had read of widow marriages in the history books" (133). Guddo's sudden disappearance is analysed thus by Virpal, "She is a woman who has not stepped out of the house even once. What could have driven her out? Is it courage or desperation? Was it a pregnancy? A pregnancy when there had been no sign of open in her three years of marriage" (138). Himmat feels guilty since he had enjoyed sexual pleasures with her. Her sudden disappearance leads to loneliness and depression of Himmat as he is the cause of her pregnancy. Himmat fails to trace Guddo and says, "What use would any description be when her face was covered" (139). Manju Kapur has portrayed the women characters of Mithari, Gulabi and Guddo who are silent sufferers in the novel but the active role is taken by Tapti Gaina who is the main heroine of the novel. There has been a feeling of jealousy between Himmat Singh and Mangal. Tapti is worried about Himmat's heinous murder by her husband Mangal and her daughters are also under stress to know about the murder. The news of the murder of CM is reported in the newspapers and is telecasted in all the TV channels. Mangal is lodged in Tihar Jail. The sorrow and traumatic plight of women is linked with the political changes and death of men in politics. Tapti's plight is depicted thus:

Tapti looks at their tears, thinks of her own bouts of crying and wonders how she is ever going to be a support to her children. Yes, he had no right to do this to them. At sixteen and eighteen, her girls are on the threshold of life, a threshold now marked by malevolent and blood. (*Brothers* 10)

Himmat Singh had entered into the marriage alliance of Mangal with Tapti despite her poor background. He married her with full hope and love. Mangal would run the cement factory and survive despite the fire accident and financial loss. He starts a petrol pump and buys a large tract of land near the petrol pump. Tapti gives

birth to two girls. He insists to have the male baby but she declines to conceive again. She dreams of her daughters and is ambitious to make them capable and independent. In her words: "At twenty four she felt there was nothing left of her youth, so swallowed up by babies was she, and it hurt her that he saw nothing of how she was feeling, his main concern not her, but his seed, his line, his name" (268). Tapti and Mangal have continuous rifts over the issue of the new pregnancy. He had wanted a companion but Tapti had undergone tubectomy. He suspects her and says, "How do I know what you do, where you go, how you manage? I only know that if there is no trust, there is nothing" (272). Manju Kapur has depicted the oppression of the male hegemony and has highlighted the trauma of Tapti who is always oppressed by her husband. Kapur comments on her situation thus:

What about her husband? He had loved her so in the beginning, never stopped saying he wanted her to live like a queen. But when the factory began to run into difficulties, she studied for the civil services, passed the exams and grew in the bureaucracy. She had missions of her own. She was substantial but to have a career had never ceased to be an assault on Mangal's sensibilities. (*Brothers* 36)

Often Tapti thinks that her husband often tried to please her, "It was not easy given his background for a man to try and please a man but she knew he had struggled through those constraints. Maybe it had been a mistake to marry out of her class and station-but what to do" (37). Her mother hated Mangal and said that men like Mangal deserved to be killed. But Tapti is fully trapped in marital status and has no chance to escape it. She feels guilty for motivating Mangal to murder his brother. Mangal feels jealous of his brother who keeps him away from the centre of influence of power and importance. He is bitter and places all the blame on his brother when his projects go wrong. The subsequent resentment and envy lay the groundwork for the eventual fratricide. Mangal is in rage as he wants to lead an independent life; he expects his children to leave schools; he wants Tapti to leave the job and should live with him in the factory. He needs massive cash to run the cement factory but no help comes to him from Himmat. He doesn't like Tapti to talk to Himmat as he says, "You are always talking about him. He is like a maggot in your brain or what?"

(292). He doubts her chastity and asks, “Where was she spending at nights?” (323). Mangal was emotionally and mentally shattered and he lost balance of his mind. “She can chatter, laugh, flirt, she can display her body, she can demand attention, love, caress, promises all unfettered” (327). Ram Partap finds Tapti flirting with Himmat; he goes to warn her mother who says:

She was not making moral judgment. That was between Tapti and her conscience; she was only concerned about her safety. Suppose her husband got to know? Had she not heard of honour killings? Her daughter must break it off at once; it cannot lie outside the house. It is too risky. What will people think, your daughters, if you are found out? Today Ram Partap and tomorrow anybody? (*Brothers* 331)

Manju Kapur has highlighted the double consciousness of Tapti which results in the tragedy. She plans to meet him for the last time and feels the burden of guilt on her psyche as she says, “Her double life lurked in the shadows of her mind, burdening her with its secrets” (341). Himmat is now the Chief Minister and it is difficult for him to meet her. He thinks, “Why should personal happiness be denied one who was so successful? But this sacrifice was the price he had to pay. It was a stream to be constantly watchful; to guard against his own instincts when they were together in front of people. If it was risky for her; it was thousand times risky for him” (344). The climax comes when Mangal goes to the locker to take his gold to mortgage and finds a white gold chain with a diamond locket. He becomes furious and asks Tapti who confesses that it was gifted by Himmat. She confesses thus, “I had gone alone. He had called me. Wanted to discuss some business, I thought it was to help you” (365). The discovery of diamond sends him into a trance and he becomes mad to take revenge from Himmat who had cheated on him and had destroyed his business. “His suspicion, the turmoil of his soul had deprived him of all certainties. He hadn’t wanted to make a mistake with such a lethal weapon” (368). He had uncovered the truth about his wife. He says, “Otherwise he would have gone on living a lie, the falsehood increasing with the passing day” (369). He loads his pistol and decides to take revenge from Himmat. He wanted to kill his wife Tapti also to punish her, “One for him, one for her. Why should he go and struggle against

his destiny, hoping for success, for a legacy to leave behind” (370). Mangal is haunted day and night by the thought of the naked body of his wife in the bed of another. He shoots Himmat in the public meeting when “Not many present know that a brother has shot a brother” (376). Ironically Tapti is in distress for the dead and is not worried about her husband Mangal who is locked in the Tihar Jail. In this novel Manju Kapur has depicted the scenes of love, jealousy, success, power politics and infidelity and revenge. Tapti suffers from agony as she is punished for her sexual liberty and liberty like other women of her novels. Each woman in Manju Kapur is given the liberty to enjoy sexual freedom but each of them suffers from psychological ailments such as trauma, depression and loss of self.

To conclude, Manju Kapur's novels offer a rich and insightful understanding of the female experience in contemporary Indian society. Kapur's works, such as *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, *The Immigrant and Home*, vividly depict the struggles and triumphs of women as they navigate the complexities of traditional expectations and personal aspirations. All novels of Manju Kapur are about the patriarchal oppression of women who are forced to conform to the rigid patriarchy and those who dare to transgress the code and suffer the loss of self. They experience trauma in their life. She uses multiple themes to depict the loss of identity and status of women in the pre-colonial and post-colonial Indian society. She has depicted her “New Women” to depict the changing culture of Indian society. Her characters are emblematic of the broader societal challenges faced by women, highlighting the tension between conformity and the pursuit of individual identity.

Conclusion

The thesis entitled “Socio-Cultural Study of Manju Kapur’s Fiction: A Mertonian Perspective” has undertaken a comprehensive socio-cultural study of Manju Kapur's fiction through the perspective of Robert K. Merton's sociological theories. By applying Merton's concepts, particularly his theory of anomie, this research has provided a deeper understanding of the societal and individual conflicts depicted in Kapur's novels. Her characters, often caught between traditional cultural expectations and the pursuit of personal aspirations, embody the disjunction between societal goals and available means to attain those goals. It has resulted in a rich, multifaceted analysis of her literary work, emphasising the interplay between individual aspirations and societal structures as depicted in her novels. This literary analysis has delved into Kapur's novels, examining her themes, characters, narrative techniques, and stylistic elements. This includes a focus on recurring themes such as gender roles, family dynamics, education, and social mobility. Kapur's characters often navigate complex social landscapes, providing a fertile ground for analysis through a socio-cultural perspective.

By applying Robert K. Merton's sociological theories, particularly his theories of anomie and deviance, the study has gained a unique perspective on Kapur's work. Merton's theory of deviance, which includes concepts like conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion, has been used to analyse how Kapur's characters respond to societal pressures and norms. The research has focused on gender studies. Kapur's novels often highlight the struggles of women within a patriarchal society. By aligning this with Merton's views on societal expectations and individual aspirations, the study has provided a deeper understanding of how traditional and modern gender roles are depicted and challenged in her works. The feminist perspective is crucial in assessing the portrayal of women and their resistance to societal norms. Cultural dynamics are also a major area of focus. The study has analysed cultural conflicts and transformations within Indian society as reflected in Kapur's fiction. This includes examining the effects of modernisation, globalisation, and Western influences on Indian culture and social structures. By using Merton's

concepts, the study has explored how characters in Kapur's novels either conform to or rebel against these cultural changes.

Education and social mobility are recurring themes in Kapur's novels. The research has also explored how education is portrayed as a means of social mobility and empowerment, identifying the social and cultural barriers that female protagonists face. This analysis has provided insights into the broader societal implications of education and the challenges of achieving upward mobility in a stratified society. Family and social relationships have also been analysed in this research. Kapur's novels often depict complex family dynamics, including marriage, parent-child relationships, and family structures. By applying Mertonian perspective, the study has examined how societal expectations influence these relationships and the individual behaviours of the characters.

Manju Kapur is an internationally acclaimed novelist of pre-colonial and post-colonial periods as she raised the woman question following the feminism of Virginia Woolf, Beauvoir, and Kate Millet. Like Shobha De, Anita Desai, and Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur deals with the question of the fractured identities of women of India. She had keenly observed marginalising and dehumanising of women, gender discrimination, displacement, oppression and the dilemmas of the women living in India. She depicted the vital issues such as predicaments of the colonised women, their alienation and displacement caused by the oppressive forces of patriarchy and sexualities. Manju Kapur wrote novels such as *A Married Woman* (2002), *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *Home* (2006), *Custody* (2011), *The Immigrant* (2008), and *Brothers* (2016) depicting the intricate interplay of tradition and modernity, societal expectations, and individual aspirations within the evolving landscape of Indian society.

Manju Kapur created a galaxy of women characters in her novels such as Kasturi, Virmati, Ida, Sona, Nisha, Shagun, Peeplika, Astha, Nina, and Tapti Gaina to depict the female consciousness. Her women struggle against the oppressive and rigid patriarchy and make hegemony as each of her women is rebellious and struggles to escape from the fetters of patriarchy. The quest of identity of each

woman character leads to her loss of self; the result of the quest for sexual liberty leads to her psychological ailments such as depression, frustration, trauma and alienation. Virmati thinks of committing suicide to escape from the male hegemony of her lover professor Harish who is married to his wife Ganga. Astha is fed up with the loneliness and finds solace in the company of Pipeelika and enjoys lesbian love.

Marriage is the nucleus of each novel of Manju Kapur. Each woman character is trapped in the patriarchal tradition of marriage. It is depicted as a social necessity. Through the theme of marriage Manju Kapur explores social issues such as child marriage; widowhood; the problem of remarriage; supremacy of patriarch; denial of higher education to women; stifling environment and marginalisation and sexual abuse. Each woman character of Manju Kapur struggles and revolts against these oppressive social code of marriage. In this study the theoretical concepts of Robert K. Merton are applied in explication and analysis of the novels of Manju Kapur to explore the various adaptations of the characters of Manju Kapur to the societal expectations and social norms. Manju Kapur is known for her novels that often explore the lives of women in contemporary Indian society, highlighting their struggles against patriarchal norms and their quest for identity and independence. In this study, the analysis of her characters' responses to social norms, reflecting Merton's concepts has been done. Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* initially conforms to societal expectations by preparing for an arranged marriage and fulfilling traditional roles. However, her later actions show a shift from this conformity. Eventually, Virmati pursues higher education and enters into a controversial relationship with a married professor. While she still seeks societal goals of love and success, she adopts unconventional means to achieve them. Astha in *A Married Woman*, who embarks on an extramarital affair, seeks fulfilment and personal identity outside the conventional boundaries of marriage. Shakuntala adheres to societal expectations of women's behaviour but without any genuine belief in or pursuit of the prescribed goals of marriage and family. Ida, Virmati's daughter, embodies retreatism through her detachment from societal expectations and her reflective journey into her mother's past, signaling a withdrawal from societal pressures. Nina rebels against traditional expectations by seeking a career, marrying an NRI (Non-Resident Indian), and

eventually confronting the challenges of a cross-cultural marriage on her own terms. Manju Kapur's characters often navigate the tension between individual desires and societal expectations, each responding to anomie in ways that highlight their struggles for autonomy and identity within a restrictive social framework. This new perspective gives the study a new dimension in critical study.

The first objective of the study was “To critically analyse the theoretical ideas of Robert K. Merton and establish their relevance to Indian society.” This objective is fulfilled as in the chapter entitled “The Concepts of Merton: Issues and Perspectives” all the major ideas of Robert K. Merton had been explored and analysed. All the major concepts of Robert K. Merton such as deviant behaviour; anomie, conformity, rebellion, innovation and ritualism have been discussed. In the Indian context, women often face unique challenges that stem from deeply ingrained social norms, economic inequalities, and systemic gender biases. Merton's concept of anomie and its adaptations can be critically analysed to understand the various ways women in India respond to these societal pressures and strains.

The second objective of the study was “To study the fiction of Manju Kapur in the light of the ideas given by Robert K. Merton” and this objective is achieved in the chapter entitled “Robert K. Merton and the Fictional World of Manju Kapur.” In this the prominent sociological ideas of Merton are applied on the novels of Manju Kapur. Each novel of Manju Kapur is analysed from this perspective. Change of the culture and emergence of new values are religiously applied in the analysis of the women characters of Manju Kapur. Merton argues that individual strain is found in most of people and this leads to the individuals to revolt against the established system. He observed in his *Social Change in the Modern Era* (1986) that change is inevitable as the new vision and perceptions of individuals disturb the existence social structure. The change is the law of nature and the history of human civilisation is the result of social change. Women of Manju Kapur struggle to forge a new identity in society in their passion to break the rigid chains of society and thus disturb the moral and social order. They don't know they are bringing new social structure disrupting the old institution of marriage. In her novel *Difficult Daughters* Virmati is a deviant woman who launches a crusade against the forces of rigid patriarchy and

expresses her deviant behaviour in breaking the traditions of marriage and develops sexual relations with the married professor Harish. In *Married Woman* Astha is a middle class woman; she has everything children; loving husband but she finds satisfaction in the lesbian relationship with Pipee; the widow of Aijaz. Astha falls in the trap of lesbian love of Pipeelika in her craze to enjoy the real sexual relations outside the married life. In *The Immigrant* Nina betrays her settled husband and it becomes the main cause of their alienation and sufferings. Ananda suffers from the loss of identity as he swings between two cultures. He suffers from cultural displacement and lives with fractured identity. Nina suffers from the sense of loss in Canada. She feels that she has lost everything. In her novel *Home* (2006), Manju Kapur presents again the touching story of two sisters Sona and Rupa. Nisha is another important woman character in the novel who is the daughter of Sona. Nisha is not allowed to marry the boy she loves as her lover belonged to the lower caste. Sona is another woman character leading a restless life being barren. She is childless even after ten years of her marriage and she feels jealous of her sister-in-law. The novel *Custody* of Manju Kapur explores the disintegration of Shagun and Raman's married life as Shagun expresses her sexual liberty in developing relations with Raman's boss Ashok in spite of the warnings of her mother. Shagun and Raman's relationships are based on their deviant behaviour. The deviant behaviour of Shagun leads to the dissolution of marriage bringing to her mental disorder and chaos in her life. Ishita suffers from barrenness and is divorced by her husband. *Brothers* (2016) novel of Manju Kapur was the last novel that dealt with the theme of gender issues. The social order is disturbed by Tapti Gaina who develops sexual relations with the brother of her husband Mangal. She has special liking for Himmat Singh who becomes the Chief Minister of the state but her husband Mangal is suffering from acute financial crisis. He takes the gun and kills his own brother in a public meeting and is thrown into the Tihar Jail. The deviant behaviour of Tapti and her attempt to enjoy sexual liberty outside marriage results in chaos and disruption of the settled social structure. She suffers the plight of widowhood because of her passion for liberty. Manju Kapur created her "New Women" characters who break from the traditions of marriage and patriarchy in their quest for sexual liberty expressing their deviant behaviour and anomie of mind. They are restless and crazy; Virmati, Aatha,

Pippee, Shagun, and Tapti Gaina express their restlessness, dissatisfaction with the existing social order and family structure; the traditions of marriage and hence they become adventurous to revolt against the existing moral order.

The third objective of the study was “To understand the disjuncture between the socially approved means and culturally accepted goals as portrayed in Manju Kapur’s fiction.” In the chapter entitled “Fetters of Tradition and Quest for Identity” all the six novels have been investigated with the focus on the discordance between the socially approved means and cultural goals and the struggle of the women to forge their independent identity to pursue their objectives of life. The novels of Manju Kapur deal with the familial bond, middle class mentality, issues related to marital life and sexual life. She has depicted the struggles of women in life as in all her novels women are always under stress because of patriarchal despotism and gender inequality. Manju Kapur created her middle class women trapped in the rigid patriarchy suffering from the terrors of male hegemony and who are anxious to launch a crusade against the existing social structure. They are always under a dilemma to confront the harsh social realities. They are forced to face the recurring problems of love and sexuality; they are motivated to revolt against society to forge a new identity in society. They fervently fight for the freedom of Indian women from the fetters of dead and rigid rules and norms of Indian society. Marriage is the nucleus of her novels and all women are trapped in the culturally accepted dead traditions of traditional marriage, child marriage and widowhood. The rise of education and the impact of Western values of change inspire them to bring a new social order. Each novel of Manju Kapur gives the heartrending tale of women who break from the accepted and established traditions in their passion to carve a new existence for them. Their quest for identity often leads them to suffer alienation and mental disturbance as their sexual liberty outside the rigid marriage traditions bring them into clash with the traditional husbands. Virmati of *Difficult Daughters* breaks the tradition and goes to Lahore to pursue higher education. Here she falls in the trap of sexual relationship with Professor Harish who is married with his wife Ganga. Now loving a married man is an expression of deviant behaviour of a woman. The society doesn’t tolerate it and Virmati suffers untold miseries because of her quest for

identity and in her spirit to break the established social structure of the society. Astha leads a settled life with her corporate husband but she feels lonely when most of the time he is on the business tours. She comes in contact with the widow Pipee and indulges into lesbian relationship breaking the norms of the social structure. Shagun flouts the traditional morality in *Custody* establishing the sexual relations with Ashok Khanna; the boss of her husband Raman. Her sexual perversion leads to the dissolution of married life. Tapti Gaina's moral perversion results in making her husband the killer, who in desperation kills his own brother Himmat. All women in the world of Manju Kapur are restless, deviant, rebellious, adventurous, sexual, and even lesbian. In this chapter, all novels are explored to comprehend the cause of discordance of the social structure and the establishment of new moral order.

The fourth objective of the study was "To examine the complexities leading to strain and deviant behaviour" and in the chapter entitled: "The World of Women and Manju Kapur's Novels" an exhaustive analysis is made to achieve this objective. Like her contemporaries such as Shobha De, Anita Desai, and Jhumpa Lahiri, Manju Kapur explores the wounded psyche of her women in her fiction. Her fictional world is populated by a galaxy of women struggling to fight with the rigid and oppressive patriarchal forces. Each of her novels moves around the themes of marriage, family issues, mother-daughter relationship, man-woman relationship, sexuality, lesbianism, sexual liberty, and separation. Like Angela Carter, Monica Ali, Bapsi Sidhwa and Khaled Hosseini, the fiction of Manju Kapur deals with the themes of feminism, sexuality, patriarchy, and objectification of the female body. The misery of the female heroines who had to deal with ruthless patriarchy while trying to find their individuality in a hostile colonised society has been authentically portrayed by Manju Kapur.

Manju Kapur exposes and criticises the malevolent attitude of men in their treatment of women after marriage. They are denied the basic rights to education and status in the family. Marriage is a social necessity as each mother in the world of Manju Kapur is aspirant to get her daughter married at an early age. In her novel, *Married Woman* the mother of Astha argues thus, "When you are married our

responsibilities will be over. Do you know the Shastras say if parents die without getting their daughter married, they will be condemned to perpetual rebirth?" (1). In her novel *The Immigrant* Nina's mother is anxious to get a husband for her educated daughter. She articulates her anxiety and restlessness thus:

The major topic of conversation in the last eight years had been Nina's marriage-who, whom, where, how? From where could fresh possibilities be unearthed on the eve of her thirtieth birthday? The lack of these, reflected in her mother's dull, mournful eyes, was what she was going home to. (*The Immigrant* 3)

Kasturi in *Difficult Daughters* feels that "it is the duty of every girl to get married: (Kapur 15). In *Home* Sona gets married into a rich business family and Rupa is married into a middle class family. In her novel *Custody*, the mother of Shagun is worried about the marriage of her daughter Shagun and teaches her, "Do what you like after you marry" (11). Interestingly, mothers in all her novels are impatient to get their daughters married and are anxious to feel unburdened. This is the basic social law and each mother is supposed to follow this law religiously. For the Indian parents, marriage of a daughter is not an occasion of ceremonial celebration but a social practice rooted in the ethos and couture of society. This chapter is devoted to investigate the nature of oppressive patriarchy; rigid moral code and the treatment of women as the "other" in Indian society. They are oppressed and are subjected to domestic violence, sexual abuse, and sexual molestation. They live to suffer the oppression of male hegemony. Kasturi of *Difficult Daughters* is reduced to a child bearing machine. She gives birth to eleven children and her eleven pregnancies shatter her body and the spirit. She is in constant pain but her husband is indifferent to her physical and psychological anguish. Manju Kapur explores the inner turbulent world of Kasturi as she faces unwanted pregnancies resulting in continuous illness and trauma. Her daughter Virmati becomes a second mother looking after the small babies. She doesn't have equal rights and status even after so many years after independence.

Barrenness is a major theme dominating the novels of Manju Kapur. They are treated as the discarded furniture when they fail to conceive in their married life. A married girl is supposed to be the mother of children and particularly if she gives birth to the male baby to give the legal heir to her husband. In her novel *Home* Sona is a barren woman and she is subjected to all forms of torture. She weeps alone in her room as she is always ridiculed, jeered, and humiliated in front of all by her sister-in-law. Sona is barren as she struggles to sustain in the family. She struggles to become pregnant and pray god thus:

She tried to calm herself by praying, closing her eyes to concentrate on her favourite image of god...Please, I am growing old, bless us with a child, girl or boy, I do not care, but I cannot bear the emptiness in my heart. (*Home* 19)

She suffers from the mental trauma for ten long years. Ishita too suffers as she cannot conceive. She has to spend five lakhs rupees but fails to conceive and as a result her husband seeks divorce from her. The identity of a woman in the world of Manju Kapur is determined by the production of children and by her docile and submissive behaviour.

Virginia Woolf had advocated that women should get good education in the society to achieve the status and independent identity in the society. Manju Kapur follows her and creates women who are ambitious to pursue higher education. Virmati of *Difficult Daughters* is an aspirant to pursue education. She insists and compels her orthodox mother to send her to Lahore for further studies. This adventure turns into misadventure as in the free and liberal society of Lahore. Virmati is ruined with the loss of her virginity. She comes under the influence of her cousin Shakuntala and her friend Swarnlata who give her modern ideas of liberty. Virmati falls in the trap of Harish who is a married man; develops sexual intimacy with him in her passion to break the chains of society and to emerge as a new woman. She suffers acute depression as Harish enjoys her body and denies marrying her. She even tries to commit suicide and at last decides to go to Shantiniketan but it is a chance that she meets a friend of Harish who intervenes and her marriage with

Harish is solemnised. But Virmti doesn't get peace of mind; she is forced to live with Harish and Ganga as the second wife. She is marginalised but she has to live there. Her anguish is intensified when she comes to know about the pregnancy of Ganga. She firmly believes that Harish is just cheating on her and her status in the family is like discarded furniture. The novels of Manju Kapur depict the longing of the struggle of Indian women to achieve an identity in the male dominated society. She remarks, "The mother-daughter nexus is only one of the many manifestations of the Indian women's roles. She is a wife, a mother, a daughter-in-law...in fact there are many aspects of a woman's life" (*Difficult Daughters* 23).

Each woman of Manju Kapur is restless and dissatisfied with her existence. Each character is in turmoil as she longs to break the fetters of patriarchy, male hegemony, and sexuality. She is educated and wants to lead an independent life. She is anxious to enjoy her own identity in the society. They live in a stifling environment oppressed by the stale and dead customs of society. They soon emerge as the deviant and in order to break the fetters they embark on a new journey to explore love, life and sexuality. Virmati becomes the headmistress in Nahan to earn so that she may get the social status. The main question in the novels is what motivated Virmati to break the chains of her family. She was always discouraged and didn't get the proper attention, affection and even love from her parents. She was ignored all the time and was even denied education. Her mother wants Virmati to learn sewing and stitching to do well after marriage. Virmati finds her mom making thread at the spinning wheel. Manju Kapur writes, "Shankutala's visit plants the seeds of aspiration in Virmati" (18). She dreams to become independent like her cousin and to lead a liberal life. She hopes to be like her cousin and says, "Maybe I will also one day come to Lahore, Penji, she wept. I wish I too could do things. But I am not clever" (18). Kasturi reprimands her thus, "Now it is you who are eating my head. What good are Shaku's degrees when she is not settled? Will they look after her when she is old?" (21). She further says, "At your age I was already expecting you, not fighting with my mother" (21). Manju Kapur's novel *A Married Woman* presents Astha who is fed up with the business tours of her husband and is bound to join the group of Aijaz and Pipeelika to explore her creative potential. Her husband is

a typical oppressive man who doesn't appreciate the creative talents of Astha. She writes good poems but her husband discourages her. She is a good painter but her husband disregards and humiliates her. But when she enters into the world of Aijaz she finds the real person; she displays her painting in an exhibition and makes good money. Astha explores a new world in the company of Aijaz and Pipeelika. She even enjoys the sexual and lesbian love with Pipeelika after the tragic death of her husband Aijaz and finds a new meaning of love and sex. Nisha in the novel *Home* breaks from the tradition and begins earning to establish her personal identity in the society. Nisha is under acute depression and starts teaching in a school and later on she starts her own business of readymade clothes called *Nisha Creations*. She becomes successful in the business world to the chagrin of her family. They pressurised her to get married and at last she had to submit to their will.

The study is primarily focused on the rebellious and deviant behaviour of women of Manju Kapur. Merton observes that when there is inequality or instability the individuals are bound to develop deviant behaviour and the result is rebellion and revolt against the existing institutions. The history of all revolts is the outcome of restlessness, injustice and the sense of loss. Women of Manju Kapur suffer from the sense of loss, oppression, hegemony and the denial of the basic rights and this is why they are rebellious and deviant. They have an inner urge to break the chains of rigidity and orthodox oppression and the stifling environment who doesn't allow them to grow. They are desperate to carve their own independent existence but the forces of rigid patriarchs block their growth. No wonder each novel from *Difficult Daughters* to *Brothers*, explores the restless consciousness of women. Each woman behaves in an unnatural and deviant manner and is restless to move away from the stifling environment of her family. Women like Kasturi are rare in the world of Manju Kapur. Kasturi ruined her life in her eleven pregnancies just to please her husband. She suffered the physical and psychological torture silently and she emerges as a passive character. There is no growth of her but her daughter Virmati and her granddaughter Ida break the fetters expressing their volcano of anger and aggression. Astha turns the tables on her husband who ignores her talents and the creative spirit. Rupa epitomises a break from the traditional concepts of motherhood

as she is satisfied with her business and money values. *The Immigrant* (2006) presents Nina who suffers from cultural displacement. She has to live with a double identity and suffers from the emptiness of life. She is crazy to break the chains of her immigrant life as she finds herself misfit in the alien land. Nina feels sick and desperate as her living in Canada doesn't give her any peace of mind. She recollects the golden days that she had spent in the company of her mother in India. Her marriage with Ananda didn't give her moral and spiritual satisfaction. She feels that she had lost everything. She feels sick of the empty streets of Canada and expresses her agony thus, "I miss home, I miss a job, and I miss doing things. I feel like a shadow. What am I but your wife?" (237). No wonder she becomes rebellious and deviant in her urge to forge her new identity. In *Custody* before marriage Shagun had different ambitions but after her marriage there is total transformation in her life. She becomes a proud mother of a son and a daughter. But in her inner heart she looks depressed and dissatisfied as she is forced to lead a dull and monotonous life. Shagun comes in contact with Ashok Khanna and finds in him her real soulmate. There is a tremendous change in her personality. She feels the force of his love and is ready to marry him in spite of the opposition of her mother. She is happy to break the barriers of rigid patriarchy to forge her new identity in the stagnant society following her ambition of sexual liberty. Raman's mother always feared that Shagun had created a wall between mother and son, "A pretty daughter -in-law, the son dancing attendance on her, an angry disappointed mother such a situation would lead to daily tension" (23). She writes letters to her mother and tells her of her alienations and plight through her letters living abroad. Shagun is an obstinate daughter as she is passionate to enjoy her sexual liberty and acts like a new woman of Manju Kapur. The novel *Brothers* of Manju Kapur describes the sexual adventure of Tapti Gaina who develops licentious relations with the brother of her husband Mangal and becomes the cause of his murder by his own brother. Himmat Singh is the Chief Minister of the state but Mangal is suffering from the liquidity crunch to run his cement factory. He is jealous of his brother who holds the political power but his wife gets precious gifts from Himmat which become the cause of his downfall. He imagines his wife sleeping naked with his brother Himmat and shoots him in the public meeting and becomes a criminal.

Women of Manju Kapur suffer from traumatic experiences and the loss of self as their liberties lead them to suffer depression, frustration, neurosis and dissolution of self. The vogue of psychoanalysis and its impact on post-colonial fiction is tremendous. Freud observes that human impulses and cultural values are always at loggerheads and neurosis is the restlessness that an individual experiences on account of the instinctual frustration he faces in society. Indeed, as Freud argued, “neurosis is the price an individual pays for the advantages he gains by the growth of civilization” (Freud 6). For Carl Jung neurosis is “a dissociation of personality due to the existence of complexes” (Jung 188). According to Alfred Adler, the basis for the neurotic conflict is social set up. When an individual is bent on establishing his supremacy in society, his anxiety that springs from a sense of inferiority causes neurosis. Neo-Freudians like Eric Fromm and Karen Horney, Eric Erickson and Lacan have emphasised “anxiety,” “adult experiences,” “cultural influence” on the individual” as the dominant factors of neurosis. De Rosen Carol Adams in his book *Lacan and Klein, Creation and Discovery: An Essay on Reintroduction* (2011) observes that “three factors, the symbolic, imaginary and real, regulate the behaviour of an individual” (Carol 123). Virmati is a psychological wreck because of the cruelties of the societal structure; she uses her freedom in an effort to stave off her fate but constantly finds herself isolated. Virmati suffers obsession as she cries out in desperation:

I broke my engagement because of you, blackened my family’s name, am locked up inside my house, got sent to Lahore because no one knows what to do with me. Here I am in the position of being your secret wife, full of shame, wondering what people will say if they find out, not being able to live in peace, study in peace...and why? Because I am an idiot. Now you want to prolong the situation. Why don’t we get married? You say your family makes no difference but still you want to continue this way. Be honest with me. I can bear anything but this continues irresolution. Swarna is right; men do take advantage of women. (*Difficult Daughters* 149)

The plot of the novel *Difficult Daughters* is about Virmati's existential battle and her elusive search for self-identity in male dominated society. She struggles to define herself and, as a result of her strange behaviour patterns, she continues to be aimless, perplexed, and sexually repressed. She cannot define what she is and remains directionless, confused, and sexually repressed because of her unusual behaviour patterns. In Erikson's theory of Identity, personality develops in a series of stages and identity is fractured if an individual is the victim of socio-psychic pressures. In his book *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (1968), Erikson has discussed the causes of deflation of self. Erikson's theory discusses the influence of social experience across the whole life span. In Virmati's case social restrictions as well as familial foundations force her to get into the lewd and sexual relations with the married professor Harish. She doesn't find happiness before or after getting married. The author depicts Virmati's inner chaotic world through stream-of-consciousness techniques, interior monologues, and relevant imagery. Kasturi's mother believes that a woman must accept her own destiny. It doesn't matter if her husband is a prince or just an average one—she is constantly at his mercy. Kasturi tells him that marriage is the only solution to all the problems of girls. She even discourages her to pursue higher study. She becomes a psychological wreck due to the brutality of the social structure; she utilises her freedom to try to avoid her fate, but she always feels estranged. Harish leads his own life freely but Virmati has to submit to her destiny. She has to live on the mercy of Harish who impregnates his first wife Ganga and Virmati has to live as the second wife and with low status. Finally, Virmati gives up and accepts her husband Harish's decision, starting her journey into the unknown as she has nowhere else to go. The novel's plot follows Virmati as she battles courageously to carve out a place for herself in the vast social world while still suffering from life's misery.

Manju Kapur captures the emotional upheaval, ceaseless sobbing, never-ending quiet, apathetic ideology, fascination with death, and mayhem of her characters Shagun and Virmati as they deal with a variety of existential issues, including feelings of loneliness and emptiness. Virmati is always thinking about the past, feeling nostalgic, and being restless in Harish's home, where he lives with his

first wife, Ganga. As a result, she never gets any peace of mind. Her novel *Custody* explores Indian women's social and household lives. Her main goal as a novelist is to raise women's awareness of their social circumstances by portraying the inner lives of common women—their futile battles and life's sufferings. Astha herself says in the novel “to be a woman...is to suffer” (65). The character of Nisha is a case study of trauma. She is always in turmoil as she suffers from the failures of love; life and sex. She tries to escape from the terrors of life but the haunting past puts pressure on her wounded psyche. Manju Kapur depicts her trauma thus:

Nisha's burden increased with every step made in the direction of her brother's marriage. Had her parents not been so determined to reject Suresh, she could have been reveling in attention as the groom's only real sister, instead of feeling a source of apology and justification. She wished she could disappear into some hole till the wedding was over. (*Home* 249)

Manju Kapur believes that in India, marriage is a symbol of sacrifice. Knowing it instills a repulsive mindset in the characters, causing them to view the world and human circumstances with apathy. They suffer from countless unfathomable problems and sorrows as a result of their repulsive and abnormal behaviour. They have a psychic trauma that turns them from normal to deviant. They destroy their personal relationship with their relatives and have marital problems with their spouse. They experience loneliness, self-destruction, and nostalgia. Every female character in the book has had a unique set of events that shape their outlook on life, the human condition, and other people. Her women Astha, Shagun, Virmati and Tapti Gaina are lost in their old memories revolving around past and present in their struggle to break the vicious cycle of rigid patriarchy. Virmati is guilt ridden when she becomes pregnant but her lover married professor Harish rejects her marriage proposal. It is the most excruciating moment for Virmati. She attempts to end her life in a traumatic state of her existence. She often becomes emotional and has a passionate outburst when she confronts her married lover. Virmati broods over her loneliness for long hours, forgets to eat and drink, sheds tears and remains silent. She considers suicide as a means of getting away from the harsh reality of life. She

suffers since she can't live her life to the fullest because of a guilty feeling. She travels between the past, present, and future, essentially being a fractured self. Shagun and Astha are also prisoners of a conventional patriarchy and eventually they dare to challenge it to enjoy her freedom. Their main concern in life is liberation from the old conventions and to emerge as new Indian women. Psychologists have seen that the emotions of failure, disregard, and apathy lead to "self-abnegation," which in the Freudian sense causes a man to become morbid as his identity becomes fractured. In the views of Bernard Weiner "feelings of sadness, low self –esteem, shame and low expectancy of success result in his withdrawal from social activity" (Weiner 170). Virmati's story is that of a sexual vagrant who, in her fruitless and unusual quest for freedom, becomes a lost soul. No rational woman would aspire to be like Astha and Virmati. She is in a quagmire of sexual lust, and soon realises that she has ruined her life in marrying a married professor Harish. All women of Manju suffer from traumatic experiences in their life.

Like the Western feminists Manju Kapur raises the women question in all her six novels. She has discussed the vital issues such as child marriage; divorces; sexual liberty; education to women; freedom and recognition; status and proper identity for women. She forcefully states that women are an indispensable part of society and no country can make progress without the active involvement of women. Women should get freedom to choose their own partners of life and there is no need of male hegemony. The time has changed with the growth of science and technology in the world and women are no way inferior to men. They have the potential to make great strides in society. No wonder women today are making valuable contributions to the society in all the fields from teaching to industrial development. Her women are "New Women" and they set an example by their spirited adventures and by their daring quest for identity.

The thesis entitled "Socio-Cultural Study of Manju Kapur's Fiction: A Mertonian Perspective" has social relevance as it explores the women characters of Manju Kapur. The novelist has depicted the multidimensional faces of her women. Her six novels are packed with all the contemporary issues such as child marriage, divorce, widow remarriage, education, freedom and the identity of women. India is

entering into the new phase of cultural transformation and in this new changed set up women's role in building the modern society is indispensable. No one can ignore the positive role of women; if women are educated and independent, the structure of society is bound to change. Merton's anomie theory has assisted us in understanding the origins of aberrant conduct and in developing strategies to avoid deviant behaviour. The novels of Manju Kapur are just the beginning of feminism and the end of the solution of women's question. Thousands of women today are locked in the four walls of their houses. They are denied the basic rights of human society. They are still considered as the child bearing machine and each mother wants a woman to give birth to the male child only. Women of Manju Kapur are struggling for the space to end their alienation. The thesis fulfils the objectives with which the present research was undertaken on the topic "Socio-Cultural Study of Manju Kapur's Fiction: A Mertonian Perspective." The study will motivate the coming generation to search for identity in life and will help them to reduce tension and stress in life. The novels written by Manju Kapur are inspiring for women to lead a respectful, noble, happy and joyful life. This study will be very fruitful to explore the psyche of women living in the modern society of India. Their challenges, problems and conflicts are investigated from the socialistic perspective employing the effective tools of Robert K. Merton. It has explored the causes of the trauma of women of Manju Kapur who break the traditions of the social norms in their quest for change and love and sexuality. Their quest for identity leads to their deviant behaviour disrupting the social norms. This study has shown how Manju Kapur's fiction presents a complex picture of Indian society, illuminating the complex relationships between societal systems, cultural norms, and personal action. This study has emphasised how Kapur's works reflect the conflicts between social integration and anomie, conformity and deviance, and the quest for self-actualisation within the bounds of society expectations through the perspective of Robert K. Merton's sociological framework. This thesis has also demonstrated how Kapur's fiction not only represents the socio-cultural realities of contemporary India, but also challenges prevailing discourses and offers opportunities for social change by examining the interconnections of gender, class, and culture in her narratives.

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