# TROPES OF GENDER: A STUDY OF THE NOVELS OF MANJU KAPUR

**Ph.D. THESIS**

*by*

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**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree**

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# INDIAN INSTITUE OF TECHNOLOGY ROORKEE
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## CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the work which is being presented in the thesis entitled **"TROPES OF GENDER: A STUDY OF THE NOVELS OF MANJU KAPUR"** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy and submitted to the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences of the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Roorkee is an authentic record of my own work carried out during the period July, 2011 to June, 2014 under the supervision of Dr. Rashmi Gaur, Professor and Dr. Smita Jha, Associate Professor, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Roorkee.

The matter presented in this thesis has not been submitted by me for the award of any other degree of this or any other Institute.

(**REENA CHAUHAN**)

This is to certify that the above statement made by the candidate is correct to the best of our knowledge.

(Rashmi Gaur)                                                                                      (Smita Jha)
Supervisor                                                                                           Supervisor

**Date:**

The Ph. D. Viva-Voice Examination of **Ms. Reena Chauhan**, Research Scholar, has been held on……………………………………………………………………………….

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# ABSTRACT

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The present research work is an attempt to trace the tropes of gender in the novels of Manju Kapur namely *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008), and *Custody* (2011). A study of Kapur's novels reveals the socio-cultural aspects through which gender distinctions are constructed and developed. These novels also challenge the pre-conceived notion of gender as biologically ordained and reinforce it as a socio-cultural outcome. The activities and behaviours of men and women are shaped as masculine and feminine by socio-cultural impacts, influences and conditionings. Gender theorists and critical thinkers also support the argument that gender constructs the concept of sex and emphasize that sex is not as powerful instrument as gender in distinguishing our behaviour as men and women. The thesis attempts a close scrutiny of Kapur's novels to investigate how she has incorporated various tropes of gender in her novels which collectively influence the construction of gender hierarchy. Kapur's novels exhibit how the tropes of gender, viz., cultural conditioning, patriarchal socialization, exploitative nature of the institution of family, skewed education, constricted economic spaces, domesticity, undue significance attached to marriage, dowry system and pre-conceived societal norms regarding motherhood are responsible for the inferior and secondary position of women. These influential tropes of gender manipulate and almost decide the destiny of women as submissive objects. Kapur's novels challenge these tropes of gender by criticizing the subsistence of those myths and rituals which reinforce the marginalization of women in a male dominated society.

Structurally, the present work is divided into five chapters; namely, Chapter I—Gender: Origin, Evolution and Theories; Chapter II—Gender: Cultural Conditioning, Patriarchy and Socialization; Chapter III—Gender: Education and Economic Spaces; Chapter IV—Gender: Marriage, Motherhood and Sexuality; Chapter V—Conclusion. The first chapter is divided into two parts. The first part analyzes the origin and evolution of the term "gender" and various critical theories related with the concept. The second part of the first chapter traces the life and works of Manju Kapur. The subsequent chapters are based on the novels of Kapur and are scrutinized from the points of view of gender theories. The instrumental lens of gender tropes

show how men and women are framed within different social-cultural roles, norms and anticipations as reflected in Kapur's novels from *Difficult Daughters* to *Custody*.

The exploration of Kapur's novels unravels various parameters which cause the exploitation of women. These parameters establish the tropes of gender which strongly influence the identity and existence of a woman. The tropes of gender are based on cultural conditioning, patriarchy and socialization in terms of education, economy, domesticity, marriage, motherhood and sexuality – in all these spheres and institutions women are given a secondary status in comparison to their male counterparts. In addition, these tropes of gender are also exploitative for men. The analysis of Kapur's novels also echoes that gender is constituted by society and the lives of men and women are deeply conditioned to follow numerous social provisions, norms and conventional traits. Her novels advocate the dissolution of gender boundaries and those practices, which constrict women on the ground of their sexuality. Kapur's novels showcases that the dissolution of gender boundaries proposes the ways through which both men and women may transcend the limitations posed by the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. Manju Kapur deconstructs tropes of gender by destabilizing the boundaries of gender and sex in her novels.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER 1.1

## Gender: Origin, Evolution and Theories

Gender was initially a study of the grammatical category since the 14th century, which identifies nouns, pronouns, adjectives and other several verb forms as masculine, feminine and neuter by numerous languages such as English, Latin, Spanish, German, Greek, French, Russian, Swedish and Sweden. According to H. W. Fowler, "Gender. n. a grammatical term only. To talk of persons or creatures of the masculine or feminine gender, meaning of the male or female sex, is either a jocularity (permissible or not according to context) or a blunder" (*A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* NP). Theorists employ the grammatical use of gender to evoke the traits of sexuality as well as gender for referring to the social distinction between sexes. The grammatical usage "involves formal rules that follow from the masculine or feminine designation; full of unexamined possibilities because in many Indo-European languages there is a third category—unsexed or neuter. Gender introduces a rational notion into our analytic vocabulary" (qtd. in Scott 1053-54). There is much diversity of views and controversies associated with gender that is linguistically defined as *gendre*, *genus*, *genre*, *gene*, and *genesis*. Joan Scott is of the opinion that gender could be noticed as the "useful category of linguistic analysis" (Odag and Pershai 40).

The word 'Gender' is derived from the Middle English *gendre*, a loanword from Norman-conquest-era Old French and Modern French *genre* or *genre sexual* related to Latin *genus* which is emerged in the Modern English as 'gender'. The earliest meaning of gender was understood as a type, kind or sort and later on, it was recognized in order to *genre sexual*; birth, family, and nation. Similarly, related to the Greek origin *gen-* (to produce) appeared as *gene*, *genesis*, and *oxygen* ("Gender". Web.). According to English language, "both terms 'gender' and 'sex' can be applied in similar framework where they could not be substituted—'sexual intercourse', 'safe sex', 'sex worker'; or on the other hand,

'grammatical gender" ("Gender". Web.). Like other languages, German also represents the same application of *Geschlecht* or *geslacht* for sex and gender without differentiating biological and social characteristics by which the identity of sex and gender is difficult to recognize. Following the term 'gender' according to English, German accomplishes a distinction between sex and gender. In French, "the word *sexe* is most widely used for both 'sex' and 'gender' in everyday contexts. However, the word *genre* is increasingly used to refer to gender in queer or academic contexts, such as the word *transgenre* (transgender) or the translation of Judith Butler's book *Gender Trouble* as *Trouble dans le genre*. The term *identité sexuelle* was proposed for 'gender' or 'gender identity,' although it can be confused with 'sexual identity' (one's identity as it relates to one's sexual life)" ("Gender". Web.). In Swedish, there is a clear definition of *genus* (gender) for social and *kön* (sex) denoting biological relations but Sweden "uses the words *könsroller* and *könsidentitet* (literally 'sex role' and 'sex-identity') for the English terms 'gender role' and 'gender identity" ("Gender". Web.).

Originally, there was no such term as gender in Russian, and the juxtaposition of sex/gender works differently than it does in English: *rod* stands for the grammatical gender; *seks* stands for sexual intercourse; and *pol*, which literally means 'sex', identifies "biological sex as well as its sociocultural aspects" (qtd. in Odag and Pershai 34). Goroshko is of the opinion that gender, taken from English, was employed in the 1990s to "describe a human's social sex (*sotsialnity pol*) in contrast to his biological sex (*biologicheskiy pol*)" (98). It will be pertinent to quote A. V. Kirilina in this context who defines gender, independent of the connotations of biological sexual differences:

> to draw a distinction between the notion of *biological sex* (sexus) and
> its social and cultural implications enclosed within the concepts of
> masculine–feminine: the [gender] role division, cultural traditions,
> power relations connected to people's sex. The term *gender* calls to
> exclude the biological determinism enclosed within the concept of
> sexus that claims all sociocultural differences connected to sex to be
> the universal natural factor. (24)

Another linguist I. I. Khaleyeva also remarks on this distinction that it is possible to outline "a new trend in Russion Linguistics during the last decade that focuses on socially and culturally marked specificity of *pol* (gender)" (09). By the end of the 20th century, the distinction between sex and gender was firmly agreed upon in Russion critical scene. Sofronova remarks:

> Gender [stands for] the notions of femininity and masculinity that exist in a certain culture. Thus gender, contrary to biological sex, is not defined by the natural [biological] features; it is constructed by social practice. […] to be a man or a woman means not only to be characterized by a certain set of chromosomes but also to correspond with the notions of [what is] masculine and feminine in a society. (105)

Thus gender may be defined as "a specific category that appeals to exclude the biological determinism in the concept of *pol*, and to underline the social character of inequality between the sexes, including the [social] norms, perceptions, relationships, stereotypes and values" (Martysiuk 04). These comments of Russian critics are in consonance with the Western theories. West and Zimmerman represent the quintessence of gender theories when analyzing the changed norms/roles of gender and sex categories. They remark that gender can be encapsulated as "an achieved status which is constructed through psychological, cultural, and social means" whereas sex is "ascribed by biology: anatomy, hormones, and physiology" (West and Zimmerman 125). In other words, gender is a cultural construction – the "entirely social creation of ideas" about conventional roles for women and men. It is a way of referring to the "exclusively social origins of the subjective identities of' men and women" (qtd. in Scott 1056).

Gender Studies, an interdisciplinary field, emerged in 1980's. Several universities started academic programmes at this time in related areas. The Freie Universitat (FU) in Berlin was the first university in Germany to "pass a resolution specifically for the advancement of women in science, and in 1981 it set up the 'Central Institute for the Advancement of Women's Research and Women's Studies', today known as the 'Centre for Promotion of Women's and Gender Studies" (qtd. in Odag and Pershai 18).The centre of

Gender Studies was established in the Universities of Hull and Humberside by gender theorists in 1986. These gender theorists address not only masculine and feminine studies, but also incorporate the studies of those "who do not fit neatly into the gender binary of male and female" (qtd. in Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 05) for e.g. sexual minorities like queer and transgender. The seeds of feminine and gender studies have been sown by feminists, but gender identity may be defined as "heterogeneous in itself" where "femininity and masculinity are not single defined categories. They are rather the sum total of their appearances" (Schöllhammer 06). According to Podems, gender theories put forward the differences between men and women whereas feminists' investigations explore the causes of the origin of gender and "challenge women's subordinate position" (08). In order to comprehend the origin and evolution of gender studies, the contribution of feminist critics is explored in a chronological pattern.

François Fourier first identified the term 'feminism' which is derived from the French word 'feminisme'. The word conveying manifold ideas related to the social position of women came into consideration in the nineteenth century - "in France in 1837 and the Netherlands in 1872, Great Britain in the 1890s, and the United States in 1910" ("Feminism". Web.). According to Lisa Tuttle, the word feminism, taken from the "latin word *femina* (woman), originally meant having the qualities of females" (qtd. in Singh 22). The early editions of *The Oxford English Dictionary* defined feminism as "a state of being feminine or womanly as did the 1901 edition of *The Dictionary of Philosophy*. By 1906, however, *Dictionaire de Philosophie* defined it as a position favourable to the rights of women. The Webster's Dictionary defines the term 'feminism as: (a) the principle that women should have political rights equal to those of men; (b) the movement to win such rights for women. Ellen DuBois found in her research on feminism and suffrage that the term 'feminism' was in general use around 1910 to describe that political movement, and that the usage originated in France" (qtd. in Singh 20-21). The early feminists have been addressed like 'defenders' or 'advocates'. Thus, we can say that feminism refers to one group of women, "namely that group which asserted the uniqueness of women, the mystical experiences of motherhood and women's special purity" (Jaggar 05). Sarah Gamble rephrases feminism "as any attempt to contend with patriarchy in its many manifestations from 1550-1700" (01). Historian and activist Cheris Kramarae has remarked, "feminism is the radical notion that women are

human beings" ("Feminism Definition". Web.). Feminist critics not only investigate assumptions which straitjacket women as weak, seductress and sexual object, but also demonstrate the economic inequalities and exploitative mechanism against women. Feminism "begins with liberalism, when women demand equality with men; then, reacting against equality feminism, radical feminists reject patriarchy in favour of a separatist matriarchy; finally, women come to reject altogether the difference between masculine and feminine as metaphysical" (Waugh 337).

Feminism can be understood as women's movement for their rights, discussing women's secondary position in the society. The phases of feminism can be divided into waves; every wave uncovers a new ideology and political strategy about women in the society. The epoch from 1830 to 1920 (Patricia Waugh), the first wave is a monumental and is acknowledged for various reform movements such as abolition and temperance. Prominent figures as John Stuart Mill, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony have played noteworthy roles in the campaign for women's civil rights. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), called by Emily W. Sunstein, "the most original book of 18th century", is renowned as the first important feminist treatise which responds to same respect, rights and opportunities for women which are provided by society for men. After the publication of this book, which demands the fundamental rights of women i.e. education, legal representation, the right to vote and the right to property, these subjects became highly political agenda in both France and Britain. For Wollstonecraft, "the most perfect education" is "an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the heart. Or, in other words, to enable the individual to attach such habits of virtue as will render it independent" (31).

John Stuart Mill, a remarkable figure of the 19th century, who not only credited to use his position as a Member of Parliament in favour of women's political rights, but also petitioned to include women's suffrage in the second Reform Bill of 1867. He writes in his famous treatise *The Subject of Women*:

> [T]he legal subordination of one sex to another – is wrong in itself,
> and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that
> it ought to be replaced by a system of perfect equality, admitting no

power and privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other. (Mill 03)

Mill claims that one can not be aware of the true nature of women because their behaviour, act and performance are a product of social forces. Women naturally accept their inferior position due to the social conditioning. Further, Mill proposes "numerous benefits for allowing equal social position to women, among these benefits are: (1) improved conditions for women in marital relationships so that they are no longer legally subject to the will of a cruel husband but are, instead, equal partners in the marriage; (2) the removal of the 'self worship' instilled in men who believe they are better than women merely because of their gender and for any substantive reason; (3) the creation of the family as a model of the 'virtues of freedom'; (4) most importantly, the promotion of human progress and the greatest happiness for all through the addition to society of new and diverse intellectual forces which will result from improved and equal education and opportunities for women" (qtd. in Smith 181-182).

In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Virginia Woolf expresses her concern for women's economic liberation and independence space. For her, economic independence and an individual space are important for women's respectable survival. Women who "have talent should be given the opportunity to develop and use it… [and] should be allowed to have an income and a room of their own" ("The Scope of Woolf". Web.). But in the patriarchal society, they are primarily trapped inside the home. Thus, Woolf believes in the establishment of "outside" which enables and encourages women to look at the institutions of power which are developed in accordance with the requirement of men. Woolf in this book writes about Shakespeare's sister who "dies young" and thus "never wrote a word" (105). Woolf regards:

> […] this poet who never wrote a word was buried at the cross roads
> still lives. She lives in you and in me, and in many other women…for
> they are washing up the dishes and putting the children to bed. But
> she lives; for great poets do not die; they are continuing presences;
> they need only the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh. (105-6)

Thus, the first wave is primarily remembered for the suffragette movement. The first wave feminists contribute to our understanding of numerous ways through which women are marginalized in the society, but the second wave feminists continued Woolf's analysis and "combined it with new, more gender-sensitive ways of reading both the traditional literary classics and also the increasingly prominent emergent literature by women" (qtd. in Waugh 326).

The second wave of feminism, dating from 1960 to 1980 (Patricia Waugh), refers to women's liberation movement which aims at exploring equal civil liberties, the same levels of education and economic independence, the same positions and employment spheres/trainings for women as men. One of the notable feminists is Simone De Beauvoir who influences two waves: her position in the first wave affirms as the concluding chapter and is considered 'pre-feminist' of the second wave. With her *The Second Sex* (1949), she encapsulates the social conditioning of women and lack of educational opportunities for them and also examines the underlying sexual discrimination against them. The aim of her work is to investigate "the question of what it means to be a woman, or rather, the question of how 'women' comes to be a mode of existence.... Historically, woman is a relational concept that takes its meaning from its relation to man as both less than man (other) and radically different to man (Other)" (Beauvoir15,16). Beauvoir critically evaluates the perception and consideration of biologist, psychoanalysts and Marxists about women as 'other' affirming that woman is reduced "to a matter of physiology" by biological science, "to matter of unconscious drives" by psychoanalysis and "to a matter of economics" by Marxism a subordination which is socially and culturally produced (Gamble 29). Beauvoir, with her sustained argument in *The Second Sex*, "one is not born a woman; rather, one becomes a woman" (295), posits key points about the social construction of femininity which provide the platform for gender theory at the later stage. She establishes a core idea through her groundbreaking text that a woman's position as a second and lesser sex is an outcome of social conditioning. Therefore, she challenges the social structure which defines the value or identity of man as the first and standard one, while defining woman as second. According to her, woman is "defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her…. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute- She is the other" (Beauvoir 16). Further, Beauvoir also provides an account of "gender division throughout history, examining

biological, psychological, historical, and cultural explanations that there was nothing natural about the hierarchical division of men and women into a first and second sex" (Waugh 320-21).

Betty Friedan is another major theorist who has laid bare the falsity of the cultural images of happy femininity. She reveals not only the depression and psychological frustration of the 1950's American housewives, but also addresses their mysterious condition as "the problem that has no name" but which "lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the mind of American women (Friedan 15). In *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), she examines, "the dominant cultural image of successful and happy American women as a housewife and mother" (Leitch 308). According to her, the social and cultural campaign of women is indoctrinated through books, newspapers and magazine articles that are applauded by expert voices which train them how to maintain happy relationship with their husbands, how to improve and adjust with their children's school, how to make new dishes, to learn how to decorate the house. Friedan exposes the construction of femininity in which women are brought up in believing that "occupation: housewife and their only dream was to be perfect wives and mothers; their highest ambition to have five children and a beautiful house, their only fight to get and keep their husbands" (18). She also traces the account of femininity cultivated over the centuries by which traditional women do not wish to have careers, higher education and political rights and  do not even accept "woman problem" (Friedan 19). Women treat all their personal problems as "there's nothing wrong really", they keep telling themselves, "there isn't any problem" (Friedan 19). She deftly delineates American women who strive their entire lives to prove that they are the best wives and mothers. "Higher education for women was dominated … to ensure girls got the message that their 'sex-role' as wives and mothers, and not their 'human' capacity to create and achieve in the working world, was the natural one" (qtd. in Bowlby 62-63).With her publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan tries to exhibit a core problem of a woman, "who am I? What do I want?" (qtd. in Bowlby 69-70) Through the text, she draws attention to women's individual characteristics, preference to education and career opportunities for the development of their individuality and selfhood.

Kate Millett enunciated the term 'Sexual Politics' which elucidates men's dominance over women to be named "patriarchy". Betty Friedan has written about "the problem that had no name" but the most notable feminist Kate Millett "named it, illustrated it, exposed it, analyzed it" (qtd. in Jeffreys, *Kate Millett's Sexual Politics* 77). In *Sexual Politics* (1970), she mentions "the relationship between the sexes" and further defines the word "politics" which indicates "power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another and patriarchy is one of these" (qtd. in Jeffreys, *Kate Millett's Sexual Politics*77). According to Millett, "male and female are considered as being part of two different cultures that are constructed from childhood" ("Sexual Politics". Web.). Women are "part of a 'minority group,' they are dealt as either less-than human species or slaves, owing to their lack of legal rights or not being equal to men, 'they live for differential and unequal treatment" ("Sexual Politics". Web.). Moreover, in other words, "…sex is a status category with political implications" and unequal treatment leads to "a relation of dominance and sub-ordinance" (Millett 24-25). Elaborating the "battle of sexes", she mentions that males in social acuity and patriarchal frame believe that it is their fundamental right to rule over females who in their opinion are born to serve men. They consider women as inferior, weak and incomplete without men. For Millett, "patriarchy always exaggerated biological differences between the sexes to make certain of men's domination, or masculine roles, and women's subordination or feminine roles through the process of socialization" (Tong 96). Analyzing the "political" aspect, Millett not only denies the biological differences between male/female to penetrate underlying unrelieved Freud's theory, but also formulates a basic theory of women's oppression within social context. Millett is of the opinion that gender is "the sum total of the parent, the peers and the cultures notion of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gestures, and expressions" (31) and that "sexual Politics obtains consent through 'socialization' of both sexes to basic patriarchal polities with regard to temperament role and status" (26). She focuses primarily on men's domination over women in the name of societal duties within the family. In sum, we can conclude the contribution of Millett by stating that she explores the account of women as subordinated and oppressed by male power under patriarchy.

Shulamith Firestone, co-founder of 'New York Radical Women', in her seminal treatise *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) opposes the premise that biology is destiny. She

recognizes sexuality as a "crucial problem of modern life" (209). She emphasizes on the abolition of social 'role system'. Like Beauvoir, she argues that gender discrimination is produced by socio-cultural structure which defines and limits the biological roles of women to childbirth and child rearing. Firestone also explains that this is because "the heart of woman's oppression is her childbearing and childrearing roles. And in turn children are defined in relation to this role and are psychologically formed by it: what they become as adults and the sorts of relationships they are able to form determine the society they will ultimately build" (72). She delineates the freedom of women from the tyranny of motherhood and artificial gestation of gender which made women dependent on men. For her, "it was not biological difference in itself that created inequality– 'man' and 'woman' were for her neutral categories of difference–but rather it was the reproductive function that happened to fall to the female body; by employing technology to lift the task of reproduction from women, equality could be achieved" (qtd. in Waugh 323-24). Along with Beauvoir, Firestone claims that "culture was a gender-neutral project that men participated in, and from which women were excluded. Consequently, their aim was equal access to social opportunity" (qtd. in Waugh 324).

Germaine Greer in *The Female Eunuch* (1970) resonates iconoclastic construction of female anatomy and gender inequality in contemporary society. With her several witty articles, she advocates frank relationship, sexual freedom, and mutual parenting and rails against the unequal social conditioning for women. Like Beauvoir and Friedan, she also criticizes the feminine conditioning of girls. Considering patriarchal domination to be responsible for contrived femininity, Greer comments, "The characteristics that are praised and rewarded are those of the Castrate- timidity, plumpness, languor, delicacy and preciosity" (17). Further she explains, "in order to approximate those shapes and attitudes which are considered normal and desirable, both sexes deform themselves justifying the process by referring to the primary genetic difference between the sexes" (Greer 30). While women have been, "…contoured to their conditioning to abandon autonomy and seek guidance", men "have been forced to suppress their receptivity, in the interest of domination" (Greer 103, 124). Talking about women's social oppression, Greer describes that "she was created to be the toy of man, his rattle, and it must jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused" (66). Greer is of the opinion that women were solely a

sexual object for men, their condition in marriage an inescapable yoke, and their children a primary duty. She also remarks that women's conventional education offers them limited options as they are encouraged to dressmaking and domestic science etc. which can be useful in the better management of their married life.

The critical works of the above-mentioned major feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone De Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Kate Millett, Shulamith Firestone and Germaine Greer comprehending strengthen our understanding of sex/gender distinction by exhibiting that gender is an artificial construction. They hold the view that gender discrimination is instigated and instilled into children from their childhood. For them, both sexes are culturally dealt with different parameters; men as socially superior whereas women as socially inferior. Their contribution in the construction of femininity not only brings to light the oppression of women owing to their biological differences, but also analyze the marginalisation of women which is "historically, cross-culturally and contemporarily" dependent on the three grounds of "reproduction, sexuality and socialization" (Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 74). Further, their arguments in the theorization of femininity through the lens of gender studies include patriarchy by which women as well as men, are encouraged to follow distinct "pathways" already "classified within society" (Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 03). To understand the oppression of men under patriarchy, this chapter also traces the construction of masculinity and the influence of postmodern theories on gender studies.

The concept of postmodernism began in the 1950s and 60s. Postmodernism insists on "fragmentation and a skeptical awareness of historical truth as it explored new modalities of consciousness, fragmentary time, and multi-perspectival spaces" (qtd. in Waugh 406). It has promoted cultural plurality and fluidity of thought in every sphere. The theory of postmodernism influences the concept of gender theorists also by highlighting the differences which exist amongst women and among men. Deducing the modernists' scrutiny of gender identity as fixed and stable, postmodernists emphasize on recognizing the differences taking object to subject study and reveal multi-perspective over a single truth. For them, gender identities vary according to the multiple strands such as "positionality, historical time, class, ethnicity and bodily abilities, as a structure of subjectivity, which can be vary greatly in different social locations, means that gendering can be seen as a process rather than as a role"

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(qtd. in Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 79, 81). Assailing the sexual binary and foregrounding the issues of alternate sexuality such as bi, hetero, homosexuality and transsexuality, they argue that socio-culturally constructed identity is a changing and shifting identity, not as an essence.

The emergence of identity in the 1990s was a primary domain of cultural studies under the influence of postmodernism. It was established that "subjectivity and identity are contingent culturally specific productions… and can not exist outside of cultural representations and acculturalization" (Barker 165). Hence the identity of a person is explained as changing, shifting and constructed through socialization and cultured resources. Theorists (Hall and Nelson) contend that identity is not natural or unified rather it is in "the process of becoming". Thus gender identity is a cultural product and masculinity and femininity both are socio-cultural constructions. In a "gendered culture the religious, legal, political, educational, and material institutions both create and reinforce expectations about how men and women should behave" (Hussein 59). Major gender theorists focus on the above-mentioned institutions which victimize women as well as men under patriarchy.

Masculinity studies developed as a response to women studies. The aim of this study is to emphasize the point that the constrains and conditioning of gender exist not only for women but also for men. The writers of men's studies contest Beauvoir's argument that "it goes without saying that he is a man" by establishing that "masculinities are historically constructed, mutable and contingent" (Adams and Savran 02), and claim that gender is "visible for both men and women" (Kimmel, *Gendered Society* 09). By incorporating to gay/lesbian/queer studies within the theoretical framework of Gender Studies, the umbrella term 'Masculinity studies' originated in the United States in the 1960s. Like women Studies, its construction is also socio-cultural and has "academic roots" (Harry Brod 1987). Historically, masculinity studies emerged as an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary area from biology, anthropology, psychology and sociology which facilitates our understanding of the account of masculine gender, how "gender is (a) representation" and how "the representation of gender is its construction" (qtd. in Carabi 07). As Lynne Segal in *Debating Masculinity* (*La masculinidad a debate*, Carabi and Armengol, 2007) argues that "genetics cannot explain everything, even less the complex characteristics of human behaviour socially

and historically constructed, such as sexual desire and violence. We are born male or female, but we always become men and women in a specific historical and socio-cultural context" (Carabi 05-6). It is also proved by many biologists that the biological differences can not account for the social differences and behavioural differences between men and women. Several anthropological studies also depict that gender differences are an outcome of cultural adaptations to the social organizations. F. Fasteau remarks that "sexual caste system is exploitative and destructive for the people of both sexes, and men are beginning to seriously question the price of being thought superior" (qtd. in Adam and Savran 04). Similarly, psychologists reveal that certain patriarchal precepts fabricate masculinity as predominant and potent. Masculinity is envisaged as strength, power, competence and competitiveness whereas femininity is frequently associated with passivity and emotional empathy. Sexual roles can be understood as "the body of attitudes, attributes and behaviors considered to be appropriate for men or women" (Carabi 07). Sex role in masculinity studies is a "tendency to theorize men's position within society" (Kimmel, *Rethinking Masculinity* 12) and points "the existence of different constructions of masculinity across time and between cultures" (Connell, *Masculinities* 27-34). As R. W. Connell argues, "The conceptualization of gender through role…reifies expectations and self-descriptions, exaggerates consensus, marginalizes questions of power, and cannot analyse historical change" (*A Very Straight Gay* 735-6). In *Gender and Power* (1987), he incorporates three foremost structures–"labour, power and cathexis–through which one can usefully explore the gender composition–gender regime–of institutions and organizations" (qtd. in Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 138). For him, Labour means not only assigned occupations between men and women but also "the nature and organization of work" (Connell, *Gender and Power* 102); power as a social construction is associated with control, authority and the account of hierarchies in institutions and amongst people; cathexis is related to the construction of emotional associations. As Lynne Segal interprets, "power and desire appear to be aspects and dimensions of all structures" (102), but as Connell argues, "none of the three structures is or can be independent of the others" (*Gender and Power* 116) but they are linked together. According to him to be masculine is to exhibit hegemonic masculinity which is scrutinized as a "historically mobile relation" (Connell, *Masculinities* 77) and "culturally dominant construction of masculinity" (Alsop et al. 140) within the social milieu:

An ideal-type hegemonic masculinity in Western society is recognized in most literature as hinging on heterosexuality, economic autonomy, being able to provide for one's family, being rational, being successful, keeping one's emotions in check, and above all not doing anything considered feminine. Hegemonic masculinity is firstly a 'cultural ideal' and is as such an uninhabitable goal for the majority of men. Secondly its content is fluid, common to do dominants ideals of masculinity in Western society is a rejection of both femininity and homosexuality. (Alsop et al.141-142)

Like gendered construction of women's identity, masculinity studies analyzes and justifies the identity of men which is also socially and culturally constructed. Therefore masculinity "occurs first not in a person but rests in cultural and language….It is a prefixed arrangement of the order of things that work together to perpetuate the interests of a masculine subject—who is no one in particular and so is everywhere—"he", a discourse of self-generation" (Parlow 216). It has also been argued by Judith Butler that "the gender performances which we enact are performances in accordance with a script – a script which supplies us with ideals of both masculinity and femininity" (qtd. in Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 142). Hegemonic masculinity defines real man as one who displays heterosexuality and possesses the power to govern woman. Similarly, homosexuality is criticized and condemned by hegemonic masculinity in social structure. In the words of Connell, homosexuality becomes "the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity" (*Masculinities* 78). M.S. Kimmel, elaborating homosexuality as a symbol of homophobic behaviour, writes, "Homophobia is more than the irrational fear of gay men, more than the fear that we may be perceived as gay…. Homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, that we are not real men" (*Theorizing Masculinities* 131). The critics hold the view that hegemonic masculinity not only oppresses femininity, it also condemns homosexuality. Research on "boys at school by Ghaill, Sewell, Frosh et al., Poynting and Donaldson, has suggested that hegemonic masculinity provides a discursive benchmark against which all masculine identities are evaluated, that includes issues surrounding heterosexuality, homophobia, misogyny, toughness, sport, competitiveness and

resistance to authority" (qtd. in Trickett 02). According to Anoop Nayak and Mary J. Kehily:

> The performance style [of homophobia] says more about the ongoing construction of the self, than the sexual identities of others…. In the constant struggle for coherence subject engage in various forms of splitting, projection and displacement which are 'articulated' in the homophobic performance. These processes of self-production appear to go largely unacknowledged by the individuals concerned as they struggle to achieve the illusion of internal consistency…. Homophobic performances are part of the self-convincing rituals of masculinity young men engage in. The performance is as much self as others, where heterosexual masculinities are constituted through action. These actions are not simply a momentary social performance for an external audience, but form a technique for styling masculine self- identity. (225)

Although the correlation between hegemonic masculinity and homophobia is the main subject in men's studies, the contribution of gay studies/theorists in men's studies is relevant as it exposes and analyzes the connection between gender and sexuality in the establishment of masculine identities. Gay activism movement, continuing to theorize masculinity, focuses on exploring hegemonic masculinity construction and proposes to have the freedom to opt for one's sexual orientation as an inalienable right. As Carrigan, Connell and Lee have pointed out, "Gay activists were the first contemporary group of men to address the problem of hegemonic masculinity outside of a clinical context" (583-84). For them, gay liberation movement challenges, "assumption by which heterosexuality is taken for granted as the natural order of things" (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 586). Gay studies have proved to be extremely advantageous, as Harry Brod has pointed out, "in correcting the unfortunate tendency within masculinity studies in the United States to presume too much commonality among men" (qtd. in Carabi 04). In *The History of Sexuality* (1976), Michel Foucault focuses on the account of masculinity as a socio-cultural conception where "the distinction between normative and dissident sexualities was culturally constructed and historically contingent.

Sexual perversion was not a universal constant but a category produced by the science of sexuality" (Adam and Savran 06). Along with gay studies, new men's studies is examined by queer theory which destabilizes the binaries of sex/ gender and the male body/the constructed masculinity, by explaining that masculinity solely pertains to men and femininity to women. Within these queer studies, we can see the important contribution of Judith Butler and Judith Halberstam who reject the validity of binary between sex and gender and establish masculinity exclusively for men and femininity for women. Judith Halberstam, following Butler's theory of performativity remarks that "masculinity (like femininity) is constituted by a set of culturally recognized acts that can be achieved by all individuals regardless of their sexed body" (Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 160). Queer theory is one of the postmodernist theories which celebrates the sexual differences by denaturalizing heterosexuality. Eve K. Sedgwick is of the opinion that "queer can refer to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" (08). It can be said that men's studies hold the view that the identity of masculine gender is the result of artificially constructed socio-cultural patterns and practices.

Postmodernist theorists like Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan display the significant function of language/discourse in the formation of sexuality and gender. They, eliminating the modernists' arguments on the approach of subject studies, analyze that subjectivity is a discursive construction. As observed by Foucault, language is entirely affected by the specific materials and historical conditions. According to him, "discourse offers speaking persons subject positions from which to make sense of the world while 'subjecting' speakers to the regulatory power of that discourse" (Barker and Galasinski 31). Influenced by postmodern theory, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Helene Cixous, the three prominent figures, bring forward the construction of femininity in language. They argue that subjectivity is an "effect of language or discourse and that subjects are fractured- we can take up multiple subject position offered to us in discourse" (Barker 22).

Drawing upon the analysis of Freud's unconscious and sexuality, Jacques Lacan adopts and further develops Freud's theory of pre-Oedipal in language. For him, there are two phases through which infants enter into culture. The first is the 'Mirror Phase' which

provides a sense of recognition to infants themselves as distinct beings. This is "the moment when the baby first joyously sees its image in the mirror or in the mother's mirroring look and misrecognizes itself as something apparently separate and distinct with edges, something with an apparently, separate, integrated identity" (Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 52). Within the mirror phase, a child does not know of any sexual differences. The second phase is 'Symbolic Order' which forms subjects (men). According to Lacan to become a subject we require a primary signifier i.e. phallus which is the first and universal sign of sexual difference through which the authority of a father is identified. Thus woman occupies a secondary signifier which is contemplated in the culture as a lack or absence. Women, therefore, "represent the lack of meaning and subjectivity in culture and can exist only in the spaces between the rational categories in language through which they sculpt out a meaningful, though unpredictable, existence. In this sense, 'masculinity' and 'femininity' emerge as unequal and complimentary in language, prefiguring traditional gender categories" (Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 52). Along with postmodernists, Lacan posits that gender identities are formulated and established by the conventions of rational language and hence socio-culturally constituted.

Lacan's preliminary ideas have played a noteworthy role in the influential works of Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous. Following de Beauvoir, they proved that "each of the apparently gender-neutral systems of thought–law, science, religion–are actually expressions of male thought, representing a masculine world-view" (Waugh 333).These French feminists deviate from de Beauvoir's theory by giving their priorities to language through which sexual difference is constructed. 'Feminine writing' as an imperfect paraphrase of the French word *ecriture feminine* is described as "a uniquely feminine style of writing, characterized by disruptions in the text; gaps, silences, puns, rhythms, and new images" (Waugh 335). Like Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva differentiate between the 'semiotic' (pre-symbolic phase) and the 'symbolic' phases through *ecriture feminine*. Helene Cixous' concept of *ecriture feminine* stands for the realm of semiotic which is eccentric, incomprehensible and inconsistent. Masculine language, on the other hand, refers to the symbolic as linear, logical, realistic and authoritative. Further, Cixous in her famous essay *Sorties* (1975) describes, "the process of gender identity in language by which male reason is ordered as a series of binary oppositions, in which one half of the binary is always superior to

the other half: for example, male/female, activity/passivity, culture/nature" (Waugh 336). In this context of understanding, women are always considered as 'other' and inferior. Further, Cixous proposes the idea of "the other bisexuality" to reform women's identity (Cixous and Clement 84). As opposed to the "classic concept of bisexuality" she defines "the other bisexuality" as "multiple, variable and ever-changing, consisting as it does of the non-exclusion either of the difference or of one sex" (Moi 107). She recommends that *ecriture feminine* writing can be appropriated by either sex and proposes a new alternative future by subverting the binary system in which women can celebrate their sexual difference and marginality, as "the other bisexuality doesn't annul differences but stirs them up, pursues them, increases them" (Moi 107).

According to Julia Kristeva, "Subjects are always both semiotic and symbolic" ("Revolution in Poetic Language" *Kristeva Reader* 93). Language, for her, is symbolic where symbolic is, "the mechanism by which the body can signify itself and involves the regulation of the semiotic by the symbolic" (Barker 242). While talking about femininity she argues that "to believe that one 'is a woman' is almost as absurd and obscurantist as to believe that one 'is a man'" (Moi 162). She explains that in the pre-Oedipal phase, infants are not able to identify their sexual difference as male and female but by entering in the symbolic phase they become familiar as sexually different identities. She too mentions that "sexual identities are a matter of representation" (Barker 243) and that "culture requires a double discourse which symbolizes not only the meaning of the father and the need for law and boundaries on phantasy but also the subversive meaning of the mother and unconscious desire" (Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 56).

Following Cixous's *ecriture feminine*, Luce Irigary also unfolds the construction of femininity in language as "plural, multiple, decentred and unidentifiable" (Moi 143,146) and examines that "female sexuality has always been conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters" (qtd. in Nayar 99). Irigary, countering the binary structure argues that woman is not one, but innumerable. The "multiplicity of femininity defies the masculine compulsion to create strict boundaries between self and other in order to define a stable, indivisible self" (Waugh 336). Irigary, in Symbolic phase, foregrounds the dominated mother-daughter relationship in which a small space is sanctioned to mother for her daughter under the

influence of patriarchy. For her, such a language provides separate identities to mother and daughter redefining motherhood in explicitly sexual conditions. Cixous, Irigary and Kristeva's distinctive ideas in language construct gender identities, which have fluidity and multiplicity. They emphasize on repositioning of 'symbolic order'. Accordingly, negatively considered femininity is seen in a positive light and challenges gender identities as unfixed. For Cixous, Irigary and Kristeva, "the relational definition of femininity is as shifting as the various forms of patriarchy itself" (Moi 165). These French critics examine the construction and marginalisation of both masculine/ feminine genders but argue in favour of the liberation of women only. Kristeva emphasizes the "multiplicity of female expressions and preoccupations" ("Women's Time", *Kristeva Reader* 193).

Research by various modernist and postmodernist theorists highlighted how gender, as a normative construct, socially and culturally instituted, "shapes the mind according to the universal principle of gender polarity" (Pedroni 33). Their arguments investigate that not only women but also men are exploited by patriarchal culture. The present work in the thesis explores the construction of gender from 1968 onwards by reviewing the major works of gender theorists.

Robert Jesse Stoller's *Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity* (1968) first used the word gender for the occurrence of transsexual identity by challenging Freud's theory of biological bisexuality. For Freud, "a person's physical sexual attributes, mental attitudes and objects of desire could vary independently of one another; so that a man with predominantly male characteristics and also masculine in his erotic life may still be inverted in respect to his object, loving only men instead of women" (qtd. in Glover and Kaplan xx). In similar framework, Stoller's notion of gender exposes the complexities of those "tremendous areas of behaviour, feelings, thoughts, and fantasies that are related to the sexes and yet do not have primarily biological connotations" (ix). He mentions that sex is separate from gender. For him, sex is:

> …chromosomes, external genitalia, internal genitalia, gonads, hormonal states and secondary sex characteristics....One's sex, then, is determined by an algebraic sum of all these qualities, and as is obvious, most people fall under one of two separate bell curves, the

one of which is called 'male' and the other 'female'. (Oakley, *The Ann Oakley Reader* 08)

Further Stoller explains that those aspect of sexuality which are called gender "are primarily culturally determined" (xiii) and distinguishes analytically between 'gender role' and 'gender identity' arguing that:

> 'Gender identity' starts with the knowledge and awareness, whether conscious or unconscious, that one belongs to one sex and not the other, though as one develops, gender identity becomes much more complicated, so that, for example, one may sense himself as not only a male but a masculine man or an effeminate man or even as a man who fantasies being a woman. 'Gender role' is the overt behaviour one displays in society, the role which he plays, especially with other people. (Stoller 09-10)

His exploration of 'gender role' and 'gender identity' is similar to the ideas of Money and Ehrhardt who mention, "gender role is the public expression of gender identity, and gender identity is the private expression of gender role" (Money and Ehrhardt 04). Stoller's theory of gender examines that 'normal' male occupies a preponderance of masculinity whereas 'normal' female belongs to a preponderance of femininity. Therefore, gender i.e. masculinity/femininity is the account of socio-cultural influences and practices.

A similar idea is conveyed by Ann Oakley in the early 1970s. She extends a discussion on the understanding of gender as "a matter of culture: it refers to the social classification into 'masculine' and 'feminine' (*Sex, Gender and Society* 16). She exemplifies the biological differences between male and female as fixed. However just as "the constancy of sex must be admitted, but so also must the variability of gender" (*Sex, Gender and Society* 16). Further, her works elaborate quite clearly that "the aura of naturalness and inevitability that surrounds gender - differentiation in modern society comes, not from biological necessity, but from the beliefs people hold about it" (*The Ann Oakley Reader* 08-9). Oakley, along with the distinction between sex/ gender, argues that biological differences of both

sexes are manipulated to exaggerate patriarchy, whereby women's mobility and freedom is constricted to spheres like marriage, domestic life and child rearing. Women as objects in the patriarchal society have to follow certain socially constructed roles whereas men as subjects need not follow similar roles. Men are, in other words, not impeded by patriarchy. According to Oakley, "in many cultures women do most of the heavy carrying and other hard labour, but this is thought less important than the lighter tasks of men typically perform" (*Sex, Gender and Society* 141). As M. Gatens has rightly pointed out that "Oakley's efforts to get away from conventional thinking about women that focused on their bodies were important but she tended to see sexed bodies, as a kind of blank slate on which social gender was written" (qtd. in Holmes 47).

Gayle Rubin's essay "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" (1975) outlines 'a sex/gender system' that is "a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention" (165). Further, her argument is to underscore the concept of separation of gender from sex; 'sex' through which we recognize our desires and 'gender' refers to the cultural practices which facilitate these desires to be played. Therefore, she identifies gender as the "socially imposed division of the sexes" (Rubin 179). According to her, "Gender inequality and heterosexuality were inseparable forces, with gender referring not only to systematic identification with one's biological sex but also to the routine enforcement of opposite sex desire" (Ward and Schneider 433). Men/Women are, for Rubin, "the social relations of sexuality" that are placed into "mutually exclusive categories" (179-80). She classifies that:

> Men and women are, of course, different. But they are not as different as day and night, earth and sky, yin and yang, life and death. In fact, from the standpoint of nature, men and women are closer to each other than either is to anything else – for instance, mountains, kangaroos, or coconut palms. The idea that men and women are more different from one another than either is from anything else must come from somewhere other than nature…Far from being an expression of natural differences, exclusive gender identity is the

suppression of natural similarities. It requires repression: in men, of whatever is the local version of 'feminine' traits; in women, of the local definition of 'masculine' traits. The division of the sexes has the effect of repressing some of the personality characteristics of virtually everyone, men and women. (Rubin 179-80)

Rubin examines the causes of marginalization of women by analyzing Marx, Freud and Levi-Strauss's theories. She further investigates the gender difference between men and women which are produced by social and political actions. The investigation of Rubin questions that "the analysis of the reproduction of labour power does not even explain why it is usually women who do domestic work in the home, rather than men" (535). She too undermines the theory of kinship exploring that however men "have certain rights in their female kin" whereas "women do not have the same rights either to themselves or to their male kin" (Rubin175). She describes, an "androgynous and genderless (though not sexless society) in which ones sexual category doesn't imprison one in any compulsory gender order" (Rubin 165). Further in her essay "Thinking Sex" (1984), Rubin argues in favour of Michel Foucault's argument that sex is formed by the social norms/patterns and not according to the biological requirement and these social norms/patterns vary according to different time and periods. She also mentions:

Sexuality is political. It is organized into systems of power, which reward and encourage some individuals and activities, while punishing and suppressing others. Like the capitalist organization of labour and its distribution of rewards and powers, the modern sexual system has been the object of political struggle since it emerged and as it has evolved. But if the disputes between labour and capital are mystified, sexual conflicts are completely camouflaged. (Rubin, "Thinking Sex" 309)

The phrase 'a sex/gender system' attempts Rubin's argument that "gender affects the operation of the sexual system, and the sexual system has had gender-specific manifestations. But although sex and gender are related, they are not the same thing, and they form the basis of two distinct arenas of social practice" (qtd. in Vance 308).

Christne Delphy emphasizes the materialist approach for the construction of gender. It seeks to explain the causes of exploitation of women which are capitalism and patriarchy instead of biological differences. According to her, it is through the institution of marriage, the main enemy that patriarchy victimizes women and men exploit women's economic, sexual and reproductive labour. In *Rethinking Sex and Gender* (1984), Delphy traces sex as a "sign- not a natural fact presiding the hierarchical division of gender" (qtd. in Sandford 31), it is "a specific social relation that serves to allow social recognition and identification of those who are dominant and those who are dominated" (Delphy 69). Thus her writing on the category of gender exposes that sex is determined by gender. Moreover, she puts forward how "gender, as a fundamentally economic division, is entirely independent of sex (whereas, she thinks, speaking of 'gender' would disguise this independence, given the normal view that because there are two sexes there must be two genders)" (qtd. in Stone 04).

Following Delphy, Monique Wittig also depicts patriarchy as dominating and exploiting in which heterosexuality is normal, natural, central and universal which generates and reinforces gender inequality in the society. Her examination of gender and sex categories mentions that "there is no sex. There is sex but that is oppressed and sex is oppressor. It is oppression that creates sex and not the contrary" (Wittig, "Category of Sex" 02). She is of the opinion that gender structures the identity of sex through heterosexuality. The category of sex is "the product of heterosexual society in which men appropriate for themselves the reproduction and production of women and also by their physical persons by means of the marriage contract" (Wittig, "Category of Sex" 06). She claims that the identity of women is constructed through existing and prevalent gender norms/roles which give priority to heterosexuality. In this context, she describes lesbian as "a not-woman, a not-man, a product of society, not a product of nature, for there is no nature in society," as "runaways, fugitive slaves", "standing at the outposts of the human", "located philosophically (politically) beyond the categories of sex" (Wittig, *The Straight Mind* 13, 45, 46, 47). These "provocative descriptions are used positively by Wittig because this neo-human position" (qtd. in Scanlon 74) "represents historically and paradoxically the most human point of view" (*The Straight Mind* 46). Indeed, the power of the lesbian is unique:

Lesbianism provides for the moment the only social form in which we can live freely. Lesbian is the only concept I know of which is beyond the categories of sex (woman and man), because the designated subject (lesbian) is not a woman, either economically, or politically, or ideologically. (Wittig, *The Straight Mind* 20)

In short, we summarize Wittig's contribution as a rejection of the biological account of sex as artifice and upholding gender as a core definition of social relations.

Nancy Chodorow, like other gender theorists, discards biological approaches, taking the view that "gender development is determined largely around the issues of emotional intimacy and separation in a mother-child relationship rather than difference and bisexual desire" (qtd. in Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 59). Deducing biological theories, she delineates that the socialization of gender takes place in early infancy which, "further builds on and reinforces these unconsciously developed ego boundaries finally producing feminine and masculine persons" (Chodorow, "Family Structure" 203). Her research is to explain 'Object-relations' in *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) which claims that "masculine and feminine personality—arise from a 'universal' nuclear family structure in which one heterosexual female parent is primarily responsible for the exclusive mothering of children" (qtd. in Segura and Pierce 63). However, as Chodorow mentions that it is women alone who are responsible for nurturing for small children and for psychologically conditioning of girls and boys since their childhood according to the norms of society. Personality, for Chodorow, is "a result of a boy's or girl's social-relational experiences from earliest infancy....The nature and quality of the social relationships that the child experiences are [unconsciously] appropriated, internalised, and organised by her/him and come to constitute her/his personality" (*Woman, Culture and Society* 45). The sexual division of labour in mothering provides a basis for differentiating "public" and "domestic" emphasizing by Chodorow that "these spheres are not equal, and since the public sphere dominates the domestic ...men dominate women" (*The Reproduction of Mothering* 10). For her, the account of femininity is shaped by the socio-cultural supported beliefs and perceptions which reinforce masculinity and femininity. Chodorow suggests shared parenting as one of the solutions to overcome the

gender inequality which will help in successful growth and development of children without preferring masculinity over femininity.

Adrienne Rich's essay on "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1979) demolishes existing compulsory heterosexuality in the society by suggesting the notion of women to women relationship. For Rich, this relationship, which may be either a lesbian existence or a lesbian continuum, is the appropriate relationship amongst women. While differentiating the terms "lesbian existence" and "lesbian continuum", she clarifies 'lesbian existence' as "women living together, not necessarily in a sexual relationship but rather in an environment of loving , sharing both emotional and political support" (qtd. in Also, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 119); and 'lesbian continuum'  as "a range – through each woman's life and throughout history – of woman identified experience, not simply the fact that a woman had had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman" (Rich 239).

The marginalization of women, according to Rich, is rooted in the routine socialization through family, media and the assignment of motherhood. In a similar vein, Rich challenges the previous theories of sex and gender developed by biological and psychological approaches. Rich promulgates the account of lesbianism as the natural and authentic identity of women by emphasising on "the demolition of heterosexual desire is a necessary step on the route to women's liberation" (Jeffreys, *Anticlimax* 312). For her, heterosexuality is propagandized and imposed on women by patriarchy to make them inferior sexually, economically, psychologically, socially and politically. Like Stevi Jackson, Rich believes that "sexuality as just one aspect of women's oppression and gender inequality and as a set of social practices that has to be contextualized in relation to other gendered institutions and social processes" (qtd. in Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 117). Sexuality "per se is neither inherently oppressive to women nor inherently liberating. It has no intrinsic qualities – good or bad. Since it is a social phenomenon, it is particular, culturally and historically rooted, forms of sexuality which are oppressive" (Jackson, *Heterosexuality in Question* 04). Rich's theory of lesbianism sets the structure of "naturalistic essentialism" which proves "female heterosexuality is socially constructed and female homosexuality is

natural" (qtd. in Weeks 46). However her framework of lesbianism is criticized by many critics.

Another gender theorist who analyzes and continues a discussion on the distinction between sex and gender is Catherine MacKinnon. Her work on gender construction illuminates that the theory of gender is produced by the theory of sexuality. MacKinnon comments in this context, "sex as gender and sex as sexuality are thus defined in terms of each other, but it is sexuality that determines gender, not the other way around" (531) and further sexuality is explained by her as a "social process which creates, organizes, expresses, and directs desire, creating the social beings we know as women and men, as their relations create society" (MacKinnon 516). Her investigation also explores the socialization of women in which their foremost goal is to satisfy men by having sex, their identities are merely seen as sexual objects. In the words of MacKinnon, the socialization of gender is "the process through which women come to identify themselves as sexual beings, as beings that exist for men. It is that process through which women internalize (make their own) a male image of their sexuality as their identity as women" (531). Indeed sexual desire, for her, is "socially constituted and inevitably gendered, and that heterosexual desire is premised on gender difference – on the sexual 'otherness' of the desired object" (Gwynne 371). Stevi Jackson too argues that "this difference is not an anatomical one but a social one: it is the hierarchy of gender, since it is this hierarchy which renders anatomical differences socially and erotically significant" (*Feminism and Sexuality: A Reader* 176). Along with Rich, MacKinnon criticises the establishment of compulsory heterosexuality in which women's characterization is seen as "lack of power" which is subjugated and exploited by men. In this context, men are placed in the sexually dominant position whereas women belong to sexually submissive and inferior position. MacKinnon also equates Marxists' analysis of capitalism with feminist theory of sexuality and gender by asserting that as the proletariat are oppressed by the bourgeoisie, women as a group are exploited by men. According to her, the shackles of heterosexuality as rape, incest, sexual harassment, pornography, prostitution and domestic abuse can be demolished by cancelling the validation of compulsory heterosexuality.

Gender theorists like Harold Gaefinkel; Sussane Kessler and MacKenn; Erving Goffman; Candance West and Don H. Zimmerman proposed the ethnomethodological

account of gender construction by rejecting the biological theories. According to Erving Goffman, gender can be understood as "the culturally established correlates of sex" (*Gender Advertisements* 01). She, with the dramaturgical approach to gender, points out that men and women are actors who adopt social scripts in order to perform their best by depending upon the social conditions. Her theory reveals 'displaying gender' and "displays are defined as events indicating the identity, mood, intent, expectations, and relative relations of actors" (qtd. in Holmes 52). Talking about displays of gender, she argues that it is "conventional, stylized, formal or informal and sometimes optional" (qtd. in Holmes 52). For her, displays of gender follow the social pattern in which the disparity between men and women come out as natural. Thus she believes that "the cumulative effect of gender displays is to "constitute the hierarchy" between men and women" (Goffman, *Gender Advertisements* 06). Goffman along with Gaefinkel, Kessler and MacKenn rejects the concept of sex over gender and even accepts the account of gender over sex. These theorists' research prioritizes the construction of gender which determines the account of sex which is an influence rather than a cause of gendered social practices.

C. West and D. H. Zimmerman's prominent article *Doing Gender* 1987, dovetails numerous arguments on the construction of gender. "Doing Gender", according to them, is achieved by doing acts i.e. "a routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment" (West and Zimmerman 126). Furthermore, doing act or doing gender can be described as, "the interactional process of crafting gender identities that are then presumed to reflect and naturally derive from biology" (Schilt and Westbrook 442). According to West and Zimmerman, by doing gender, masculinity and femininity exist in the social structure where, "normative expectations for men and women maintain gender inequality as strictures of masculinity push men to do dominance and strictures of femininity push women to do submission" (qtd. in Schilt and Westbrook 443). They put spotlight on three categories, which are sex, sex category and gender. Elaborating these three categories, they exhibit that 'sex' is biology as male or female; 'sex category' can be defined as the application of sex criteria which can be changed into other categories such as the category of transsexual; gender is "the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category" whereas 'doing gender' is "a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast

particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine "natures" (West and Zimmerman126-27). West and Zimmerman have also included the investigation of Barrie Thorne in their article, who observes that "conceptualizing gender as a role makes it difficult to assess its influence on other roles and reduces its explanatory usefulness in discussions of power and inequality. Drawing on Rubin, Thorne calls for a reconceptualization of women and men is distinct social groups, constituted" (qtd. in West and Zimmerman 129) in "concrete, historically changing – and generally unequal – social relationships" (Thorne 11).

West and Zimmerman, exploring the distinction between men and women as neither natural nor biological, believe in the theory of Beauvoir which claims "one is not born a woman; rather, one becomes a woman", and prove that gender is performative. They too argue against constituted differences between girls and boys which are applied to develop and reinforce the "essentialness" of gender. In a "delightful account of the "arrangement between the sexes," Goffman observes that "the creation of a variety of institutionalized frameworks through which our "natural, normal sexedness" can be enacted" (qtd. in West and Zimmerman 137). Moreover, Goffman mentions that:

> The functioning of sex-differentiated organs is involved, but there is nothing in this functioning that biologically recommends segregation; that the arrangement is a totally cultural matter… toilet segregation is presented as a natural consequence of the difference between the sexclasses when in fact it is a means of honoring, if not producing, this difference. ("The Arrangement between the Sexes" 316)

In short, West and Zimmerman's landmark article alerts men and women to the constructed expressions which appear natural and are an integrated part of "doing gender".

Judith Butler with her most powerful arguments in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) moderates the pervasive category of sex/gender. Her influential arguments in the ethnomethodological account of gender construction originate and develop the theory of performativity. For her, "the performance constitutes the real: Gender is a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* viii). Analyzing and elaborating sex as not a natural category, Butler argues that "there is no

recourse to a body that has not already been interpreted by cultural meanings, hence sex could not qualify as a prediscursive anatomical facticity" (*Gender Trouble* 08). Our understanding of "material, anatomical differences is mediated through our cultural frame of meaning. Rather than gender following from biology" (qtd. in Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 97). For her, gender norms create biological sense in accordance with the patriarchal society in which heterosexuality is focal and compulsory. Therefore, sexes are only divided into male and female identities. Then it is the "epistemic regime of presumptive heterosexuality" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 08). She insists on the performance of gender as 'artifice' which is formed by us not naturally and we create "the illusion of gender through our performance, but this does not imply gender can be changed like a dress. Although gender is constructed, it is an internalized role that, as part of our identity, becomes second nature" (Schöllhammer 06). Her theory, destabilizing the binary of gender categories, affirms that the perverse gender differences are the effect of social and cultural practices believing in Beauvoir's theory "not biological or psychological differences" but created. Monique Wittig's influential view of lesbianism, according to Butler, as a new notion "beyond the categories of sex" (*The Lesbian* 53). For her, Wittig's emphasis on lesbianism suggests a way through which wipes away the compulsory heterosexuality. Like Michel Foucault, Butler strengthens the formation of subjectivity as discursive product. Butler's theory of performativity "ignores those material social relations which underpin the category of sex" (Jackson, "Gender and Heterosexuality" 17). Moreover, she, in *Gender Trouble* which is translated into twenty different languages, argues that there is no "doer behind the deed" (Butler 25) even men and women's repetitive performances produce doer. Talking about a vexed issue gender, Butler heightens the notion of performance or deed which constitutes a core identity of gender; gender structures our biological understanding of sex as male and female. Drawing attention to performativity, she explains how we perform various acts and our gestures through body to accrue gender identity. In her view, sex is a discursive category, but it is not possible to reject the corporeal of body on which gender identity existed, "for surely bodies live, and die; eat and sleep; feel pain, pleasure; endure illness and violence; and these 'facts'…cannot be dismissed as mere constructions". In order to overcome this dilemma she takes into account, "that bodies only appear, only endure, only live within the productive constraints of certain highly gendered regulatory norms" (Butler, *Bodies that*

*matter* xi). Thus, she argues that gender/sex both categories are artificially constructed by social and gender practices. According to her, gender is 'corporeal style' but "gender does not appeal to an ontological essence granted by nature" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 136). It is essential to cite her comments in detail at this point. Analyzing performativity, Butler illuminates:

> The notion of an original or primary gender is often parodied within the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing, and the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities [in lesbian cultures]. Within feminist theory, such parodic identities have been understood to be either degrading to women, in the case of drag or cross-dressing, or uncritical appropriation of sex role stereotyping from within the practice of heterosexuality, especially in case of butch–femme lesbian identities. But the relation between the 'imitation' and the 'original' is, I think, more complicated than that critique generally allows. Moreover, it gives us a clue to the way in which the relationship between primary identification – that is, the original meanings accorded to gender – and subsequent gender experience might be reframed. The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance. If the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance. (*Gender Trouble* 137)

Butler is to be famous not only for her most influential theory of performativity, but also recognizes as the queen of queer theory. Like other queer theorists such as Annamarie Jagose, Steven Seidman, Butler also claims that identities are numerous, unstable, fragmented,

and continually shifting. Through queer theory in the theories of gender, Butler's aim is to provide "a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexuality definition" (Roseneil 01). She mentions:

> Queer theory reflects the 'queer tendencies' of postmodernity, which has reorganized relations of sexuality. A full account of these queer tendencies would cover the self-critical nature of queer, the ways in which heterosexual relations have become less socially central, a move towards reflecting on heterosexuality as not necessarily self-evident, and the celebration of the queer within contemporary culture. (qtd. in Holmes 82)

Discussion on the definitions of homo/heterosexuality within queer theory, Butler shifts to intersexuality and transsexuality, lesbian and gay studies which are looked down by women's studies. Butler's remarkable performativity and queer theories make stronger our understanding of gender theory.

Another major contribution has been made by Joan Wallach Scott in her book *Gender and the Politics of History* 1999. She formulates gender as the "social organization of sexual differences" and claims that "sexual difference is not, then, the originary cause from which social organization ultimately can be derived. It is instead a variable social organization that itself must be explained" (Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* 02). Scott, conceding the misrepresented socialization of gender and rejecting Foucault's argument, asserts that "history's representation of the past helps construct gender for the present" (*Gender and the Politics of History* 02). According to her, "gender categories are defined in terms of how one is socially positioned, where this is a function of, e.g., how one is viewed, how one is treated, and how one's life is structured socially, legally, and economically; gender is not defined in terms of an individual's intrinsic physical or psychological features" (qtd. in Haslanger 38). Moreover, she analyzes the social organization of gender based on the unequal relationship of the sexes in her article *Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis* (1986). The theory of gender according to Scott, as "a substitute for 'women'... seems to fit within the scientific terminology of social science and thus dissociates itself from the (supposedly strident) politics of feminism" (1056). Further, gender in her characterization is "a social

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category imposed on a sexed body" (qtd. in Scott, *Gender: A Useful Category* 1056) and a societal trait of sex which differentiates social roles that are assigned to men and women. Scott identifies two components and numerous subsets of gender which are interrelated but "must be analytically distinct. The core of the definition rests on an integral connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (Scott, *Gender: A Useful Category* 1067).

Joan William in *Unbending Gender* (2000) exemplifies three grounds i.e. class, work and family which are the site of intense gender ideology through which women are impoverished socially and economically. She identifies "the contours of a complex gender ideology as domesticity and proffers domesticity as an essential tool in the economic construction of gender" (qtd. in Davis 834). According to her, in the structure of gender norms, domesticity links masculinity to earn money outside of home as a paid employee and femininity as unpaid worker whose duty is to care within home without any payment. In the words of Marx and Engles:

> The division of labour in which (social) contradictions are implicit, and which in its turn is based on the natural division of labour in the family and the separation of society into individual families opposed to one another, simultaneously implies the *distribution*, and indeed the *unequal* distribution, both quantitative and qualitative, of labour and its products, hence property, the nucleus, the first form of which lies in the family, where wife and children are slaves of the husband. This latent slavery in the family...is the first form the property... (and) corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists, who call it the power of disposing of the labour-power of others. (46)

According to William, gender power is governed by class, family and work arena which generate the marginalization of women economically as well as sexually. Moreover, this power "may well feel like men with their feet on our necks in the context of rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment, but in the work/family context it more often feels like a force field pulling women into traditionally masculine ones" (qtd. in Davis 846). Like

other gender theorists, Williams welcomes women's entry in the world outside of their houses.

Aforementioned arguments on the origin and evolution of gender by major modernist as well as postmodernist theorists unambiguously establish that the construction of gender i.e. masculinity and femininity is the effect of socio-cultural patterns, trends, relations and practices. The chapter traces the origin of the term 'gender' — *gendre*, *genre*, *genus, gene, and genesis* — in many languages such as Latin, Spanish, German, Greek, French, Russian, Swedish and English. Analyzing the origin and changed meanings of gender, this chapter outlines the evolution of the word gender since 14th century. The modernist theorists like Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Kate Millett, Shulamith Firestone and Germaine Greer investigate the central grounds of marginalization of women based on the biological differences through which the position of women is considered to be as inferior and secondary, on the other hand men are placed on dominating and socially superior status. These theorists provide a range of factors which are responsible for the construction of femininity as exploitative and oppressive. They examine that women are exploited socially, mentally, psychologically and sexually in the frame of patriarchal society. The modernist feminists explain that in patriarchy women are like slaves or inferior beings because of their sex which is considered as "second sex". Building further on this argument, postmodernist theorists emphasize on the recognition and celebration of differences between and among men and women.

Postmodernist theorists, refuting the traditional essentialist practices which identified the common condition of 'being a man or woman', insist on multiple truth over single reality and the celebration of differences amongst women and men. Demolishing the fixed and stable identity, they analyze shifting approach of gender which is formed through social relations by applying cultural norms. They argue that socio-culturally constructed identity is a changing and shifting identity. Postmodernist theorists denaturalize the sexual binary and foreground the issues of alternate sexuality such as bi, hetero, homo and transsexuality. Their scrutiny prove that both constructions i.e. the construction of masculinity and femininity are structured by social roles and cultural expectations. In similar vein, both men and women are victimized by patriarchy. In men's studies, Connell and Kimmel analytically explore the

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concepts of hegemonic masculinity, heterosexuality and homophobia as social products. Further, gay and queer studies contribute to gender studies by destabling the binary of sex and gender. Influencing by postmodern theory, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous highlight the construction of femininity in and through language. Their observation of *ecriture feminine* calls it as a political aspect and they differentiate between the 'semiotic' (pre-symbolic phase) and the 'symbolic' phases. According to them, *ecriture feminine* stands for the realm of semiotic which is eccentric, incomprehensible and inconsistent. Masculine language, on the other hand, refers to the symbolic as linear, logical, realistic and authoritative. Gender theorists like R. J. Stoller, A. Oakley, G. Rubin, C. Delphy, M. Wittig, N. Chodorow, A. Rich, C. MacKinnon, C. West, D. H. Zimmerman, J. Butler, J. W. Scott and J. William's works analytically discuss the theories of gender and sex and suggest that gender is more influential a feature than sex. With the strongest statements, West and Zimmerman and Butler investigate that gender is an achieved category. In other words, doing is gender and gender is achieved by doing deeds. Our performances make us men and women. On the bases of various gender theories, the above mentioned deliberation summarizes that gender is structured and organized by social relations and practices in which man is dominance and woman is sub-ordinance.

It is pertinent to explain the term 'trope' in detail at this point. The word 'trope' is derived from the "Greek τρόπος (*tropos*), 'turn, direction, way', taken from the verb τρέπειν (*trepein*), 'to turn, to direct, to alter, to change'. Trope has also come to be used for describing commonly recurring motifs or clichés in creative works" ("Trope". Web.). Oxford Dictionaries also define 'trope' as "a significant or recurrent theme; a motif" (*Oxford Dictionaries* Web.). According to Abrams and Harpham, 'Tropes' means "turns and conversions" which signify crucial narrative movements. For them, "tropes in which words or phrases are used in a way that effects a conspicuous change in what we take to be their standard meaning" (Abrams and Harpham 130). The thesis will investigate tropes of gender as they emerge on the basis of previous discussion and enumerated later in the chapters in the context of the novels of Manju Kapur namely, *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008), and *Custody* (2011). Within the theoretical framework of modernism (e.g. Beauvoir, Friedan, Millett, Firestone, and Greer) and postmodernism (e.g. Kristeva, Cixous, Irigaray, Stoller, Oakley, Rubin, Delphy, Wittig,

Chodorow, Rich, MacKinnon, West, Zimmerman, Butler, Scott and William), the present work examines the novels of Kapur to identify the presence of various tropes of gender which strongly influence the identity and existence of a woman. These tropes of gender cause the exploitation of women as well as of men. These tropes of gender are cultural conditioning, patriarchy, socialization, education, economy, domesticity, marriage, dowry, motherhood and sexuality. Analyzing the novels from the perspective of tropes of gender, the present research work explores a wide range of factors responsible for gendering identity of women as inferior and subordinate under patriarchy. The marginalization and exploitation of women as weaker and secondary sex is not only linked to biology, but also associated with their conditioning and socialization. In the patriarchal society, their oppression begins from childhood and continues till death. Throughout their life, women are oppressed because of their inferior position owing to the tropes of gender, viz., cultural conditioning, patriarchal socialization, exploitative nature of the institution of family, skewed education, constricted economic spaces, domesticity, undue significance attached to marriage, dowry system and pre-conceived societal norms regarding motherhood. Kapur's novels examine how the above-mentioned tropes of gender are responsible for shaping the construction of masculinity and femininity. The exploration of Kapur's novels displays that gender is more effective in determining the identity of men and women in comparison to sexuality. Furthermore, her novels explain that unequal social relations, institutions, cultural conditioning and different upbringing instructions construct women's identity as passive, deficient and suppressed. Additionally, women are always expected by a male dominated society to follow the path of sacrifices. Traditionally, even as a child, girls are trained to maintain femininity in accordance with social norms. The socialization of girls imposes that their duties and capabilities are different from boys and labels them as passive, fragile and weak. Domesticity is another governing factor which conditions women to believe that their real education is in the kitchen. Family plays a vital role to develop the understanding of conventional gender roles in girls and boys. Simone de Beauvoir appropriately delineates how family enslaves girls and boys to follow the hierarchical roles of gender from their very childhood. A girl child is taught that "to please she must try to please" others whereas the same roles are not passed to a boy child. Beauvoir uses the phrase "he is please them by not appearing to seek to please them" to emphatically put across this argument (298, 308). According to Beauvoir, "A

good deal of the housework is within the capability of a very young child; the boy is commonly excused, but his sister is allowed, even asked, to sweep, dust, peel potatoes, wash the baby, keep an eye on cooking" (312). Thus it is an important component which psychologically influences a child and the child learns different gender norms and thereby they get a sense of being a boy and a girl.

Education also conveys the prevalent societal norms in which women's personalities have been groomed to shoulder household responsibilities (such as cooking, washing, cleaning and taking care of children) and men's personalities have been trained to bear economic responsibilities. Women are economically impoverished owing to their education which has limited and different objectives from those of men. They are restricted from opting for those subjects which are not in consonance with conventional feminine roles. On the other hand men are encouraged to opt for those disciplines which may lead them to socially successful and financially enriching profession. Women receive education in different perspectives e.g. their education focuses on teaching them to take better care of the domestic chores and married life. In the patriarchal system women learn to be socially inferior and economically dependent on men by their formal and informal education. To access professional career is often considered to be unimportant and an obstacle in the suitable marriage of women. The lack of proper education and resultant secondary position in public and private domains leads women to lose confidence in decision-making. Patriarchal society treats men as competitive, aggressive and intelligent and considers them to be fit for public domain; whereas women are considered to be suitable for household activities. The limited opportunities of women's education and economic dependence compel them often for accepting confined roles within home.

Marriage as a social institution has a perpetual impact on the lives of men and women. The ceremony of marriage is considered to be compulsory for imparting social reputation to women. According to Beauvoir, "Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society" (445). Since their formative years, girls are groomed and trained for marriage by their families. Gender stereotypes regard women's marriage as the foremost and almost mandatory institution which provides them social dignity and economic security. Without marriage, they are looked down upon, criticized and treated as insecure and pariah.

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Over the centuries, the socialization of femininity conditions women to believe that their sexual functions are designed to please and satisfy their husbands' sexual needs. Women are treated as sexual objects for men in their marital homes. Kapur aptly exhibits the sufferings of forced sex on women within the institution of marriage. Patriarchal society looks at physical gratification as a duty of women toward their counterparts. Gender hierarchy regards heterosexuality as a normal sexuality which gives privilege to men and women are oppressed by men on the basis of their sexuality. Pervasive acceptance of compulsory heterosexuality is the foundation of male power and men use it to subjugate women. Women face numerous problems within the institution of marriage on the ground of their sexuality because men control not only their sexual freedom, but also their reproductive capacities. Patriarchal conditioning believes that the fulfilment of women lies in childbearing and childrearing. Social norms and traits accept that one of the major purposes of marriage is procreation of offspring. Within marriage, a woman who cannot produce a child, is inflicted with many taunts by her family and by society. Patriarchal beliefs suggest that a woman's worth is measured by her fertility. Inability of a couple to have children is often blamed on the woman alone as the phallus pride does not allow man to doubt his own sexual prowesses. Through the social institution of marriage, men manipulate women's capacity of maternity. Another trope of gender which has been taken up by Manju Kapur effectively is the pressure on women to give birth to a male child. The novels of Kapur bring our attention to the Indian mind-set which exhibits an explicit preference for a male child. Indian society gives a definite priority to a male. Thus in the Indian society the status of the mother of a son is superior and is admired for giving a *kuldeepak,* while the status of a daughter's mother is inferior. The thesis attempts to review the novels of Manju Kapur on the basis of these parameters, and scrutinize as to what extent her novels have incorporated tropes of gender in her narratives.

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# INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER 1.2

## Manju Kapur: Life and Works

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Manju Kapur, born in Amritsar 1948, is one of the most remarkable contemporary Indian writers whose first novel *Difficult Daughters* has been awarded the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book (Eurasia) in 1999. *A Married Woman* (2002), her second novel is cherished as "fluent and witty" in the *Independent*. Her third novel *Home* (2006) is marked as "glistening with detail and emotional acuity" in the *Sunday Times* and her fourth novel *The Immigrant* (2008) has been shortlisted for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature in 2009. The novel *Custody* (2011) is her latest novel, which has been praised as "Kapur's cynical novel". Her novels have been translated into several languages. *Difficult Daughters* has been translated into Marathi (1998), German (1999), Greek (2000), Italian (2000), Dutch (2001), Greek (2003), Spanish (2003), and Portuguese (2005); *A Married Woman* into Spanish (2004); *Home* into Hebrew (2007), Spanish (2007), Malayalam (2009) and Marathi (2009); *The Immigrant* into Hebrew, and Hindi (2009). A remarkable feature of her novels is that they all begin with seed concepts. The seed concept of *Difficult Daughters* is education; in *A Married woman* it is homosexual relationship; *Home* has explored the sustaining role of family; *The Immigrant* scrutinizes NRI marriages and *Custody* reflects the significance of economic liberation in woman's life. Kapur's interview with Jai Arjun Singh published in Elle magazine of 9th August 2008 reveals her concern, "In my work I aim to show rather than tell. I took the *raasta* (way) of not standing between the reader and the story – I wanted to make it as transparent and seamless as possible. The story takes shape gradually" ("A Meeting". Web.).

Kapur has worked as a Professor of English Literature at Miranda House College in New Delhi. Kapur did her graduation from Miranda House University College for Women, New Delhi and completed her post-graduation from Dalhousie University at Halifax in

Canada. She obtained her M.Phil degree from Delhi University. Her father was a professor and an art lover. He owned a Gaitonde [a leading Indian abstract artist], which he said was called "The Thinker". Her mother's priority for her was to be happily married. Kapur is married to Gun Nidhi Dalmia and has three daughters and three grandchildren. Presently, she lives with them in New Delhi. Along with teaching, she began writing at the age of forty-one. In her interview by Anjana Ranjan, Kapur has pointed out, "I was bored with my life, I thought if I was to do anything it had to be now-feels writing is the most solitary of arts" ("Seeds of Hope'. Web.). Kapur is a reticent writer who prefers to write in solitary surroundings and avoids books launch parties. For her, social parties and meetings are a type of obstacles in the way of writing. As she expresses, "It's hard for me to see writing as a social stepping stone." Further, Kapur says, "It's such a solitary activity, whereas being in society means being gregarious. Of course, younger people have more energy, and if they can party *and* write, good for them. But if it interferes with your writing, I would say just don't do it. As a writer, you have to serve your art, old-fashioned as it may sound – and personally I do this by not meeting anyone!" ("A Meeting". Web.)

Published in 1998, *Difficult Daughters* is her first novel which has received the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book (Eurasia). Its review in the *Sunday Times* praises its ingenuity, "This book offers a completely imagined, aromatic, complex world, a rare thing in the first novels" (qtd. in Jacob 52). The novel narrates the story of Virmati, whose character is based on the life history of Kapur's own mother. In her interview with Jo Simpson, Kapur candidly admits that the protagonist of her first novel is base on her mother. I "based my first novel on her. I admire her fighting spirit, her generosity, her capacity to endure. She irritated me when she was alive, but now I see these things more clearly. I think of her every day" ("One Minute". Web.). Sumita Pal in her article "The Mother-Daughter Conflict in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*" also indicates the autobiographical content of Kapur's first novel:

> Like Virmati, Manju Kapur was born in Amritsar and teaches in college. Her family was victims of partition and was Arya Samajis like Virmati's family. Manju Kapur's father too was a professor, like Virmati's husband. Manju Kapur admits that she herself had been a

difficult daughter for the mother whose priority was marriage and she, in turn wants her daughters to have good jobs. (qtd. in Dhawan 137)

Mothers share a sensitive and complicated relationship with their daughters. *Difficult Daughters* distinctly centralizes the complexities of this relationship. Rajender Kaur has mentioned that the opening lines of this novel enumerate the major themes of the novel, "... the themes of rejection, miscommunication, conflict and loss that define mother-daughter relationships in so much of the psychoanalytic scholarship on mothers and daughters" (51). *Difficult Daughters* also shows how difficult it is for a daughter to share something with her mother, if the mother supports conservative norms owing to her conditioning. As revealed by Virmati in this novel, "Why was saying anything to her mother so difficult? May be it was best to keep silent…" (*DD* 11) Shashi Deshpande also discusses this fact in her work *Telling Our Own Stories*:

> When I became a mother, I found such a discrepancy between what I was told about how mothers felt, and what really felt, that I was deeply disturbed. It was only as a writer that I could get across this disturbing split and approach reality. And I realized that motherhood does not turn you overnight into a different person, it does not make you a nobler, stronger, more loving and lovable individual. You are the same person; except for the enormous bond that suddenly appears between you and newborn. In fact we know that mothers can be cruel. (97)

Through the portrayal of Virmati, Kasturi, Ida and Ganga in *Difficult Daughters*, Kapur points out how "the daughter becomes the image of her mother…if I leave, you lose the reflection of life, of your life" (*DD* 04). Further, this novel elaborates the focal reasons because of which some daughters are considered to be difficult by their families. Virmati's yearning for education, economic independence and he rejection of arranged marriage make her a difficult daughter for her family. She attempts to go beyond the conventional roles and expectations and to assert her selfhood and individuality. Elleke Boehmer has rightly pointed

in her article "Manju Kapur's Erotic Nation", "She thus becomes reconciled to her difficult choices only by living out a kind of modern schizophrenia, in effect a self-partition, choosing to occupy tenuously linked locations in her new conventional role as a wife who remains a student" (58).

In *A Married Woman* (2002), Manju Kapur traces the life of Astha who has to deal with a number of different roles – of a daughter, a beloved, a wife and a mother – simultaneously. She is the only child of her parents – the father, a bureaucrat; the mother, a schoolteacher; living in Delhi. Astha's parents finalize her marriage when they receive a suitable proposal from Hemant Vadera, an America returned MBA, who is working in a bank and belongs to a bureaucrat family of Delhi. While Astha attempts to accomplish the role of a conventional wife, Hemant's busy schedule of his profession oppresses her. As a result of communication gap, her married life suffers from monotony. Furthermore, her husband's typical masculine behaviour disappoints and depresses her. Astha always tries to maintain harmony in her married life but she fails because of her husband, who never tries to understand her. Later on, she examines her status in her married life, as the one who is always sacrificed in the name of family and a negligible figure in Hemant's life. He not only uses his power over her, but also humiliates her by commenting that she does not know how to manage household chores. This kind of humiliation and insult lead her into a lesbian relationship with Pipeelika Khan.

The characterization of Astha in *A Married Woman* is amazingly real. Kapur not only explores gender norms and forms of sexuality through her character, but also deconstructs the gendered binaries by illustrating her lesbian relationship with Pipeelika. Kapur presents this affair for Astha and Pipee as their desperate attempt to fill up the void, which has crept in their lives. Astha feels that several facets of her relationship with her husband reflect "power rather than love". Kapur in this novel also deals with the status of compulsory heterosexuality, which is the foundation of male power, which encourages men to use their authority over women to subjugate them. Elaborating on her treatment of lesbian relationship in this novel, Kapur points out:

> This relationship suggested itself to me as an interesting means of
> making Astha mature and change. An affair with a man would have

been the classic cliche and so I ruled it out and tried out a same-sex affair. I don't know how successful I have been, nor is this based on any real-life relationship. It is, as I said, a writer's experiment with a plot. (Ira Pande. *The Hindu.* Web.)

It is pertinent to quote Mithu C. Banerji in this context:

However, occasionally Kapur's rendition of a lesbian relationship sometimes distracts the reader from the tensions of the situation and the core sensibilities of the characters. Nevertheless, *A Married Woman* is a well balanced depiction of a country's inner development its strength and its failures and the anguish of a woman's unrest, which is as the social political upheaval going on around her. (qtd. in Rajput 117)

Manju Kapur's third novel *Home* (2006) was shortlisted for the Hutch Crossword Prize for fiction. Talking about the background of the novel, Kapur reveals the reason of selecting this particular title to Farhad J. Dadyburjor, "I teach in an all girls college (Miranda House College, Delhi) and 'Home' was first conceived in response to the home situations of some of my students who came from conservative backgrounds" ("Writerly life". Web.). Furthermore, in her interview with Jai Arjun Singh Kapur has talked about the title of the novel:

Literature by women, about families, always has these larger considerations, with years of studying texts, it becomes almost second nature to look beneath the surface at social and economic forces, gender relationships and how they are played out in an arena that, in my writing happens to be the home. But then, all sort of things happening outside do affect what is happening inside the home. ("A Meeting". Web.)

Kapur's *Home* is about Nisha, who belongs to a middle class Delhi family. She is the granddaughter of Lala Banwari Lal and daughter of Yaspal and Sona. Born in a business

class joined family, Nisha tries to mould her personality in accordance with the preferences of her family in which women are not allowed to work outside their home. She is not even allowed to play outside home with her brothers. In her childhood, she has been sexually abused by her eldest cousin Vicky. Her family was unable to understand her dilemma thus, she is sent to her aunt Rupa's home for eleven years. She comes back to her home, she is trained in the role of a wife. Her mother Sona tells her that the real education of a girl is in the kitchen. Unfortunately, Nisha's horoscope has made her a *manglik*. She protests and raises questions against her family which compel her to wait for a *manglik* marriage proposal. Initially Nisha is portrayed as an assertive character, who rebels against the gendered norms of her surroundings. She discards the traditions of her family, which fix a woman's position within home opting for high education and later on for business. She establishes her individual identity as a business woman by starting a boutique called 'Nisha Creations'. Nisha's character portrayal in the novel echoes Judith Butler's theory of performativity, which suggests that the real gender identity is based on performance and it cannot be governed by sexual differences. Along with Nisha, Kapur in the novel describes the characters of Sona and Rupa. They are sisters but very different from each other. Sona, the elder sister believes in deep-rooted traditions, Rupa, younger sister, being a business woman, supports a modern perspective for life.

The story of the novel *The Immigrant* (2008) showcases gender tropes related with sexuality and motherhood, as well as the protagonist's struggles to seek out an independent identity. The story revolves around Nina, who is an English teacher at Miranda House College in New Delhi and lives with her widowed mother Shanti at Jangpura Extension in Delhi. When she was almost thirty, her mother finalizes her marriage with Ananda, who is a dentist and a Canada based NRI. Nina finds her husband to be sexually dysfunctional and so she is unable to have the joy of motherhood. Ananada maintains secrecy about his sexuality and later on about his treatment in California. To fully believe his sexual potency, he experiments with his white assistant. However, his decision to deceive his wife about sexuality, and later on, about his affairs, pushes Nina to desperation. Ultimately, she decides to be financially independent and leave Ananda to pursue her own life. In this novel, Nina's struggle is different from Kapur's all other protagonists. Kapur's all female protagonists from Virmati to Nisha struggle against the Eastern rigid cultural conditioning and patriarchy.

In this novel, Kapur shows Nina's fight against her loneliness, alienation and changing roles in the Western set-up. *The Immigrant* highlights Nina's experience of daily life as an immigrant her changing preferences about food and dress. It also portrays her struggle to be accepted in a different culture. For a migrated person, it is very tough to maintain balance between two cultures and countries. Satendra Nandan remarks in his essay "The Politics of Dispossession and Exile":

> What then is writer's enigma of survival? Initially, it is an outrage of more horrendous fates of people elsewhere. One is dislocated from one world, but is connected to so many others. Suddenly they become closer to one's own. The writer then tries to find new ways of being human, new ways of recognizing his redefining his humanity with others. (20)

In her novel *The Immigrant*, Kapur is engaged in "redefining the traditional concept of diaspora wherein loss is replaced by gain. It is not only displacement and dislocation but her sensitive handling of vital issues therein that has made her a global writer" (Dangwal 44). Kapur ends this novel with Nina's statement:

> Perhaps that was the ultimate immigrant experience. Not that any one thing was steady enough to attach yourself to for 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. Form an immigrant there was no going back. When one was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home. Pull up your shallow roots and move. Find a new place, new friends, a new family. I had been possible once, it would be possible again. (*TI* 330)

Shagun and Ishita are the two central figures of Manju Kapur's latest novel *Custody* (2011). The novel opens with Shagun, who is the wife of Raman and mother of his two children – Arjun and Roohi. She attempts to fulfil her femininity by performing the roles of mother and wife. These roles are traditionally considered to be the foremost. Like Virmati and Nisha, Shagun is also one of the bold characters of Kapur, who has the determination to

protest against injustice. She decides to divorce her husband in order to have a life on her own terms. Her bold decisions are aptly reflected in the words of Helene Cixous, "She has answered the harassment, the familial conjugal venture of domestication, the repeated attempts to castrate her" (95). She also fights a prolonged legal battle to get back the custody of her children. In this novel *Custody*, Kapur voices a very contemporary and pertinent issue. Another influential figure in this novel is Ishita, the wife of Suryakanta. She is divorced because of her infertility. Her broken marriage and her desire to adopt a child compel her to be economically independent. Her second marriage with Raman and her easy acceptance of his children reinforces the prevalent notions about the fulfilment of femininity through the experience of motherhood. Shagun and Ishita are portrayed as foil and counterfoil and illustrate comprehensive range of gender tropes.

Kapur's notable works are marked as "a chronicler of middle class familial bonds" which deal with the full panorama of women's life. Malti Agarwal writes in her article "Manju Kapur's *Home*: A Chronicle of Urban Middle Class in India" that Kapur's depiction of her "heroine, her traversing the labyrinth of rules and regulations of traditional middle class milieu and stepping out to start earning for her existence are superb. A girl in Indian family is whining under the burden of patriarchy. She while living in her home feels herself homless-shelterless. She strives to explore space for herself. She tries to be self-reliant in order to survive" (NP). As Kapur herself remarks:

> I am interested in the lives of women, whether in the political arena
> or in domestic spaces. One of the main preoccupations in all my
> books is how women manage to negotiate both inner and outer spaces
> in their lives –  what sacrifices do they have to make in order to keep
> the home fires burning and at what cost to their personal lives do they
> find some kind of fulfillment outside the home.  (qtd. in Sinha 160)

Kapur convincingly narrates the turmoil and repressed stature of women in her novels. She writes about women from "the starting point" of gendered narrative revolution that "combines postmodernism and the Indian oral narrative tradition" (Iyer. Web.). Kapur displays how the Indian women are taught to tolerate their sorrow, frustration and dissatisfaction in silence though their patriarchal conditioning. Kapur's novels support the

arguments of Beauvoir when she writes that a man can think of himself without woman but a woman cannot think of herself without man, "... she is simply what man decree…. 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" (Beauvoir 16). Kapur's novels highlight a gender aspect of women's personal narratives (Lukic, Regulska, and Zavirsek 63). Her novels very aptly reveal the rigidity of conventional boundaries for Indian women. In this context, Dr. Ashok Kumar rightly points out in his article "The Portrayal of New Women":

> A major preoccupation in recent Indian women's writing has been a delineation of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships. In a culture where individualism and protest have often remained alien ideas and marital bliss and the women's role at home is a central focus, it is interesting to see the emergence of not just an essential Indian sensibility but an expression of cultural displacement. Manju Kapur has joined the growing number of women writers from India on whom the image of the suffering but stoic woman eventually breaking traditional boundaries has had a significant impact. (48)

In her novels, Kapur shows that "the cultural gender inscription over the centuries has straitjacketed women into saint, witch or whore" (Malik 41). Kapur's novels deconstruct the patriarchal stereotypes and provide "new perceptions of gender roles and show a shifting sense of gendered space" (Malik 40, 42). The exploration of her novels analyzes "the relationship between gender and sexual identity, and the impact of history and culture upon identity" (Field 44). Her novels also address larger socio-economic and gender issues through the prism of the family. Manju Kapur's expertise in interpreting "the family matrix is a byword. She relies on this skill too heavily in *Custody*. The auctorial voice, pitched midway between shudder and sneer, has judged and sentenced before we can weigh the evidence" (Ratna. Web.). Kapur in one of her interviews expresses:

> I am a feminist. And what is a feminist? I mean I believe in the rights
> of women to express themselves in the rights of women to work. I

believe in equality, you know domestic equality, legal equality. I believe in all that. And the thing is that women don't really have that- you know even educated women, working women. There is a trapping of equality but you scratch the surface and it is not really equal. (qtd. in Goel 40).

According to Bassnett, the portrayal of her women characters raises the 'question of women' in India for which "we may term a novel 'feminist' for its analysis of gender a socially constructed for its understanding that change is possible and that narrative can play a part in it" (09). Through her novels, Kapur talks about the middle class educated women whose lives are affected by forces outside their homes yet who have to live through several social hypocrisies in their daily lives. Her male characters are also remarkable by their projection as "as emphatic a character as possible" ("Seeds of Hope". Web.). Kapur responds to her label as 'a chronicler of Indian families', "My own feeling is, describe me any way you like, as long as I am relevant, as long as I am read, I don't really care". Further, she says, "Women have a lot of things to say. But, unfortunately not much is given to them. However, there is a lot of interest in what women have to say - and many, specially the regional women writers, write under tremendous personal pressure" ("Manju Kapur". Web.).

Manju Kapur expresses her "absorbing ideas of women relationship, women sexuality, love, infatuation, jealousy, marriage, gender roles, self-discovery and other problems with intelligence and sympathy. Basically she has presented the women characters of the 1940s, a conservative period when women have no voice to assert their rights" (Nayak 209). Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* has 'control over one's destiny' as the theme. Christopher Rollason aptly remarks in this context:

> The search for control over one's destiny, surely the key theme of Difficult Daughters refers to the independence aspired to and obtained by a nation (despite its cruel division by a hateful partition), but also to the independence yearned after (and finally not obtained) by a woman and the member of the same nation. ("Women on the Margins". Web.)

Kapur's protagonist Virmati "seeks human relations that will allow her to be herself and to exercise the degree of control over her life which, as an educated woman, she knows she deserves" (Dwivedi 32.) Kapur's themes echo this notion that "the emergence of feminist idea that 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. Women can consciously and collectively change their social place" (Green 02).

In her second novel *A Married Woman*, the new generation of women explains, "split in their personalities. They are all highly educated and are accustomed to the sound and furies of the world. Their eyes and ears, ascertained to the ups and downs of the fast changing world long to experiment something unusual to satisfy their suppressed ego" (Kumar 76). Ashok Kumar rightly remarks:

> Manju Kapur has exposed a woman's passion with love and lesbianism, an incompatible marriage and ensuring annoyance. With passion to revolutionize the Indian male sensitivity, she describes the traumas of her female protagonists from which they suffer, and perish in for their triumph. She is stunned at the intensification of fundamentalism and the argument of religious zealots to uplift and elevate the country by a crusade and establish paranoia by presenting evil as a historical necessity. (165)

Kapur's third novel *Home* deals with incest. According to Kapur, "These are our social realities even if we normally keep them under wraps," and so at least on the pages of a book, it can be brought to light. In *Home*, relates this lecturer of Literature in Delhi University's Miranda House, "the incident of incest brings out two things - one, how the family tries to suppress it and the other, how they ring around the girl to comfort her" ("About Home and Hearth". Web). Pooja Tolani comments in her review:

> Even today, thousand of girls sit within the four walls of their houses and wonder why they do not have the right to close their own lives, decide for themselves whether they want to be homemakers or move.

Marriage is still the reason for their birth. Freedom is more than just being aloud out for a pizza with friends. (qtd. in Rajput 124)

In *The Immigrant*, the sexual and psychological aspects are primarily expressed through man-woman relationship. Brinda Boss appropriately comments on the theme of *The Immigrant*:

> What redeems Kapur's novel, however is its sure footed trail around the locations of the novel with its female protagonist Nina from the red brick buildings of Miranda House in Delhi University to the bright corridors of Dalhousie University in Halifax where she pursues a degree in Library Science, enroute to employment in the adopted country that will provide her with the proverbial (and providential) ticket to ride. (qtd. in Kumar 64)

Set in the early 1990s, Kapur's *Custody* delineates the plight of the children, "waifs in the marital combat zone". Shruti Ravindran has written about Kapur's fifth novel *Custody* which "lays bare the messy meat of a couple's wrecked marriage, and the plight of the children caught up in the ensuing custody battle — insecure, and ultimately, neglected; manipulated by their parents' and step-parents' needs" ("Custody". Web.).

The novels of Manju Kapur represent aptly the sentiments of women and their self-introspections. Virmati, Astha, Nisha, Nina, Shagun and Ishita all rebel to establish their selfhood and self-actualization. The theme of 'tradition' versus 'modernity' has been graphically exhibited in her novels from *Difficult Daughters* to *Custody*. This concept is boldly supported by her characters Kasturi, Virmati, Ida in *Difficult Daughters,*; Sita, Astha, Pipeelika in *A Married Woman*; Sona, Rupa, Nisha in *Home*; Nina, Shanti in *The Immigrant*; Mrs Kaushik, Sagun, Ishita in *Custody*. Her writing style gives an incredible impression to the readers. Kapur's subject matter and temperament accurately suit her themes. She has used a lot of Hindi and Panjabi words like *atta*, *dahi*, *bhenji* and *lassi* which provide a particular flavour to her novels and evoke a distinct cultural sensibility. This manner of code-switching also enhances the readability of the novels. The verisimilitude of her narration gives authenticity to the expression and justifies the plot.

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# CHAPTER 2

## Gender: Cultural Conditioning, Patriarchy and Socialization

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Gender can be defined as a cultural construction or social assignment which is instrumental in one's cognition of how specific roles – masculine/feminine/alternate – are to be performed. The performance of men and women is formed and shaped as masculine, feminine and alternate by socio-cultural conditioning. Gender theorists argue that gender constructs sex, and that sex is not as capable as gender of distinguishing our behaviour as men and women. Kimmel and Messer's scrutiny also strengthens this concept when they state that "biological differences between men and women seem to have their influence on social difference, but they do not determine directly our behaviour as men and women" (qtd. in Carabi 06). Furthermore, Gender theorists, negating biological theories, prove that gender identity is more significant than the sexual identity and is structured by social-cultural relations. The lens of gender discloses the categories of "man" and "woman" as "empty and overflowing" as Scott succinctly remarks, "Empty because they have no ultimate, transcendent meaning. Overflowing because, even when they appear to be fixed, they still contain within them alternative, denied, or suppressed definitions" (49).

Patriarchy can be encapsulated as "the existence of a structure of hierarchical relations between the sexes" (Eisenstein n.p.). According to Heidi Hartmann, patriarchy stands for male power over women. The theory of patriarchy structures men as socially superior, logical and capable to rule over women. Under the influence of patriarchy, women are subordinated and subjugated owing to their sex. The construction of femininity is determined by the routine socialization under the patriarchal set up such as family, school and media. This chapter analyzes and explores how cultural conditioning, patriarchy and socialization are responsible for the exploitation and secondary position of women as illustrated in the novels of Manju Kapur. The novels taken up in the study are *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008) and

*Custody* (2011). The analysis of Kapur's novels within the framework of tropes of gender demonstrates that gender identity is like a script in which socio-cultural norms and practices depict women as inferior, passive, deficient and like a "scattered bouquet" without men (qtd. in Vincent and McEwen 40).

Manju Kapur in *Difficult Daughters* traces three generations of women through Kasturi, Virmati and Ida. Kasturi, the mother of Virmati; Virmati, the mother of Ida; Ida, the daughter of Virmati; these characters expose the marginalization and oppression of women as a production of cultural conditioning and governing decree of patriarchy. In the novel, Kapur subverts the preset concept of gender as biologically ordained and intensifies gender as a socio-cultural outcome. Kapur vindicates the narrative tropes of gender as a "dynamic matrix of interrelated, often contradictory, experiences, strategies, styles and attributions mediated by cultures and one's specific history, forming a network that cannot be separated meaningfully into discrete entities or ordered into a hierarchy" (Garland Thompson 284). Analyzing and elaborating three generations from the perspective of gender, Kapur displays the socialization of women, which relegates them to passive roles and subservient positions.

Ida, an educated modern woman who lives on her own after divorce, narrates the theme of the novel. She does not believe in the conventional tradition in which the cement of husband and children is mandatory for the edifice of women's reputation. She candidly remarks, "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother.... Adjust, compromise, adapt" (*DD* 01, 256). Ida, the daughter of Prof. Harish and Virmati, who has disappointed her father by not being able to show any sign of intellectual brightness, is advised by her mother to make her father happy, but she protests by asking, "Why is it so important to please him?" (*DD* 279) Kapur accurately explicates that "discrimination or inequality based on gender is systemic and structural, that evaluation is a political activity, that knowledge is a powerful resource that serves an explicit or implicit purpose, that knowledge and values are culturally, socially and temporally contingent, and that there are multiple ways of knowing—some privileged over others" (Sielbeck-Bowen et al. 03-4). Through the portrayal of Ida, Kapur brings to light the social systematization in which the performance of a woman is appreciated and considered laudable if she follows the instructions of her father, brother, husband or male children. As Ida remarks:

> 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-back 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. (*DD* 279)

Ester Boserup has "attributed the marginalisation of women to ideologies about proper feminine roles, which are reinforced by patriarchal values" (qtd. in Pant 95). Similar idea is conveyed by Millett who exhibits "sexual politics" as "the arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another" (qtd. in Nayar 88). In patriarchal societies, "man is central and woman is the other, repressed, ignored and pushed to the margins" (qtd. in Dangwal and Bhandari 21). Ida, discarding the deep-rooted feminine values, states, "I was very careful to tailor my needs to what I knew I could get" (*DD* 256). She does not justify the approach of her mother who tries to give her the feminine inheritance – adjust, compromise and adapt. Ida is a "woman who does not believe in just being", but is essentially a woman (Purohit 30).

Virmati is a daughter in the prosperous merchant family of Lala Diwan Chand. While in the "generation of Kasturi, woman's role was confined to childbearing and kitchen work, the generation of Virmati…breaks away from the tradition bound limits of Indian women" (Milhoutra 164). Virmati, a young Panjabi girl from a conservative family is the eldest among eleven children of Kasturi and Suraj Prakash in Amritsar. In the early years of her youth, she performs duties as a second mother of her younger brothers and sisters. Ida comes to know it through her uncles and aunts, "You know, our mother was always sick, and Virmati, as eldest, had to run the house and look after us. We depended on her…she never rested or played with us, she always had some work" (*DD* 05). The characterization of Virmati discloses the social obligations to women as nurturers and caregivers. The novel almost echoes Chodorow by suggesting that these roles are instilled in young girls by giving

them nurturing and caring responsibilities in the family. Chodorow, emphasizing on family as a primary institution in the sex/gender construction, contends that "the sexual and familial division of labor in which women mother and are more involved in interpersonal, affective relationships than men produces in daughters and sons a division of psychological capacities which leads them to reproduce this sexual and familial division of labor" (07). Beauvoir also explains the impact and influence of family, which train women to fit into the frame of femininity. A woman "seems to us to be already sexually determined, this is not because mysterious instincts directly doom her to passivity, coquetry, maternity; it is because the influence of others upon the child is a factor almost from the start" (Beauvoir 296). Kapur also suggests through her novel *Difficult Daughters* that in the patriarchal set-up, unequal socialization of gender moulds the personality of girls into passive, caregiver and subservient roles whereas boys are encouraged to become active, assertive and capable to work outside the home. Vogel et al. comment, elaborating on this idea, that "one reason women and men confirm gender stereotypes is because they act in accordance with their social roles, which are often segregated along gender lines. Therefore, women and men confirm gender stereotypes in large part because the different roles that they perform place different social demands upon them" (520).

In the generation of Virmati, the different social acts and expectations from women shape them into stereotypical roles in which they are allowed to have limited rights. Opting for higher education and marriage by choice are not included in these rights. Virmati, the protagonist of the novel who does not want to live as "a rubber doll for others to move as they (men) willed" (*DD* 92), takes initiative to challenge the social expectations. She is criticized and rebuked by her family for choosing higher education and love marriage. Her mother Kasturi rebukes her on leaving home for higher education by stating that "when I was your age, girls only left their house when they married. And beyond a certain age…" (*DD* 111). Kasturi does not support Virmati's determination for higher education and love marriage, "God has put you on earth to punish me.... You've destroyed our family, you *badmash*, you *randi*! You've blackened our face everywhere! For this I gave you birth? Because of you there is shame on our family, shame on me, shame on *Bade Pitaji*! But what do you care, brazen that you are!" (*DD* 111, 221) Jaideep Rishi points out in his essay entitled "Mother-Daughter Relationship in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*", "Kasturi

unknowingly becomes the voice of patriarchy. She holds those values as ideals which patriarchy has taught her to be so and when her daughter rebels against such values she takes it to be a rebellion against her own self" (02). On the other hand, being educated Virmati knows that:

> As women, it is our duty, no, not duty, that world has unpleasant connotations. It is our privilege to be able to give ourselves to the unity of our country. Not only to the unity between rich and poor, but between Muslim and Hindu, between Sikh and Christian. Artificial barriers have been created amongst us to gain power over insecure and fearful minds. Let the politics of religion not blind us to this fact. (*DD* 145)

Further, Virmati remarks, "we are lucky we're living in times when women can do something" (*DD* 152). She tries to establish self-identity as "a value charged, almost a charismatic term, with its secured achievement regarded as equivalent to personal salvation" (Naik and Narayan 102-3). Although Virmati is highly educated, she is misguided by Prof. Harish who is already married to Ganga. Falling in love with Harish, she realizes "men do take advantage of women!" (*DD* 149) She too remembers her friend Swarna's suggestion, "Men don't want family wealth to be divided among women ... because sisters and wives will be seen as rivals, instead of dependents who have to be nurtured and protected. As a result, women will lose their moral position in society! Imagine!"(*DD* 251-52) Moreover, Kapur illustrates that Virmati is considered as 'other' not only as the second wife of Harish, but also as a woman whose position always comes after man. The novel contains several instances to suggest it. Virmati selects her daughter's name Bharti but Harish rejects this name:

> 'Bharti,' suggested Virmati as a name.
> 'No,' said Harish.
> Harish's voice rose hysterically, and the girl was named Ida. (*DD* 276)

Virmati tolerates his irresponsible and unethical attitude because with "the passage of time, she comes to know that no matter what the consequences are, she has to respect the

traditional values and social norms" (Mythili 160-61). According to Gur Pyari Jandial, "It would be a mistake to devalue Virmati's struggle she failed, for what mattered was to have made the attempt: what is necessary is to break the patriarchal mould and for Virmati to do that in the forties was a great achievement" (126). In the novel, Ganga, the first wife of Harish, also compromises with him. A marked demonstration of her compromises with him can be seen when Kapur shows the interaction between Ganga and Virmati. They visit Company Bagh and Darbar Sahib where Virmati asks Ganga to buy blue coloured bangles. Ganga rejects this suggestion by saying, "He doesn't like blue ...I wear nothing blue" (*DD* 42). Later as a dutiful wife, Ganga remembers that it is the time for Prof. Harish to return home from college. She informs Virmati that they are getting late. But Virmati refuses to listen to her and says that he will be angry with you. "No, no, he'll say nothing, agreed Ganga. 'Like that he is very good, but still…' Her voice trailed off. How could she explain all the different qualities of silence that could thicken the air in a house...?" (*DD* 42) Through these lines, Kapur voices against the patriarchal society where a man always imparts significance to his choices, desires, occupations and also wants to "keep woman in a place of mystery, consign her to mystery, as they say, 'keep her in place'. She is at her place she is at her distance. She is kept in the place of what might be called 'watch bitch', that is to say, she is outside the city and city is the man" (Cixous 486).

*Difficult Daughters* has also portrayed the tradition of polygamy, which was legally and culturally accepted in contemporary India for Hindu males. The Hindu Marriage Act which prohibited the patriarchal practice of bigamy was legislated in 1955. The Act perceived bigamy as basically "a problem of a male-dominant culture than religion" ("Bigamy". Web.). Kapur ironically comments on this tradition, "Co-wives are part of our social traditions...so many stories of men taking two or more wives.... She is part of the tradition of weeping brides, and her sorrow is not taken seriously.... Those people don't know how to keep their daughters in order. Just think! No brother, uncle, cousin, nobody. So shameless! (*DD* 122, 151, 203, 165) If a woman is not with her brother, father, uncle and husband or a male support, she is not considered valuable in a patriarchal society. Women are socialized to derogate their own positions. As Beauvoir points out, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature…which is

described as feminine" (295). Patriarchal society exists "to remind us through its various voices that the ultimate truth is man...his intellect or his possessions" (Purohit, "Echo of Humanistic" 03). Kapur has portrayed the character of Virmati as a response to "pressures and oppressions of patriarchal culture" (Naik and Narayan 104).

*Difficult Daughters* has shown the reasons through which some daughters are marked as difficult by their families. The rejection of arranged marriage, desire to pursue higher education, carving for independence and move beyond the conventional responsibilities of caregiver are the reasons through which it is considered that some daughters are not fulfilling their femininity in accordance with social structure and become difficult for their families. Therefore, neither Ida agrees with Virmati nor Virmati with Kasturi. Thus, Ida was a difficult daughter for Virmati and Virmati for Kasturi. Ida was not able to understand her mother Virmati during her lifetime. After her death, Ida realizes Virmati's tough journey for individual identity in the patriarchal society by going into her past. The story of this novel also has autobiographical links. Bala and Chandra remark, "Conflict between mother and daughter is inevitable and I suppose I was a difficult daughter. The conflict carries on through generation because mothers want their daughters to be safe. We want them to make the right choices –'right' in the sense that they are socially acceptable. My mother wanted me to be happily married; I want my daughters to have good jobs" (qtd. in Dhawan 107). Further, Kapur states, "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 live in it, Mama, leave me be. Do not haunt me any more" (*DD* 280).

*A Married Woman*, the second novel of Manju Kapur delineates the story of Astha who has to deal with a number of different roles – daughter, beloved, wife, and mother simultaneously. Astha, the protagonist, deconstructs the stereotypes of gender binary by opting for homosexuality and challenges the factors, which are the focal causes behind the shaping of gender identity. Her upbringing in conventional middle class tradition also unravels fixed and unchangeable stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. She is the only child of her parents. Her father is a bureaucrat and her mother is a schoolteacher in Delhi. Kapur mentions, "Astha was brought up properly, as befits a woman, with large supplements of fear. Her education, her character, her health, her marriage, these were their burdens"

(*AMW* 01). Analyzing the social influences on gender construction, Kapur shows how men and women are framed within different social-cultural roles, norms and anticipations. These roles restrict women into limited spheres and construct their dependence on men. The family that is one of the most effective instruments, which promote these social relations and patterns from boys' and girls' early years. Kate Millett, explaining the prominent influence of family, comments how society is dominated by patriarchy:

> The chief contribution of the family in patriarchy is the socialization of the young (largely through the example and admonition of their parents) into patriarchal ideology's prescribed attitudes toward the categories of role, temperament and status. Although slight differences of definition depend here upon the parents' grasp of cultural values, the general effect of uniformity is achieved, to be further reinforced through peers, school, media, and other learning sources, formal and informal. (35)

In patriarchal set-up, women are trained to serve and obey men by their formal and informal education. *A Married Woman* unfolds that women are born to serve and please men as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers by following the social norms. Social priority is to educate girls to become ideal wives. Accordingly, Astha is trained by her mother to perform the ideal role of a wife. Her mother Sita comments, "Who can escape their duty?" (*AMW* 01) She nurtures Astha's body by *pranayam* and morning walk at five. Kapur portrays the construction of femininity in which women's priority is to take care of husband and children. As it is shown by Sita's anxiety, "Retirement, father's uncertain health, finances in meagre state, the bridge to the plot unbuilt and their dearest daughter still to be settled" (*AMW* 33). Finally, Astha's parents decide her marriage when they have a suitable proposal from Hemant Vadera who belongs to a bureaucrat's family and lives at Lodhi colony in Delhi. He has also spent some time in America and presently works as an assistant manager in a bank in India. "Today you are getting married and leaving for your new home,' Sita murmured, tears in her eyes, the pain of a mother at parting, the joy of a mother at her duty successfully completed" (*AMW* 36).

According to Eagly and Wood, "Women and men seek to accommodate sex – typical roles by acquiring the specific skills and resources liked to successful role performance and by adapting their social behavior to role requirements" (421). The novel efficiently explains the construction of femininity through Astha who devotes her life to become an ideal wife. Astha attempts to accomplish the role of a conventional wife. Hemant's preoccupation in his business oppresses her. Their married life suffers from monotony within "a few months and dullness began to taint Astha's new life. What was she to do while waiting for Hemant to come home?" (*AMW* 46) In this situation, Astha is suggested to work and she joins St Anthony School as teaching is considered to be the best job for women in the opinion of her husband. The novelist describes the aimlessness of her monotonous life in the following lines:

> A day, as usual, with Hemant coming in late. Astha had been waiting
> the whole evening, and now took this opportunity to gaze at him, her
> soul in her eyes, the soul that she was waiting to hand over on a
> platter. He sat down on the sofa, and Astha knelt to take off his shoes.
> She unlaced them, and pulled off his socks, gathering the day's dust
> in her lap. (*AMW* 48)

Through these lines, Kapur also goes on to draw attention to the social practice that a woman is scrutinized as an inferior and less-than human species in man-dominated society. As Josephine Donovan points out, "they are objects, who are used to facilitate, explain away, or redeem the projects men […] women are the objects, the scapegoats, of much cruelty and evil" (214). Besides her subservient position as "kneeling, taking off his shoes, pulling off his socks" (*AMW* 50), Astha always tries to maintain harmony in her married life but she fails because of her husband who never tries to understand her individual identity. Even he blames her of thinking too much. In order to express her longing, Astha starts writing poetry. Her pain and sorrow can be seen through one of her poems *Changes*:

> The eventual release from pain
> In the tearing relentless separation
> From those in habit loved

Can come so slowly

It seems there will never a day

Of final peace and tranquillity


I would never suffer again

But no matter how many times

I heave the doorways of my soul


To let the chill light in

The darkness grows silently

To hide me in the break of day. (*AMW* 80-81)


Hemant is unable to empathize with her inner vacancies and loneliness. He complains, "There is not one happy poem here" (*AMW* 81). Astha requests him to allow a peaceful place for painting and keeping her stuff but he denies. "Many women would die to have the space you do. We could never afford anything like this now" (*AMW* 156). Furthermore, Kapur reveals his attitude towards Astha, "Why you are so childish? I work hard all day, and when I come home I want to relax. I have no time for all these games" (*AMW* 66). This is the reflection of socialization in which women are deeply conditioned to follow patriarchal norms, which show them as secondary and parasitic. The method which is "used to subjugate women is the objectification of women in sexual terms; the male perspective on society is dominant one…the relationship is founded on gender hierarchy in which men are dominant and women are subordinate, socially, economically, politically and sexually" (Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 121). Kapur in the novel discloses the socialization of men and women. On the one hand, Astha is criticized by Hemant and his family while on the other Hemant is appreciated by his family and the patriarchal system. In the text, the appreciation of Hemant is shared by many characters. For instance, when Hemant drops Astha to her college occasionally, both families admire his devotion as a husband. Further, her nurse remarks, "How good Sa'ab is? Coming to see you every day. Not every husband is so nice" (*AMW* 77). According to Srilatha Batliwala, "The notion of autonomy is rooted in the closely related concepts and dimensions of power and authority. Power is the ability, actual or potential, to exercise command and control over ideology.

Control of ideology refers to one's ways of thinking and perceiving situations" (qtd. in Pant 93). Astha was initially satisfied with following gendered condition in which she was performing her roles of a wife, daughter-in-law and mother:

> Astha often looked at her family, husband, daughter, son. She had them all. She was fulfilled. Her in-laws frequently commented, 'Woman is earth,' and it is true she felt bounteous, her life one of giving and receiving, surrounded by plenty. Visitors to the house would say, 'A mother's love' and then trail off, words collapsing into significant silence, which in turn washed over Astha and made her feel that she had partaken of the archetypal experiences marked out for the female race. (*AMW* 69)

Women face numerous problems because of their sex and their identities are contingent upon traditions and social structures. Janet Radcliffe Richards also expounds this approach in *The Sceptical Feminist* (1980) wherein she agrees that women suffer from systematic social injustice because of their sex. Between Anuradha's birth and Himanshu's, "Hemant changed from being an all-American father to being an all-Indian one. After he came home the last thing he wished to bother about was taking care of a child. 'It's your job. It's woman's work,' said Hemant firmly" (*AMW* 70). In the patriarchal set-up, men are associated with the public domain; in contrast, women are associated with the private domain. Childcare is one of the primary tasks of a woman under the traditional feminine roles. Astha individually handles children, house, and job:

> Astha was now virtually a single mother. Beleaguered by job, small children and house, she sometimes toyed with the idea of resigning from school, but between her marriage and the birth of her children, she too had 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. (*AMW* 71-72)

According to Chodorow, "The development and reproduction of gender identity — that is, of 'masculine' and 'feminine' personality — arise from a 'universal' nuclear family

structure in which one heterosexual female parent is primarily responsible for the exclusive mothering of children" (qtd. in Segura and Pierce 63).When Astha handles many things together, she requires someone for household help. Hemant responses negatively, "only learn how to manage it" (*AMW* 72). Kapur continually foregrounds the gendered nature of relationships in the novel by drawing our attention to Astha's humiliation by Hemant. When her mother shifts from Delhi to Rishikesh in an ashram and Astha wants to keep the boxes of book, Hemant refuses and declares, "Are you mad? We don't have the room. Come on, Az, donate them to a library. We can't clutter up our house with a lot of old books" (*AMW* 86). She requests him to keep his father's books. Her mother also adds that this is "Hemant's house, and he said there was no room" (*AMW* 87). Astha, examining her position, says, "Then who am I? The tenant? We could have found room, we could have built bookshelves, done something, we could at least have discussed it" (*AMW* 87).

The above lines expose the crisis of identity for a woman in patriarchal society through the central character of Astha. She represents the existing cultural pattern in the country wherein the marital home is considered to be the real home for a woman. Following that conditioning, she devotes her entire life to maintain household responsibilities but she is not considered worthy enough to take significant decisions related to it. It reflects a man's overall control over the household in a male- dominated society. Astha examines her status in her house when she is not allowed to keep her father's books because of Hemant's decision. She questions her place in the relationship by saying that at least they could discuss how to arrange space for books. As Naila Kabeer mentions that men's overall control is a reflection of social norms and cultural patterns. The "allocation of authority and control within household structures by social norms and values produce unequal gender relations where men command authority and resources" (224-28).

In the words of Beauvoir, "The situation of woman is that she – a free and autonomous being like all creatures – nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other''(29). In a similar vein, Astha realizes her foolishness. What "kind of fool had she been to expect Hemant to understand? She had a good life, but it was good because nothing was questioned.... There would ever be a day when she could feel the same right to complain that Hemant did" (*AMW* 99,172). Once, *The*

*Street Theatre Group* conducts a workshop in Astha's school and the founder of this workshop, Aijaz Akhtar Khan motivates Astha to write a script on the issue of Ramjanama Bhoomi and Babri Masjid. This issue is highly controversial and politicized in India. For Astha, to write on this topic is a lucky chance through which she can participate in the socio-political activities. She discusses this matter with Hemant but he disappoints her, "Wasn't Aijaz going to write this play...surely this is his area of expertise, not yours. How have you got so involved? Astha said, 'He wants everybody to participate. Besides you forget I am the teacher volunteer" (*AMW* 109). Hemant criticizes Astha and remarks, "Please. Keep to what you know best, the home, children, teaching. All this doesn't suit you" (*AMW* 116). Elaborating this kind of opinion through Hemant, Kapur unfolds patriarchy where men decide women's occupations without consulting them. If a husband commands over his wife, his status will be considered superior in patriarchal society. Existing socio-cultural traits and expectations play an essential role in gender conflicts. As Veronica Beechey points out that "patriarchy is neither a single nor a simple concept but has been attributed to wide variety of different meanings. Her analysis demonstrates how varying conceptions of patriarchy correspond to the different political tendencies…" (Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 69). In the words of Kapur, "Astha was a woman, and she was sick of sacrifice. She didn't want to be pushed around in the name of family. She was fed up with the ideal of Indian womanhood, used to trap and jail" (*AMW* 168). She advocates against a man-centred society, which always expects a woman to follow the path of sacrifices. Kapur also draws our attention to this fact in the text:

> In essence women all over the world are the same, we belong to families, we are affected by what affects our husbands, fathers, brothers and children. In history many things are not clear, the same thing that is right for one person is wrong for another, and it is difficult to decide our path of action. We judge not by what people tell us, but by what we experience in our homes. (AMW 197)

In this context, Chris Weedon points out that "patriarchy is founded on a fundamental polarization between men and women in which men exploit women for their own interests" (26-27). Astha gradually realises that she is a negligible figure in Hemant's

life. He uses his power over Astha and criticizes her that she does not know how to manage household, how to treat servants, how to care for children. This kind of humiliation and neglected attitude of her husband leads her to a lesbian relationship with Pipeelika Khan, who is the wife of Aijaz Akhtar Khan. Astha gets love, care, affection and understanding from Pipee.

*Home*, Kapur's third novel was shortlisted for the Hutch Crossword Prize for fiction. Like *Difficult Daughters* and *A Married Woman*, *Home* too questions the gender stereotypes prevalent in contemporary Indian society. Narrative tropes of the novel analyze the boundaries of gendered choices, which are imposed on women by family and other processes of socialization. In subtle ways, these processes efficiently fashion the personality of a girl in accordance with patriarchal priorities. The novel confirms the plight of a middle-class Indian girl in today's urban society. In her interview to Farhad J. Dadyburjor, Kapur has pointedly indicated this detail, "I teach in an all girls college (Miranda House College, Delhi) and *Home* was first conceived in response to the home situations of some of my students who came from conservative backgrounds" ("Writerly life". Web.). Furthermore, in another interview with Jai Arjun Kapur talks in detail about the selection of the title of this novel:

> Literature by women, about families, always has these larger considerations, with years of studying texts, it becomes almost second nature to look beneath the surface at social and economic forces, gender relationships and how they are played out in an arena that, in my writing happens to be the home. But then, all sort of things happening outside do affect what is happening inside the home. ("A Meeting". Web.)

On the one hand, the theme of the novel *Home* extensively explores the conservative gender practices, which imprison women within home as submissive and secondary while on the other exhibits men as intelligent, central and logical. Kapur, through this novel investigates not only the imprisonment of women within the socio-cultural structure, but also challenges the sexual exploitation of women to be linked to gender practices.

The portrayal of Nisha, the protagonist in the novel, emerges as an entrepreneur in the Banwari Lal family which:

> Belonged to a class whose skills had been honed over generations to ensure prosperity in the market-place. Their marriages augmented, their habits conserved. From an early age children were trained to maintain the foundation on which these homes rested. The education they received, the values they imbibed, the alliance they made had everything to do with protecting the steady stream of gold and silver that burnished their lives. Those fell against the grain found in their homes knives that wounded, and once the damage had been done, gestures that reconciled. (*H* 01)

Living at Karol Bagh in Delhi, Nisha, the granddaughter of Lala Banwari Lal, daughter of Yaspal and Sona, explodes the tradition of her home which fixed a woman's position within the home and establishes her identity as a business woman to be called 'Nisha Creations'. As it is explained by Kapur through Yaspal, "The women of the house had never worked. Not one. He was sending his beloved daughter out into the world because she did not have with her own home to occupy herself with" (*H* 269).

Negating the prefixed traditional roles of women within the domestic sphere through Nisha, Kapur brings forth a new concept about the chores of women like stitching, embroidery, knitting, cooking etc. which are not only used for familial purposes within home, but may also be accepted outside homes in the form of occupations. The theme of *Home* strengthens the notion of gender disparity which is "culturally instilled...into the child during a period of socialization" (Waugh 334). The socialization of girls suggests that their duties and capabilities are not only different from boys, but also label them as passive, inferior, fragile and weak. In similar context, Nisha is not only compelled to accept roles, which are different from those of her brothers, but also forced to utilize her talent within the precincts of house only. She is preached by her mother Sona, "The life of a woman: to look after her home, her husband, her children, and give them food she has cooked with her own hands" (*H* 126). Sona tries to mould Nisha's personality in accordance with the societal culture which appreciates "occupation: housewife and their only dream was to be perfect

wives and mothers; their highest ambition to have five children and a beautiful house, their only fight to get and keep their husband" (Friedan 18). In this framework, gender norms coerce women to believe in stereotypical femininity; and the account of femininity as a social script is transferred from one generation to other. As Eisenstein has pointed out, "Patriarchy as sexual hierarchy... is manifested in the women's role as mother, domestic labourer and consumer within the family" (qtd. in Beechey 67).

Tracing the life of Nisha from her childhood to adulthood, Kapur brings our attention to the Indian preference for a male child. The status of the mother of a son is considered to be superior to that of the mother of a daughter in the Indian society. Kane is of the opinion that "the birth of a daughter was not greeted as joyously as that of a son" (qtd. in Nabar 53). Kapur not only highlights the preference for a baby boy through Nisha, but also hints at the differences between the upbringing of a male and female child in the Indian society. From her childhood, a girl is fashioned to prefer sitting inside and play within the boundaries of home. In contrast, boys are traditionally free to play rough-tumble games out of home. The following conversation attempts to draw our attention to different social and cultural norms for raising girls and boys. Wishing to play with her brothers outside home, Nisha requests:

> I want to go too.
>
> 'You can't', said the mother shortly.
>
> Why? Why can't I?
>
> It is better for girls to remain inside.
>
> Why?
>
> You will get black and dirty.
>
> So what? Raju is black.
>
> Raju is the colour of Krishna and Krishna is a God, points out the mother. (*H* 51)

Above-mentioned lines expose the social construction, which equates men to gods and women to ordinary things. The novel shows that gender system is a socio-cultural product of history and men's ideology, which relegate women to 'other', thing and less valued in comparison to men. Kapur has rightly pointed out, "What is there in happiness? A girl has to be happy everywhere" (*H* 134). Greer describes the different instructions given to boys and girls since childhood:

> While little boys are forming groups and gangs to explore or terrorize the district, she is isolated at home, listening to tale of evil-minded strangers. Her comparative incarceration is justified in the name of protection…she is taught to fear and distrust the world at large, for reasons which are never clearly stated. (86-87)

Beauvoir also draws our attention to the different upbringing of male and female child by explaining that "boys are spoken to with greater seriousness and esteem, they are granted more rights; they themselves treat girls scornfully; they play by themselves, not admitting girls to their groups, they offer insults" (313). She further says that this is because a woman "comes out of a feminine world in which she has been taught feminine good deportment and a respect for feminine values, whereas he has been trained in the principles of male ethics" (Beauvoir 479-80). Traditionally, even as children, girls are trained to maintain femininity according to the social structure on which their lives rested. Beauvoir has observed, "The passivity that is the essential characteristic of the 'feminine' woman is a trait that develops in her from the earliest years" (307). The construction of femininity imposes on women that marriage is an ultimate goal and household activities are the primary occupations for them. Nisha's desire to play outside her home like her brothers is rejected by her mother with a scolding, "... if you get dirty and black playing in the sun, who will want to marry you. You want to look like a kali *bhainsi*...sweeper woman.... Your skin will become as black as a buffalo's, then nobody will ever marry you" (*H* 51, 52, 228). Mary Wollstonecraft has pointed out, "… taught from infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison" (58-59). Above-mentioned gender tropes confirm that family as a vehicle of various socio-cultural practices of patriarchy is one of the focal factors which psychologically influence a child. A child

learns different gender norms within the family itself and thereby gets a sense of being a boy or a girl. Such depictions of gender tropes in the novels of Kapur often confirm the views of various critics. Rosemarie Tong comments that "patriarchy always exaggerated biological differences between the sexes to make certain of men's domination, or masculine roles, and women's subordination or feminine roles through the process of socialization" (96). Owing to the different socialization, the parameter of treating both sexes is not similar and equal. For instance, Nisha's brother Raju, is treated with care and attention; in contrast, the family ignores Nisha who is sexually exploited. Unable to share her exploitation with any member of the family, the child suffers silently. It affects her demeanour also and she looks pale and sick. Without bothering to consult a doctor about her incessant cries and abnormal screaming, her parents send her to her aunt Rupa's home by stating, "There is nothing wrong with Nisha. All children have bad dreams from time to time" (*H* 64). Rupa is a childless younger sister of Sona. Her husband Prem Nath comments with irritation, "Fine way to abdicate responsibility, dump the girl here and forget her" (*H* 70).

According to Millett, "Sexual behaviour is almost entirely the production of learning … as the product of a long series of learned responses – response to the patterns and attitudes, even as to the subject of sexual choice, which are set up for us by our social environment" (32). Kapur highlights gender differences in the rearing up of boys and girls which make parents indulgent to a boy's shortcomings. Raju's teachers complained that he was noisy, inattentive and did not study properly. Her grandmother complacently ignores it, "Boys will be like that" (*H* 97). In contrast Nisha is ridiculed for her academic brilliance, "What is the use of doing brilliantly if you cannot help your brother? You are older, you should teach him" (*H* 98).The novel exposes the bias built within the social framework – Raju's poor performance is obliquely a negative comment on Nisha's brilliance who as a girl should not perform better than a boy. Under the propitious influence of Rupa and Prem Nath, Nisha excels academically. They also invite Raju for studying but Sona rejects this idea by saying "He is very sensitive, if I send him away he will feel I am punishing him. He can learn from her example right here" (*H* 100).

The novel aptly expounds the existing gender disparity, which is dictated by the society. After the death of his father Banwari Lal, Yaspal orders Sona to bring Nisha back

from her aunt's place without any consideration for her studies so that she can keep company with his ailing mother. Sona remarks, "The child was not a rubber ball to be bounced around to whomever felt the need" (*H* 120). Sona, finding sixteen years Nisha's culinary skills to be negligible, complains peevishly:

> You take half an hour to peel ten potatoes. How will you manage in your future home?
>
> '*Masi* said there is always time to learn cooking, but only one time to study,' Nisha tried defending herself, her aunt, and her upbringing.
>
> That *Masi* of yours has ruined your head. What does a girl need with studying? Cooking will be useful her entire life. (*H* 125)

Sona blames her sister Rupa for distorting Nisha's views and thus making her somehow a sub-standard female. Sona decides to teach culinary skills to Nisha herself, "Now quickly cut up cucumbers for the salad - here, do it like this, rub the top, take out the bitter, then wash, then peel, then slice, do the same with onions, tomatoes, and green chillies" (*H* 125). Kapur depicts that the lives of women revolve round the institution of marriage. Girls are taught to inculcate those values, which shall help them to become better wives. In this context, Beauvoir explains:

> Mother saddles her child with her own destiny… even a generous mother, who sincerely seeks her child's welfare, will as a rule think that it is wiser to make a 'true woman' of her, since society will more readily accept her if this is done… the treasures of feminine wisdom are poured into her ears, feminine virtues are urged upon her, she is taught cooking, sewing, housekeeping along with care of her person, charm and modesty. (309)

Along with her culinary skills, Sona takes meticulous care to include Nisha in every religious rite and ritual. The first time "Nisha was told she had to fast for her future husband she protested. 'Why should I? That's for older women.' She didn't want to spend the day without food or water" (*H* 92). Sona comments, "How are you going to get married, madam,

if you do not make sacrifices and what kind of wife are you going to make if you can't bear to fast one day a year for your husband?" (*H* 92) Talking about the importance of sacrifices for a woman, Sona further narrates the *Vat Savitri Katha* to Nisha and remarks, "This is what you must be like" (*H* 133). Kapur portrays the misuse of religion in the case of women. They are also conditioned to make sacrifices in the name of religion in a male chauvinist society. There is an "age for everything, and when the child should be thinking of studies, she was forcing her to think of husbands" (*H* 95). This is the reflection of existing social pattern, which promotes patriarchy by subjugating women. Through the novel, Kapur explains that in patriarchal society, women not only have limited rights, but also are not free to take their own decisions. As Nisha, rejecting the idea of wearing her hair short, states, "My hair, this thing not her own, but family treasure, the essence of traditional beauty" (*H* 147). Later on, under the influence of her boyfriend, she takes a   haircut but this act is criticized by her family members, "Who gave you permission to cut your hair, suddenly you have become so independent, you decide things on your own" (*H* 149). In a "gendered culture, the religious, legal, political, educational and material institutions both create and reinforce expectations about how men and women should behave" (qtd. in Hussein 01).

Kapur draws our attention towards the socialization of men and women in which men are regarded to fit in the frame of professional education and women's real education is in the kitchen. According to Amanda B. Diekman et al., "People favor traits that align with valued roles, and disfavor traits that misalign with these roles" (551). Disapproving the concept of working outside home, the social construction of femininity proves that "as daughters, sisters, and wives, women lit up their households" (*H* 72). Patriarchal norms believe that marriage and child rearing enrich the lives of women. For instance, Nisha's brother comments:

> Have you gone mad? Mummy Papaji are spending so much on your
> clothes, your jewellery, and you are talking like this....Why are you
> always doing drama?....Your in-laws will not like the idea of your
> working… I certainly won't let my wife work who is going to look
> after the house? (*H* 226, 250, 251)

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In the *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millett demonstrates gender traits, which identify masculine as "aggression, intelligence, force and efficacy", whereas feminine traits are believed to be "passivity, ignorance, docility, and ineffectuality" (26). As it is observed in the novel, "Why can't you be mature like your brother? He is so sensible, while you are just a fool" (*H* 226). Kapur highlights sex difference in which Raju is appreciated whereas Nisha is "more intelligent, methodical, and independent than Raju" (*H* 295).

Gender stereotypes of femininity imprison women within the responsibilities of marriage and condition them to believe that women's "real education is in the kitchen" (*H* 134). Frustrated by the whole process of marriage, Nisha declares that if marriage is everything and "there is no place for me in this house...I will go to an ashram and devote myself to homeless widows. At least there I can live with dignity and respect" (*H* 280, 281). In the words of Betty Friedan, "For a woman, as for man, the need of self fulfillment autonomy, self-realization, independence, individuality, self actualization is as important as the sexual need…" (282). The instrumental lens of gender tropes exhibit that gender disparity is determined by patriarchal conditioning and socialization. In this novel, such tropes delineate conventional expectations from men and women by maintaining gender inequality as "strictures of masculinity push men to 'do dominance' and strictures of femininity push women to 'do submission" (qtd. in Schilt and Westbrook 443).

*The Immigrant*, the fourth novel of Kapur, was shortlisted for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature in 2011. In this novel, Kapur describes not only the protagonist Nina's fight against the Eastern rigid patriarchal conditioning, but also her negotiation with and struggle against her loneliness, alienation, frustration and changing roles in the Western set-up. Like Diaspora authors Chitra Devakaruni, Kiran Desai and Jhumpa Lahiri; Kapur also delineates how such issues are faced by an immigrant woman. In this novel, Kapur highlights Nina's experience of daily life as an immigrant including her marriage which was arranged with an NRI and reshaping of her preferences about food and clothing. Makarand Paranjape writes about the felt authenticity of a woman's perspective is a postcolonial situation, "its story is in another and very powerful sense the other side of colonization, and if the story is told by women, it then becomes more valuable, more privileged, more saleable"(01). Women are "influenced by the discourse of femininity regardless of how it is expressed, because it

constitutes what it means to be a woman and in so doing control[s] the behaviour of individual women" (Crowley and Himmelweit 65). According to Beverley Skeggs, "femininity is the process through which women are gendered and become specific sorts of women" (98). Appropriating 'specific sorts of women' is produced by and dependent upon the social and cultural construction. Kapur starts the novel with the introduction of Nina who is almost thirty, a teacher at Miranda House in New Delhi:

> Friend and colleague consoled her by remarking on her radiant complexion and jet 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.... Tomorrow thirty, thirty, thirty. What brightness could any dawn cast on her existence? Colleagues, friends, students, parent—her world was totally female….The only men in her life long dead authors. (*TI* 01, 02, 03, 06)

Although Nina is financially self-reliant, her spinsterhood makes socially unacceptable, "socially she was nothing" (*TI* 49). In the socio-cultural frame, women are considered to be respectable and valuable by completing the assignment of marriage. The novel discusses the construction of gender in which men's existence is completely individual and socially independent whereas women are dependent and socially inferior. Kapur mentions how the patriarchal society provides men the privilege to believe that it is their natural right to subjugate women and also depicts the socialization of women in which they learn how to look and behave in accordance with men. It is "a romantic sentiment, a nostalgic tradition of imposed limitations" (Brownmiller 02). Nina shifts from Lucknow to Jangpura Extension in Delhi with her widowed mother Shanti by hoping that Shanti "would lead a fuller life and in Delhi her mother imagined a husband could be found who would give her darling the home she (Nina) deserved" (*TI* 05). Kapur explains that women are not regarded complete and respectable without the support of men in a patriarchal set-up. Nina and her mother are 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" (*TI* 07). Shanti prayed and fasted for ten years to appease gods for ordaining her daughter's marriage. When she receives the proposal of Ananda for her daughter her joy knows no bounds, "At last, at last her daughter had a decent offer, thank God there was somebody to take her out of this little room and give her the life she deserved" (*TI* 74). Nina's marriage is finalized with Ananda, an NRI settled in Canada as a dentist with the help of his uncle after his parents' accidental death. His uncle Dr. Sharma was brought up as a son by Ananda's mother. Though "close in age, as children she had mothered him" (*TI* 25). This reflects that young girls are instilled from their early years that childbearing and childrearing construct their real identity. The construction of femininity compels girls to look after male children of the family. It also demonstrates that women's identity is completely made to serve men. Women are "mothers, women are sisters, that's the only way a woman can get respect in our culture. Women are not perceived as individuals. They are always linked to or attached to someone else: a male" (qtd. in Siraj 190).

Several tropes of the novel underline the patriarchal perception that a woman devoid of a male protection is incomplete. Owing to her isolation and social marginalization, Shanti's obsession for the marriage of her daughter has grown. She selects Ananda for her daughter. For Shanti, Ananda is a replica of her late husband "as an eligible, well-off professional, settled in the first world country, and honest, upright citizen, a man who understood about caring and sharing, someone Nina would never regret choosing" (*TI* 72). Nina is confused about taking such a major decision, "I'm not sure, Ma, it is such a big step. And so far away. It means leaving everything, job, friends, you. If anything happens, I'll be left with *nothing*" (*TI* 74). Her mother convinces her, "Marriage is a question of adjustment.... After you marry, I can die happy" (*TI* 54, 74). Shanti is always concerned with Nina's marriage. Like Kasturi in *Difficult Daughter*, Kapur constructs the character of Shanti who passes on the rules of patriarchy to her daughter.

According to Maggie Humm in all societies "which divide the sexes into different cultural, economic or political spheres, women are less valued than men" (01). Nina's "heart ached for her husband. After her father died, she and her mother had spent long bitter years reconciling themselves to the full scale emptiness in their lives. In addition to the man they

adored, they had lost status, housing, security and their future" (*TI* 174). Linda McDowell, describing the status of men and women under patriarchy, shows the law of man:

> In its most general sense, the term…refers to the law of the father, the social control that men as fathers hold over their wives and daughters. In its most specific usage within feminist scholarship, patriarchy refers to the system in which men as a group are constructed as superior to women as a group and so assumed to have authority over them. (16)

Having faced a long series of sorrows without the supportive presence of a man as father/uncle/brother in the patriarchal society, Nina expects to have a happy married life with NRI Ananda in Canada, but Western set-up too disappoints her. She herself examines her position and accepts that "the immigrant who comes as a wife has a more difficult time. If work exists for her, it is in the future... at present all she is, is a wife, and a wife is alone for many, many hours. Then she realizes she is an immigrant for life" (*TI* 121-22). In Canada, Nina deals with strange loneliness as "no sign of any living thing around her. When was Ananda coming home?" (*TI* 115)

> At home one was never really alone. The presence of her mother, the vendors who came to the door, the half hour gardener who watered their plants, the part time maid who washed and cleaned, the encounters with the landlady, all these had been woven into her day. When she mourned her loneliness to Zenobia, it was a romantic companionate loneliness she was referring to, not the soul destroying absence of human beings from her life. She had worried about her mother's lack of companionship after her marriage; it would have been wise to have spared a thought for herself as well....It had already been a month, and she was keen to set down roots that would make her feel more at home. In India these relatives had seemed peripheral, more tourist than family. Now her perception had changed. She wanted to be close to them. (*TI* 130, 159)

Analyzing Nina's experiences in a diasporic situation Kapur depicts how she tries to negotiate with her circumstances in Western surroundings. J. Clifford in his article "Diasporas" comments on how the diaspora situation subtly changes the externalistic behaviour of women without altering in any way the underlying power structures of gender. He describes how women, while still "attached to a 'home' culture often find themselves caught between 'patriarchies, ambiguous pasts, and futures' and how communities can be a site of support for women, but also of oppression" (Clifford 314). Nina is frustrated with her psychological torture but her mother motivates her by replying, "Things take time. In the end patience and love achieve their own rewards. A woman's duty is to understand this" (*TI* 130). These lines by Kapur show that the fulfilment of women's femininity lies in caring for others as husband, children and other relations with having patience. As Carol Gilligan comments that women have an "obligation to care" (334).

According to West and Zimmerman, appearance is also a definition of femininity. Women's clothing and its presentation are vital elements of doing femininity. Feminine behaviour is "reflected and mediated through cultural idioms, values and practices, and associated with appearance: being feminine is basically looking after yourself, taking care of yourself, being attentive to look well presented. Appearance was a core element in women's feminine identity" (qtd. in Siraj 192). The novel illustrates how a woman is constrained by her husband to change her conventional values and practices in the Western set-up. Nina's marriage in Canada reshapes her preferences for clothes, which are the part of her identity as an Indian woman. Kapur portrays, "As immigrants fly across oceans they shed their old clothing, because clothes maketh the man and new ones help ease the transition. Men's clothing has less international variation; the change is not so drastic. But those women...wearing Western clothes...in a dilemma" (*TI* 150).

Kapur shows that sticking to Indian way of dress, saris and salwar kameez, has made Nina's life more difficult. These Indian clothes enrich her femininity, "she took out her saris and stroked the intricate woven surfaces. Benarasi, Kanjeevaram, Orissa patola, Gujarati patola, Bandhani; she had fancied carrying all parts of India to Canada in her clothes. She…gazed at the magic of the green, yellow and red Gujarati weave" (*TI* 112). However, these clothes demand a lot of care, time and "the local dhobi, the corner presswallah, not

washing machines. So when Ananda declared enough was enough, she had to graduate to Western, she acquiesced" (*TI* 150). Ananda compels her to wear Western clothes arguing that saris and salwar kameez are too formal. Kapur represents the immigrant experience in the following lines:

> Women who are not used to wearing Western clothes find themselves
> in a dilemma. If they focus on integration, convenience and
> conformity, they have to sacrifice habit, style and self-perception…
> in Nina's case it took months to wear down her resistance. (*TI* 150)

Furthermore, Western culture not only reshapes Nina's clothes, but also compels her to be a non-vegetarian. Under the influence of Indian culture, she loves, "Turmeric…red chillies…onions and garlic...releasing sweet sharp smells…cumin and coriander…these smells and imagined sights travelled across the world from north India to eastern Canada to kick her sharply in the stomach" (*TI* 139). Ananda, a Brahmin boy who was a pure vegetarian in India, adopts Western culture and becomes a non-vegetarian. Therefore, he forces Nina to eat meat.

> Ananda: How about a special combo [pizza] with pepperoni,
> anchovies…nothing in India quite compares.
>
> Nina: I thought you were vegetarian.
>
> Ananda: At home they think I am. But here I eat what everybody else
> does, it is simpler and convenient. You too will get used to it.
>
> Meat had never crossed Nina's lips in thirty years, how could she
> change now? (*TI* 112)

In this novel, Kapur also gives a picture of transnationalism. It can be understood as multiple ties and interaction linking people and institutions/communities across borders of nation-states. Transnational transactions are of many types like economic, social, political and cultural. According to Luis E. Guarnizo, t*ransnational habitus* is:

A particular set of dualistic dispositions that inclines migrants to act and react to specific situations in a manner that can be, but is not always, calculated, and that is not simply a question of conscious acceptance of specific behavioral or sociocultural rules. The transnational habitus results from the migration process itself, which has spread people's lives across national borders and becomes like a second nature. The transnational habitus incorporates the social position of the migrant and the context in which transmigration occurs. This accounts for the similarity in the transnational habitus of migrants from the same social grouping (class, gender, generation) and the generation of transnational practices adjusted to specific situations. (311)

In this novel, Kapur shows how patriarchy ensconces men in their belief that women should change themselves in accordance with their likes or dislikes. Ananda also exhibits this patriarchal practice when he wants Nina to alter her habits and preferences regarding food and dress. Nina changes her preferences swiftly and unquestioningly, not because she wanted but because she was dependent on Ananda. Alone in Canada, she is "emotionally, financially and socially, heavily dependent on him" (*TI* 215). Thematic tropes explain the condition of women in the following lines, "Helplessness, loss of control and a lack of confidence in her femininity. That was a sterile woman's profile" (*TI* 165). In the *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*, Sarah Hoagland defines heteropatriarchy as that which:

Ensures male right of access to women. Women's relations - personal, professional, social, economic - are defined by the ideology that woman is for man. Heteropatriarchy is men dominating and de-skilling women in any of a number of forms, from outright attach to paternalistic care, and women devaluing (of necessity) female bonding. Heteropatriarchy normalizes the dominance of one person and the subordination of another. Carole Pateman argues that social contract establishes men's political right over women and orderly access by my to women's bodies. (245)

Manju Kapur's novel *Custody* deals with two central characters – Shagun and Ishita – who struggle not only for their own identity, but also for their autonomy. Shagun, an extremely beautiful wife of Raman, the mother of two children, namely, Arjun and Roohi, wants to live on her own terms and conditions, whereas Ishita is completely victimized by the patriarchal society. Sagun fulfils her femininity by performing the roles of a wife and a mother, but Ishita fails in her conventional duties due to the lack of reproductive capacities. Through the characterization of both Shagun and Ishita, Kapur proves the construction of femininity, which is determined by social institutions, and not bodies. Men and women get sense of their actions and performances though their cultural conditioning and socialization. Biological accounts are not proficient to develop the behaviour variations in males and females. According to Ann Oakley, gender is "a way of separating the bodies of human beings from their social fates" (29).

Kapur suggests that in patriarchal society the role of a wife and a mother is considered to be the essence of womanhood. Preparation for these roles begins from the early years of girls. The social construction of masculinity and femininity develops different grounds of marriage for men and women. As girls are encouraged to become wives, societal emphasis is on maintaining their comeliness, which enhances their marital prospects. In contrast, boys are trained to become financially and socially superior. The novel claims that our bodies are influenced by the existing historical forms of masculinity and femininity in which a girl is recognised by her beauty and men for prospect. Raman and Sagun's "marriage had been arranged along standard lines, she the beauty, he the one with the brilliant prospects" (*C* 14). The role arrangements of men and women in accordance with patriarchal society are different in which beauty helps women to get their foremost destiny, marriage; and prospect helps men for their marriage. Beauty is instrumental in the marriage of a woman. Women, who are not conventionally beautiful, emphasize on "dieting, make-up, exercise, dress, cosmetic surgery...try to sculpt their bodies into acceptable shapes" (Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 167). In the novel, Kapur examines similar condition of Ishita who is "sweet rather than pretty....She had a wheatish complexion, a few scattered pimples, unremarkable black hair pulled into a bun low on her neck, eyes that were large enough, height average urban Indian five feet three inches" (*C* 52, 272). Raman has given very cold

response to his mother's second choice Ishita. He comments, "She seemed very ordinary" (*C* 269).

Another important character of the novel is Sagun. She is not only extremely beautiful, but also one of the bold characters of Kapur like Astha and Nina, who goes beyond social norms maintaining her extramarital relationship with Ashok Khanna, the boss of Raman. She wants to get rid of her dismal and uninteresting life with Raman. Thus, she decides to take divorce from Raman but her mother opposes her saying that "the family united in speculation that covered as wide a territory as possible, Physical, financial and emotional.... The house rests upon us women. In your children's happiness, your husband's happiness, lies your own. Anything else is just temporary" (*C* 103, 242). But Sagun challenges the prevailing norms by marrying Ashok. Leonore Tiefer remarks, "What women need is not to learn traditional morality according to official rules but to put forward women's sexuality that has been contained by the patriarchal system in the past" (NP). Therefore, Sagun is considered as a faithless wife in accordance with social rules. "This fact was embroidered and extended to cover the whole period of their marriage" (*C* 123). Sagun realizes, "If she had had a wish in life it was to be a homemaker, with husband and children, something every girl she had ever known effortlessly possessed" (*C* 185). But Ashok's modern point of view motivates her:

> Tradition versus modern values, individual versus society', he elaborated, putting a contrite arm around her. 'I just want to take you away from here. This narrow social set-up is all you know – that's why you are afraid. But it will be fine, fine.... It was part of the Indian disease. Ashok was always going on about stultifying tradition. The great Indian family, which rested on the sacrifices of its women. (*C* 84, 103-4)

On the other hand, Ishita's mother consoles her daughter, "All around her, it seemed, were broken marriages. Even Princess, Diana, beautiful, privileged, adored, even she couldn't keep her husband. No matter where you lived, what you circumstances, women always suffered" (*C* 127). Ishita is divorced by her husband Suryakanta because she could

not bear a child. Kapur examines the social structure in which a childless woman is not permitted to live happily in her married life.

Ishita's broken marriage has devastating effect on her. In the beginning, she is not ready for her remarriage. Her parents also realize that she is married to her work and nobody can give her a similar satisfaction. Still, they feel that marriage is the destiny of women and mandatory for their social and financial statures. Thus, they convince Ishita to marry again. Kapur captures their efforts for Ishita's second marriage in the following lines:

> Every Sunday both parents sat with the papers, pencil in hand, circling the marriage advertisements where a divorcee was acceptable. This narrowed their choices, but surely somewhere there was a man suitable for a girl like Ishita Rajora. A girl with all the home-making qualities, with so much love to give. (*C* 139)

Similar attempts can be seen in the portrayal of Mrs. Kaushik, who is the mother of Raman. She wants her son to remarry, so that the wife can take care of the household chores. She prefers Ishita in the hope that her own unhappy past may enable her to be subservient and thus make a satisfying home for Raman. For Mrs. Kaushik, Ishita is "a simple, home-loving girl to heal the wounds in her son's life" (*C* 270). Mrs. Kaushik also convinces him for marrying Ishita by saying, "she was such a good wife, devoted, caring. For her marriage was for life.... Capable, patient, even tender with the children, reliable ... the heart of a homemaker. These are good qualities in a wife. And what was good in a wife was good for the family" (*C* 262, 270, 271, 272). Ishita succumbs to her familial pressures to marry Raman as her parents did not want to refute the societal norms regarding marriage would have to be followed. Without performing the role of mother, Ishita was incomplete in her first marriage but her remarriage with Raman who has already children complete her femininity. When Raman decides to marry with Ishita, her parents claims:

> It was miracle that her daughter had got this chance of returning to the status so rudely snatched from her.... What kind of catch is your daughter? The reality of the world was that all men were catches and only some women. That made the marriageable male-female ratio

fragile, and the mother of a daughter constantly watchful. (*C* 270, 303)

The aforementioned deliberation and discussion of Kapur's novels analyze that the construction of femininity is determined by social institutions, and not bodies. Biological account is not as powerful as gender to develop the behaviour variations in men and women. By applying and citing such arguments of major gender theorists, this chapter has attempted to outline a wide range of responsible factors i.e. unequal social relations, institutions, cultural conditioning and different upbringing instructions through which women's identity is constructed inferior, passive and deficient. Gender hierarchy differentiates between the socialization of men and women in a patriarchal society. The lives of women are obligated to care for men. Manju Kapur's protagonists –Virmati, Astha, Nisha, Nina, Sagun and Ishita – are bold and strong with indomitable wills. They rebel against gender inequality as well as the mores of society, which constrict them in the roles of daughters, sisters, wives and mothers only. They struggle to establish their individual identity. This chapter has explored and investigated gender tropes related with cultural conditioning, patriarchy and socialization, which are accountable for women's marginalization and exploitation, though there are several other tropes of gender which are also responsible for women's secondary and subservient positions. Among these, women's education is one of the instrumental gendered tropes, which impoverishes them intellectually as well as economically. The third chapter explores how the education of women also becomes a tool to perpetuate gender binaries. It discusses how the focus of education for women in a patriarchal culture is to continue their subservience, resulting in their academic, intellectual and economic impoverishment as educational opportunities are intrinsically linked with economic standing in the society.

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# CHAPTER 3

# Gender: Education and Economic Spaces

Education and economy are connected in inextricable, inevitable and extensive forms. Education transmits the existing socio-cultural practices in which women's personalities have been groomed to take the charge of household responsibilities and men's personalities are groomed to bear economic responsibilities. Social preferences and conventional gendered stereotypes project men as active, energetic, logical, strong, dynamic and suitable for public spheres; whereas these norms project women as passive, conservative, incapable and weak, associated with private domains. The role of valuable education in the lives of men and women is regarded equally important and similar for the development of society, but to access higher education and professional career are conceded negligible for women and compulsory for men in patriarchal society. Women are economically exploited because of their education which has limited and different objectives from those of men. Convention restricts them from opting for those subjects and professional streams, which are normally preferred for/by men. They also receive education in different perspective, e.g. their education is considered to be only a means to take care of and better manage the household chores and married life. According to Millett:

> The education of women was not thought of as a course of study beyond the threshold level of learning, a genteel polish its major achievement. And in most cases it was deliberately cynical in its emphasis upon—virtue—a sugared word which meant obedience, servility, and a sexual inhibition perilously near to frigidity. (74)

Education is imperative if one wishes to be independent and successful. However, patriarchy has differentiated against women by constricting their educational opportunities. It is true about the Indian societal set-up also, against the backdrop of which Kapur has narrated her novels. A general survey of various sociological and educational studies explains that:

Changing discourse around education in the last 50 years in India has influenced programmes; from education being conceptualised as a 'universal good' at the time of independence (1947), to an instrument for population control in the 1960s, to a 'right' by the 1980s and to a cornerstone of women's 'empowerment' by the 1990s. (qtd. in Katherine 327)

Gender tropes depicted in the novels of Manju Kapur exhibit that women are exploited and oppressed by the societal norms in the spheres of education and economic independence. This chapter not only analyzes the position of women in the fields of education and economy, but also highlights that higher education and economic independence support women to take decision individually. Education and economic independence also help in removing the degree of violence against women, thus enabling them to assertively foreground their individuality. Rachel Jewkes observes in this context, "In many studies, high educational attainment of women was associated with low levels of violence" (1425).

In *Difficult Daughters,* the struggle for emancipation by Virmati is supported by her education. For Virmati, education is the only choice, which can lead her to be independent. She proudly boasts about her family, "My mother, my *masi* (aunt), all studied. It is the *rivaz* (tradition) in our family. Even now my father keeps getting my mother books and magazines to read" (*DD* 39). However these practices are nurtured only to the extent to which they do not contradict the basic pursuit of feminine duties by women. Virmati also realizes that her family believes in the conservative norms and traits in which women are born only for caregiving and household activities. Emphasis on education within conventional setting does not enable women to attain self-hood, rather it binds them more effectively to conventional nurturing roles. From the early years of her youth, she has been overloaded with the burden of domestic duties and responsibilities of upbringing her younger siblings. Despite it, she is "so keen to study, *bap re*. First FA, then BA, then BT on top of that" (*DD* 05). She is very much influenced by her cousin Shakuntala, who is depicted as a qualified woman in the novel. Shakuntala holds the view that "here we are, fighting for the freedom of the nation, but women are still supposed to marry, and nothing else" (*DD* 17). Shakuntala is a post-

graduate, an M. SC. in Chemistry whose responsibilities spread beyond the family. However, she is looked down upon and taunted by her family, "When will this girl settle down? All the time in the lab, doing experiments, helping the girls, studying or going to conferences" (*DD* 16). Shakuntala's portrayal narrates how in a male chauvinist society a woman is respected and regarded to be honourable by performing the roles of only wives and mothers (Chauhan and Gaur 172). Kapur also explains in the novel that different social expectations and roles of women as nurturers and household caretakers are responsible causes on which their exploitation and secondary status is based. Their socialization ensures "their subservient roles in the household" as commented by Bhattacharya:

> Women accept their subservient roles in the household and perpetuate the discrimination against their female offspring.... [I]deology stresses male superiority within the household and places the women under the control of men throughout their life. (22)

Kasturi, who is Shakuntala's aunt and Virmati's mother, cherishes traditional values and norms, which compel women to believe that marriage is the foremost goal and childbearing is mandatory for a woman. Kasturi prays to God that her daughters should not be like Shakuntala but her eldest daughter Virmati wants to follow her footsteps. Education, freedom and "the bright lights of Lahore colleges" (*DD* 17), these seeds of aspiration in Virmati are planted by Shakuntala's visits. For her, Shakuntala "no longer was the poor, unmarried, elder cousin, who didn't come home because she was hiding her face in shame" (*DD* 18) as suggested by her family. Virmati is told irritably by her mother:

> What good are Shaku's degrees when she is not settled. Will they look after her when she is old? ... she's become a mem. Study means developing the mind for the benefit of the family. I studied too, but my mother would have killed me if I had dared even to want to dress in anything other than was bought for me. (*DD* 16-17, 21-22)

The novel depicts that girls are psychologically moulded to fit in the frame of passive roles by their families. Like Shakuntala, Virmati decides to remain single and pursue higher education. In the pre-independence India depicted in the novel, Lahore was considered to be

a place of higher learning. Virmati also wants to go to Lahore, [she] "had to go to Lahore, even if she had to fight her mother who was so sure that her education was practically over" (*DD* 19). I. K. Sharma writes in his article "A Study of Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*":

> Virmati's identity begins to change as she identifies herself with Shakuntala and with Lahore. This identification gradually creates in her a desire to be free. And to fulfill that desire, she demolishes whatsoever comes in her way. She thus constructs her new identity. (68)

It is pertinent to quote Thomas N. Daymont and Paul J. Andrisani in this context:

> Men were more likely than women to feel that making a lot of money is very important in selecting a job or career. Consistent with societal expectations that men be assertive and dominant, they were also more likely to feel the importance of choosing a job or career that provides an opportunity to be a leader. Women, on the other hand, were more likely to feel the importance of opportunities to be helpful to others or to society, and of opportunities to work with people rather than things. (414)

In the patriarchal system, women are regarded as socially inferior and economically dependent on men but the research of Daymont and Andrisani proves that women are more helpful to others than men if they get opportunity to work. This message is also delivered to Kasturi by Shakuntala when she remarks that Virmati will "become a teacher and help others. *Chachi*, you know how important education is…", but she realizes that "*Chachi* (aunt) will say I am a bad influence on Virmati" (*DD* 17,113). Shakuntala is appalled by Kasturi's lack of enthusiasm for allowing Virmati to pursue her education. She tries to convince her by saying that "times are changing, and women are moving out of the house, so why not you?" (*DD* 18) The most "obvious way we can see that gender roles and stereotypes are culturally and socially dependent is in that gender expectations change over time and across cultures" ("Gender, Culture and Society". Web.).

The novel further demonstrates the negligible attitude of girls' parents for their education through Virmati. Virmati's education is not a serious subject for her parents. As "a child she had been sent, a ten-minute walking distance, to the Arya Kanya Mahavidyalaya" (*DD* 19). Over burdened with domestic duties, she is not able to give her best towards education and fails her FA. Her mother wants to discontinue her education, "Leave your studies if it is going to make you so bad-tempered with your family. You are forgetting what comes first" (*DD* 21). Humayun Ansari portrays the feminine identities of women as "passive and docile, subject to patriarchal traditions and lacking any active agency to change their condition . . . Invisible in the public domain and trapped within the family framework, their lives are seen as unfree and exposed to domestic exploitation" (252).

Such indoctrination traps the girls within the familial framework and denies any active agency to them. The novel shows that women are forced to adjust within the family and domestic roles and are not given any freedom to think about pursuing their education or economic freedom. It is also clear for Virmati that her higher education will not be permitted by her family but for her, education is the most powerful instrumental tool through which she can prove her capability and taste "the wine of independence" (*DD* 19). Goaded by the desire to achieve something, howsoever tenuous it could be, she continues to pursue her education and manages to pass:

> Her FA with marks that were respectable enough for a girl. She now wanted to study further. Her parents thought that she had gone far enough. Her fiance's parents thought she was already well qualified to be the wife of their son, the canal engineer. They didn't want too much education in their daughter-in-law, even though times were changing. (*DD* 45)

Faced with the futility of options – "early marriage, and no education" or "education versus marriage", Virmati attempts to commit suicide (*DD* 41, 54). When her father asks her the reason for such drastic step, she says that she wants to get higher education. She is not "harming anybody by studying. How weak and fragile that statement sounded…" (*DD* 86). For her mother Kasturi, marriage is the only choice of life. Kasturi is unable to understand why her daughter did so and does not want to get married. She exclaims:

What nonsense!

'*Mati* (mother), Please, I want to study' Virmati faltered

But you have studied. What else is left?

'In Lahore…I want to go Lahore.' (*DD* 59)

Virmati does not want to be treated either as a doll or as a decorative ornament. She wishes to be independent, assertive and autonomous. She regards higher education as her first step towards emancipation. For Kasturi, higher education and economic independence mean the denial of conventional roles. She tries to convince Virmati again and again for marriage by citing innumerous examples:

> When I was your age…girls only left their house when they married. And beyond a certain age…*hai re*, beti! What is the need to do a job? A woman's *shaan* is in her home. Now you have studied…*shaadi*…a woman without her own home and family is a woman without moorings…marriage was acceptable to her family, but not independence. (*DD* 16, 111, 115)

Her family's refusal to allow her to study further leads Virmati to Harish Chandra, a professor who had studied in England. He has been exposed to the demand of liberation by women. He not only expresses his concern towards woman's education, but also motivates Virmati for further education:

> For him, [women's] studies are very important… it showed he really cared for women's education …who is responsible for this state of affairs? Society, which deems that their sons should be educated, but not their daughters … once she had gained a proper education, she would be on her way to becoming one of the finest flowers of Hindu womanhood. (*DD* 39, 62, 103)

The family ultimately allows Virmati to go to Lahore for further education. She "entered AS College, the bastion of male learning. It had four hundred boys to six girls.

Virmati was the seventh" (*DD* 45). She is excited by this opportunity and also by her hostel life, "I have heard that a hostel has opened for girls in the medical college. There are families who want a career for their daughters. Nobody wanted anything for me except a husband" (*DD* 110). The novel depicts that girls are brought up to believe that the single aim of their life is marriage. In Lahore, Swarna Lata, the roommate of Virmati helps her to look beyond her immediate circumstances, participate in co-curricular activities, and be more familiar with societal challenges. Virmati was totally trapped in her affair with Harish. Swarnalata advises her to open up the possibilities of other ambitions too. 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" (*DD* 151). Swarnalata's motivated views enable Virmati to introspect her activities. She comments, "Am I free thought Virmati. I came here to be free but I am not like these women. They are using their minds organizing, participating in conferences, politically active, while my time is spent being in love" (*DD* 142). Further she reminds herself that "she had seen women growing in power and strength, claiming responsibility for their lives, declaring that society would be better off if its female were effective and capable" (*DD* 163). *Difficult Daughters* takes up gendered constrictions of women in an evocative manner and is therefore able to gain an inter-cultural acceptance. The novel has been translated into Marathi (1998), German (1999), Greek (2000), Italian (2000), Dutch (2001), Greek (2003), Spanish (2003) and Portuguese (2005). Dora Sales Salvador, in her note to her Spanish translation of the novel, appropriately stresses:

> Kapur emphasizes the efforts made at that time by numerous women
> who, while demanding equal opportunities, equal access to education
> and life-opportunities going beyond convention, were a visible force
> in the non-violent resistance to the British. (qtd. in Kumar 03)

According to Kapur, "education encourages girls to be independent… it's good the girl of today know so much, out of her kitchen, out of her house, the kinds of knowledge…" (*DD* 39, 196). Furthermore, the novelist proves it through the characterization of Virmati. After completing BT, Virmati is offered the position of headmistress by the prime minister of Sirmaur. He compliments to her father, "It is unusual to have a daughter so highly qualified,

BA, with a BT from Lahore. Very few of our girls are allowed to go in for higher studies" (*DD* 179). Virmati's father responds, "Bhai Sahib, you know how times are changing. With the boys becoming educated, and often opting for professional careers, there is the need for girls to keep up with them. Otherwise, where is the compatibility?" (*DD* 179) After getting her father's permission, Virmati joins Pratibha Kanya Vidyalaya in Nahan, the capital of Sirmaur and proves her talent as well as potential there as a professional. On the one hand, Virmati proves herself as capable as men in the profession, while on the other her mother blames her by commenting that "all your education has achieved is the destruction of my family" (*DD* 99). Her mother does not support Virmati's autonomous decisions and blames them on her higher education and economic independence. Elaborating on the narratives tropes of education and economy, *Difficult Daughters* has discussed that women are not supposed to be having equal footing with men in private and public activities within a male governed society.

Kapur's *A Married Woman* highlights the complexities of a married woman, Astha, and discusses how she yearns to get respect, freedom of expression, equality, as well as financial independence. Analyzing and elaborating on the institution of education through the novel, Kapur discloses that for girls education is an option of marriage by which they can find out a good husband. A girl is not groomed either to take up a job or become independence by her education. The patriarchal system of education trains girls to be dependent on men socially as well as economically. Education too transmits the existing gender practices in which men "bear the burdens of the outside world, home is their (women's) refuge" (*AMW* 270). J. Wallerstein and S. Blakeslee convey the similar concept in the book *The Good Marriage: How and Why Love Lasts* that "the woman takes charge of the home and family while the man is the primary wage earner" (22). Kapur describes that Astha's parents do not move beyond this socio-cultural trait, though they have different perspective about her education. Astha's mother Sita believes that marriage is the only respectable option for girls and the education of girls should serve this purpose. She echoes the sentiments of Beauvoir who maintains that "marriage is not only an honourable career and one less tiring than many others: it alone permits a woman to keep her social dignity intact" (352). She prays everyday for "a good husband for Astha. In comparison we find that Astha's father is liberated and believes that his daughter must study to expand her mental

horizon" (Chauhan and Gaur 174). He feels that "his daughter's future lay in her own hands, and these hands were to be strengthened by the number of books that passed through them" (*AMW* 02). He also updates her general grasp of various affairs by stating, "You need a sense of your cultural background... of what made this country great. Know your artistic heritage, since your interest lies there" (*AMW* 27). Her father, a bureaucrat does not want his daughter to be like himself, dissatisfied and disappointed. He preaches to her:

> You have so much potential, you draw, you paint, you read, you have a way with words, you do well academically, the maths is a little weak, but never mind, you must sit for the competitive exams. With a good job comes independence. When I was young, I had no one to guide me… *(AMW 04)*

Sometimes seeing his daughter's carelessness towards education, he scolds her, "You worthless, ungrateful child. Do you know how much money I spend on your education?" (*AMW* 02) However, even Astha's father, who holds modern views, never thinks beyond the periphery of marriage. He says to Sita, "If she did well in her exams, she could perhaps sit for the IAS, and a good husband there. You met all kinds of people in the administrative services" (*AMW* 03). On the other hand, Sita who believes in the virtues of tradition tells Astha, "Our *shashtras* teach us how to live. You will learn from the *Gita*, the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*" (*AMW* 27-28).

> Now that Astha was in college her mother focused anxiously on their primary parental obligation. Every Sunday she scanned the matrimonial pages meticulously, pencil in hand, circling ads. Later on she would show them to the father.
>
> She is only in second year, Sita for heaven's sake. Let her finish her education at least.
>
> In the time it takes to finalise a match she will have graduated. Good boys are not to be found so easily.
>
> She has just eighteen. Let her be.

Let her settle down to a career, then we will see. I can't go around begging people to marry my daughter. (*AMW* 19-20)

Finally, they settle Astha in the wedlock with Hemant without thinking of her career. Within a few months of her married life, a dullness began to taint Astha's new life, "What was she to do while waiting for Hemant to come home?" (*AMW* 46) In this situation, she is suggested to work. Her father advises her to "join journalism and Hemant decides that she should take up a teaching job which is considered to be appropriate for a woman" (Chauhan and Gaur 175). He remarks, "Journalists have to stay out late, they have very odd hours… all women were destined to be teachers or nothing" (*AMW* 47). In the words of B. Laslett and J. Brenner, through teaching profession women can take "primary responsibility for the daily physical needs of household members, caring for young children, and nursing the sick, and make crucial contributions to the productive activity of the household" (386). According to the decision of her husband, she joins St Anthony's School. However, Astha soon realizes that Hemant does not respect her job. He mocks at her duties, "What is there in teaching? Hardly a serious job, you just go, talk to some children about poems and stories, organise a few clubs, and come back" (*AMW* 68). Hemant criticizes not only her teaching job, but also her friend Pipee's work who is a part of NGO called *Ujjala* by saying, "take money from here and there, and pretend they are working" (*AMW* 224). Astha protests, "She works with basti Children and helps them get through school, she gives them a sense of self-confidence, and strength" (*AMW* 223). Kapur exposes in the novel that "socially privileged men devalue women's works and this tradition passes from men to men" (Chauhan and Gaur 175). The following lines clearly showcase this patriarchal attitude:

The home is regarded as the domain of the 'private' and the feminine while sites of paid work have coded masculine within the public sphere. Homes have been cast as the unpaid domain of mothers and children, connoting the secondary values of caring, love, tenderness and domesticity. In contrast, places of paid work have been regarded as the domain of men, connoting the primary values of toughness (either physically or mentally), hardness, comradeship and reality. (qtd. in Barker 293)

Women are groomed for accepting their natural roles as homemakers and caregivers which results in economically and socially secondary status for them. The different performances, deeds and expectations from women because of their sex lead them to an inferior condition. Kapur, through the characterization of Astha, also exhibits that women are restricted from taking active part in the public domain. In Astha's school, Aijaz Akhtar, the founder of a workshop, motivates her to write a script on the issue of Ramjanama Bhoomi and Babri Masjid. The responsibility of writing a script enhances her talent as an active writer. Her husband Hemant advises her to keep her priorities clear. She is discouraged by him, "Keep to what you know best, the home, children…all this doesn't suit you" (*AMW* 116). Later on, Hemant criticizes Astha for participating in the procession, "You seem to forget that your place as a decent family woman is in home, and not on the streets" (*AMW* 172). Such denial of participation in public sphere to a woman has also been explained by Beauvoir in her *The Second Sex*:

> It is outrageously paradoxical to deny woman all activity in public affairs, to shut her out of masculine careers, to asset her incapacity in all fields of effort, and then to entrust her the most delicate and most serious undertaking of all: the moulding of a human being. There are many women whom custom and tradition still deny the education, the culture, the responsibilities and activities that are the privilege of men. (538-39)

Throughout the novel, Kapur mentions that men are considered eligible, capable and logical to take active part in public spheres as well as financial charges. For instance, Astha's mother Sita gives her property to Hemant as her father's legacy. When Astha questions it, Sita replies, "Why not? He is a man, he knows about money. He will invest it for you and the children" (*AMW* 97). Her mother not only discusses her financial matters with Hemant, but also calls him a clever person, who does "business, with no background,' 'You yourself have said he manages everything financial. It was the same with your father, I only did the household accounts" (*AMW* 97). Such statements of Sita reveal the supreme and superior position of men in the field of finance and commercial management. According to Beauvoir:

...the truth of the universe, the supreme authority, the marvellous, master, eye, prey, pleasure, adventure, salvation; he…incarnates transcendence; he is the answer to every question. The most loyal wife never consents to renounce this marvel and shut herself away in dull communication with a contingent, limited individual. (560)

Owing to the busy schedule of Hemant, Astha practically becomes a single parent for her children. In this situation, Hemant suggests her to leave her teaching job but Astha murmurs:

I want something of my own. 'My own money,' though she knew it was contrary to the spirit of good marriages for a wife to hang on to things and say they were her own. But she was not yet enough of a painter to risk giving up a job she had had for ten years. It represented security, not perhaps of money, but of her own life, of a place where she could be herself. (*AMW* 148-149)

Virginia Woolf points out that education is a vital element for women's self-actualization. She also delineates that education and economy are connected with each other and "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (06). Astha does not only earn her salary as a teacher, she has also found a talent for painting and sold some of her paintings at profitable prices. All of a sudden, Hemant arranges a family trip to Goa and thinks of staying in a five-star hotel. When Astha questions him how he will manage money for this trip. Hemant replies, "I have to go to Bombay to see a dealer, the children's tickets will cost half, yours is the only ticket we have to pay for. We will spend the money you earned for your painting" (*AMW* 163). Astha is astonished at her husband for having taken a decision of spending her money without consulting her. It is her own money which is being spent by her husband on this off-season trip, still she has been denied any real authority to spend it in her own manner. Hemant plans all the expenditure and does not allow any space to her. His refusal to Astha's request to buy the silver box confirms this attitude:

'Please, can I have that box?' she asked Hemant.

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'You must be out of your mind,' said Hemant.

The tone, the refusal both hurt her. She was an earning woman, why
couldn't she have a say in how some of their money was spent?
(*AMW* 164-165)

The aforementioned conversation highlights that women do not have an easy control over the money, which has been earned by them. Astha strives to establish her own position in patriarchal society even though she is often pushed to acceptance. Tropes of gender – education and economic spaces portray that women are always associated with dependence and their beliefs and values are considered to be secondary; on the other hand, manhood becomes a symbol of authority and independence. Men occupy public as well as private positions, while women engage in particular occupations such as domestic, housekeeping and child rearing. Additionally, men compel women to take primarily domestic responsibilities. The tropes of the novel clearly indicate and indict the prevalent societal norms concerning educational and economic traditions.

*Home* is the story of Nisha, the protagonist, as well as of her mother Sona and her aunt Rupa. When the novel opens, Sona and Rupa are depicted as two elderly women. The novelist has also described their early life in detail to highlight how the choices and opportunities regarding education and economic independence are constricted by the gendered position of women in a patriarchal society. They belong to a Meerut-based educated family. Sona, the elder sister is studying in her first year of college when a marriage proposal is received for her. The groom is Yaspal, who is a high school passed shopkeeper and the eldest son of Lala Banwari Lal. Sona is married to him and "marriage provided enough reason to discontinue her education. She was reasonably pretty, reasonably fair – to be extreme in the looks department could be deceptive…" (*H* 12). Being a daughter-in-law in the business family, she declares that "she does not want to study any more, she wants to remain on the same level as her husband" (*H* 08). The socialization of girls moulds their mind to give priority to marriage, rather than education. They accept marriage as their fate and vital career. Rupa, the younger sister is not forced to give up her education due to a lack of marriage proposal. She completes her B.A, after which her marriage is arranged with Prem Nath, a poorly paid mechanical employee in the Defence Ministry. During her conjugal life,

Rupa's circumstances compel her to earn money. She starts a pickle shop 'Roopams' to make a little extra money, but Sona dislikes her business. Rupa convinces her to look beyond the traditional gendered roles by stating, "Times are different now, Didi. You mean to say all working women have no one to call their own?" but Sona replies, "We are old-fashioned people. Tradition is strong with us. So is duty" (*H* 123). The conversation between Rupa and Sona reveals socially constructed practices and constrains in which a woman "only becomes a domestic, a wife, a chattel... she is no more the helpmate of man than gold in itself is money. What then are these relationships by which a female becomes an oppressed woman? (Rubin 158) Feldberg and Glenn refer this trope of gender as a "job model versus a gender model of explanation: with men's activities being interpreted as primarily *job* related and women's as being primarily related to their *gender* (in the biologically reductionist sense)" (qtd. in Mills 354).

Kapur delineates how gendered perceptions about the purpose and usefulness of education of girls create hindrances for them. The attitude of the sisters towards education and consequential economic independence of girls fashions the upbringing of their children. Nisha, being a girl is especially affected by it. Through Nisha, the central figure of the novel, Kapur also represents that parents pay less attention to girls' education in comparison to boys. For Nisha's parents, her education is an insignificant subject. As Kapur explains:

> Months passed, Nisha close to six and was about to exhaust the possibilities of play school. Weren't her parents going to see about a proper educational institution, thought the uncle irritably. In most schools applications had to be submitted by the end of December. (*H* 69-70)

Her aunt Rupa and uncle Prem Nath, who do not have a child of their own, persuade her parents to allow them to look after Nisha's education. She is admitted to the New Horizon Public School by her uncle and learns from the traditional lore – *Stories from the Ramayana and Jatka Tales*. Additionally, Nisha learns some basics of running a business from Rupa. Her father, grandfather and uncle never shared any information related to business with women at her home. Kapur mentions the social construction in which women are not encouraged to participate in the public domain, despite their intelligences and

capabilities. Nisha, a sharp-minded girl who obtains "89 in Maths, Science 82, Hindi 86, Social Studies 90, English 87, Sanskrit 88" (*H* 98), is not praised and motivated by her family to study further. On the other hand, her brother Raju, who declares, "I hate studies, my brain dries up" (*H* 121), is pressurized to study further. Gender norms assign paid work to men and unpaid work to women, this is one of the reasons that women's education is given secondary status and different objectives from those of men. Although women "entered numerous leadership roles formerly male-dominated roles, they also have retained responsibility for domestic and caregiving roles" (qtd. in Diekman et al. 558). Nisha's parents expect her to give preference to conventional roles unquestioningly:

> After eleven years Nisha returned home to assume her place as daughter of the house. Now there was less interest in her school, no pampering, and long hours expected in the kitchen… here nobody looked through her school dairy, notebooks, or test papers. They didn't care if she failed, they only cared if she cut ginger… this was her home, but it didn't feel comfortable. The moment she opened her books, she missed her uncle, when she sat down to eat she missed her aunt's food, when she slept she missed the quietness, when she came home from school she missed the fuss, when she worked she missed the encouragement. (*H* 124, 125, 128)

Socialization patterns embedded in educational options socially permissible to girls subtly push them to accepting "conventional roles in preference to their careers. Glorification of feminine roles is also responsible for it" (Chauhan and Gaur 178). The findings of Bergen and Williams also support this notion that unfortunately "held beliefs, the attributes, attitudes and strength of sex stereotypes have not changed" (qtd. in Naqvi 294). The novel illustrates how women are still restricted from pursuing higher education. Their limited options of higher education, if they are able to have them, are targeted to the better management of their married life. Nisha is also restricted from pursuing higher education. Her aunt Rupa speaks in favour of Nisha:

> If anything happens in the girl's later life, she is not completely dependent…she knows her views should be confined to her sister,

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who would recycle them as she thought fit. But she couldn't help herself. In this day and age there still people wondering whether girls should get an education…it would be a shame to not educate her further. Let her do English Honours, not too much work, reading story books'. As it is, Nisha is so bad in kitchen work, she might get totally out of control in college,' says Sona anxiously" (*H* 139-140).

Sona wants to finalize Nisha's marriage as soon as possible. Unfortunately, Nisha's horoscope has made her a *manglik*. She is permitted to join the Durga Bai Girls College for English Honours when the family is unable to find a suitable *manglik* groom for her. Even then she is told not to take it seriously, "Higher studies were just a time pass, it was not as though she was going to use her education. Working was out of the question, and marriage was around the corner" (*H* 141). Marriage has been set as the foremost aim for women, without completing this assignment, they cannot get dignity and respect in the society. Nisha discards this destiny and gender boundary of choices opting for business:

> A BA degree is not enough. I want to study fashion designing. Lots of girls do it, why can't I? Why should I sit at home every day waiting for proposals? ... I have seen girls working in shops. Why should it be only Ajay, Vijay and Raju? There must be something I too can do. (*H* 226, 267)

Another aspect which has been taken up by Kapur is that women's work is allowed only in "unconventional situations (no children), and that respectability demanded it be avoided as much as possible" (*H* 211). This is also one of the reasons that Nisha is forced to work from home only. "You will do the housework…you don't know the world,' said Sona, turning on her daughter angrily. 'After us, you are your brother and sister-in-law's responsibility" (*H* 223, 261).

Rosabeth Kanter's *Men and Women of the Corporation* shows that "gender differences in organizational behavior are due to structure rather than to characteristics of women and men as individuals" (291-92). She further argues that gender "enters the picture

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through organizational roles" that "carry characteristic images of the kinds of people that should occupy them" (Kanter 250). According to Kanter:

> A 'masculine ethic' elevates the traits assumed to belong to men with educational advantages to necessities for effective organizations: a tough-minded approach to problems; analytic abilities to abstract and plan; a capacity to set aside personal, emotional considerations in the interests of task accomplishment; a cognitive superiority in problem-solving and decision making. (qtd. in Joan Acker 143)

A similar case is discussed by Kapur in this novel. Nisha requests to get a chance by which she can prove her potential and talent. Give me "a chance to show you what I can do. I want to do something of value" (*H* 286). It would be appropriate to cite Chris Weedon who in *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* says that "the nature of femininity…is one key sites of discursive struggle for the individual…it is a struggle which begins at birth and which is central to upbringing and education" (98). Nisha is preached by saying that "once you are married, and in your own home, you can do what your in-laws think fit…. A daughter-in-law has to function in her married home…. When you marry you can do anything your husband permits" (*H* 227, 265, 266). The whole personality of women depends upon men and they use their power over women to exploit and subvert them. Her mother also remarks:

> She is going to get married, why waste time and money in all this? A business was not like teaching, resignable when the bridegroom reached the door….Business is not an easy thing ….People know how to take advantage of a young girl. (*H* 289, 290, 293)

Millett has rightly pointed out, "Women's independence in economic life is viewed with distrust, prescriptive agencies of all kinds (religion, psychology, advertising etc.) continuously admonish or even inveigh against [their] employment" (40-41). Ester Boserup's analysis has pinpointed the issue of economic system as one of the focal factors of women's marginalization. Boserup emphasizes gender as:

A basic factor in the division of labor, prevalent across countries and regions: Even at the most primitive stages of family autarky there is some division of labor within the family, the main criteria for the division being that of age and sex.... Both in primitive and in more developed communities, the traditional division of labor within the family is usually considered 'natural' in sense of being obviously and originally imposed by the sex difference itself. (15)

Francis argues that "ways must be found to 'see' gender beyond the body', i.e. identify gender as embedded in performed behaviour rather than sexed bodies" (qtd. in Acker 413-14). Butler's performativity theory also avoids gender hierarchies and those pre-conceived roles, which reinforce the category of sex. Her theory serves a range of behaviours, decisions, deeds and 'corporeal styles' which give a sense of being male or female. Men and women's performances and activities construct them as gendered subjects. It is proved by Nisha in the novel. Nisha starts her boutique 'Nisha Creation' with a negligible financial support from her family. She works hard to make it a success. During her struggle for establishing it successfully and later on when it is established, she carefully handles every aspect related with her venture. It exhibits that performance constitutes a real identity for men and women, which is above sexual differences. As the novel explains:

Mummy, what have you done? Wailed Nisha. 'Even if he sleeps he never cuts less than five suits a day. I promised Gyan's twenty by day after, if he doesn't come, my reputation will be spoilt. Do you know how competitive the market is? …Nisha had to send the tailor Nasir to his house before Masterji unbent enough to come. (*H* 293-94)

Nisha wants to run her business independently, her "business was not to be run standing on the shoulders of others" (*H* 292). This aspect of her character portrayal echoes the argument of Judith Butler that there is "no doer behind the deed. The doer becomes formed from the doing". We become gender identity from "our performances and the performances of others towards us" (qtd. in Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 99). Through Nisha, the novel aptly explains that men and women's repetitive performances produce doer. The thematic tropes of this novel explain that there are two prerequisites for women's

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emancipation: economic independence and liberation of women from the conventional roles of society.

Kapur's *The Immigrant* discusses the story of Nina and Ananda and highlights the fact that education plays an essential role in the lives of migrated married couple also. Education is the "means which allows Ananda to escape the drab reality of small town India, almost in a similar fashion it becomes a gateway for Nina also. The novel unfolds in a diasporic setting in which education and financial independence have more significant connotations" (Chauhan and Gaur 180-81). Ananda  is not only familiar with the difficulty of how to live in Canada without speaking English properly, but also with the embarrassing condition of some of lesser educated Indian girls who cannot speak English properly at the Indian Club in Canada. He is satisfied to know that his sister has selected Nina who is a teacher of English Literature in Delhi and undoubtedly has a good command over the English language. As his sister has written in her letter, "For the last nine years she has taught English at Miranda House; she spoke very knowledgeably of books, which will appeal to you. A career is important to her, you can decide later whether you want to be a double income family" (*TI* 55).  Ananda is particularly satisfied to note that she is fluent in spoken English and also acquainted with the French language. Nina's education helps her in her marriage with Ananada and also supports her at the time of her interrogation by Canadian immigrant officers:

> What did her husband do, what was the name of the partner he worked with? Where all had travelled, who were her parents, what was her education, what were her professional qualifications?
>
>  Now she is being asked for proof of marriage.
> How did you meet your husband?
> An astrologer is clearly not the right answer. 'Our families are old friends.'
>
> How often had you met your husband before you married?
> Nina says with distance so great, they wrote more than met, as can be seen from the number these of letters. (*TI* 105- 6)

She completely satisfies the Canadian officers by her appropriate answers and it came definitely from her education as well as her accent. Thus, it is clear that education helps women to overcome difficult situations. Education as an instrument develops self-confidence and encourages a person to be independent. Wollstonecraft has commented that the most perfect education is "to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent" (31). Nina has lost her father in her early years. Her education enables her to earn money by which she can give a better life to her mother Shanti.

Another trope which Kapur has illustrated repeatedly in her novels is the inner loneliness experienced by women after their marriage. Nina suffers from a strange loneliness and alienation in Canada. Nina's frustration in her marriage and lack of purpose in life force her to re-establish her economic independence. Thus, she states to Ananada:

> … I miss a job – I miss doing things. I feel like shadow. What am I
> … despite the discomfort of poor teaching facilities and the pain of
> stupid students, she had known the excitement of breaking into
> minds. That is entirely missing in her new life. (*TI* 233, 291)

Nina wants to fill up her inner vacancy by become a mother but due to Ananda's dysfunctional, she is unable to conceive. Unable to comprehend the different requirements which she has to fulfil in order to work in a diaspora setting, Nina is irritated when Ananda is quite categorical that she is not qualified:

> Everything is very strange, she said in a rush. I used to be a teacher,
> in fact I taught for ten years before I came here. And  now I do
> nothing. I have not even been able to conceive. Am I locked into
> stereotypical expectations? I don't know what I want. At home it was
> much clearer. I feel so lost here….She thought of Miranda House. To
> replace a job, she would have to enrol for a Ph. D, repeat MA
> courses, then bolster her cv with academic publications. (*TI* 229, 231)

Formal and informal education of women can be understood as a feature of social construction, which develops and increases inequalities between men and women. Nina is

conscious of the inequalities and injustices of a male dominated society. She requests him, "I have to do something that ensures me a job I am suited for, where I won't take forever to qualify…. I need to find my feet in this country. I can't walk on yours" (*TI* 213, 232). Ananda denies, "Life is not a game. If you are so unsure, why go through all the trouble?" (*TI* 232) The impact of cultural conditioning can be seen in the field of education also. Such educational indoctrinations trap women within the conventional roles in a male chauvinist society. Millett's observations for women's education in patriarchal system can be cited:

> As patriarchy enforces a temperamental imbalance of personality traits between the sexes, its educational institutions, segregated or co-educational, accept a cultural programming toward the generally operative division between "masculine" and "feminine" subject matter, assigning the humanities and certain social sciences (at least in their lower or marginal branches) to the female—and science and technology, the professions, business and engineering to the male. (42)

Further, Millett Comments:

> Of course the balance of employment, prestige and reward at present lie with the latter. Control of these fields is very eminently a matter of political power. One might also point out how the exclusive dominance of males in the more prestigious fields directly serves the interests of patriarchal power in industry, government, and the military. And since patriarchy encourages an imbalance in human temperament along sex lines, both divisions of learning (science and the humanities) reflect this imbalance. (42)

Existing social and patriarchal norms relegate women to secondary and inferior place while men are considered to be superior and logical. Similarly, being a man Ananada occupies a superior status. He does not discuss his income or expenses with Nina. He even blames Nina for too much expense on her clothes:

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Three hundred dollars! You spent three hundred dollars on your clothes? Why, my most expensive suit is a hundred and fifty.

'The cashmere sweater will last a lifetime. And it was on sale' defended Nina.

You could have bought an ordinary sweater. Why do you have to dress in cashmere?

I should have come with you. You go alone, you lose your head. (*TI* 273)

Ananada not only blames Nina for extravagance on her clothes, but also orders her to spend a reasonable amount only like "any normal woman" (*TI* 274). Nina replies, "I am a normal woman. It is you who are not normal. Who knows what you earn, you never tell me, never share, how am I supposed to know?" (*TI* 274) Further, she declares, "I will only buy clothes when I have money of my own" (*TI* 274). This statement of Nina echoes Virginia Woolf's suggestion that "women should have liberty of experience that they should differ from men without fear and express those differences openly…be…encouraged to think, invent, imagine and create as freely as men do" (qtd. in Kumar 91). Nina joins Library School. Library "School assumed an excitement for Nina… for the first time she had a sense of her own self, entirely separate from other people, autonomous, independent" (*TI* 249, 260). Through Nina, the novel explains that the aim of education is to expand women's personal as well professional spheres. According to Millett:

In a society where status is dependent upon the economic, social and educational circumstances of class, it is possible for certain females to appear to stand higher than some males … the caste of virility triumphs over the social status of wealthy or even educated women…. And the existence of sexual hierarchy has been reaffirmed and mobilized to 'punish' the female quite effectively. (36)

Another important aspect, which is taken up in *The Immigrant*, is the question of unpaid household labour, which is a prominent factor in women's economic exploitation. Kumkum Sangari has explained domestic trope on the investigation of Colette Guillaumin that "unpaid household labour is given the framework of lasting personal relationships which are not and cannot be measured in terms of time and money…hence that patriarchies build personal relationships into exploitation, operate inside the spheres of relationships of love, nurture and sexuality, are indeed inseparable from them" (qtd. in John 181). Kapur in her interview with Deepa Diddi reveals this fact, "My novels focus on the needs and desires of women from different backgrounds and in different situations''. She further adds, ''Women yearns for recognition for their work, particularly since domestic labour so often goes unappreciated. They want concern and a sharing of responsibilities'' (qtd. in Agarwal n. p.). Like her other novels, Kapur explains different parameters of education for boys and girls in this novel through Nina's brother-in-law Ramesh who is the husband of her sister-in-law Alka. He wishes her son Ishan to start his career from Canada whereas his expectation from his daughter Ila is to get married in India. Kapur writes, "Ramesh was thinking of putting both his children into dentistry. Ila of course would have to stay in India–there was the question of her marriage–but Ishan, yes, for him Dalhousie could be an option" (*TI* 285-86). Gender theorists argue that women face exploitation physically and psychologically owing to their sex. Due to their sex, they are not only oppressed by their socialization, but their education and professional career are also constricted. The investigation of Hollis and Martin also points out this fact that women's education has been attributed a secondary status because of their inferior position in a male centred society. They claim, "Historically, from 1869 onwards, whilst still excluded from national politics on the grounds of their sex, British women could vote and hold office at the local level" (qtd. in Martin 57). Talking about women's unequal position, David with Wright expose, "the 1890s, 1920s and the 1960s have been identified as favourable decades in the Left education account, because oppositional views were listened to" (qtd. in Martin 59).

The novel *Custody* explains that education is vital if one desires to retain self-identity. At one point Kapur mentions in this novel, "Success didn't come just like that – there was a connection between upbringing and achievement" (*C* 171). Women have not been given the

opportunities of accessing higher education and professional career due to their socio-cultural conditioning. Their upbringing in patriarchal society also exhibits gender hierarchy in which they are groomed merely for the roles of wives and mothers. As Rachel Bowlby has observed:

> Higher education for women was dominated by a spurious use of sociology and anthropology to ensure girls got the message that their 'sex-role' as wives and mothers, and not their 'human' capacity to create and achieve in the working world, was the natural one. (62-63)

The portrayal of Ishita also reveals this aspect in the novel. Her arranged marriage with Suryakanta puts several obstacles in her pursuit of B. Ed degree, as she was expected to dedicate completely to household activities. The women of "the family didn't work, daughters-in-law were obviously expected to devote themselves to home. What about her B.Ed., her desire to be independent?" (*C* 53) To access a professional degree is regarded as an obstacle in the achievement of the ultimate goal (marriage) of women in conventional set-up. Over the centuries, women are socialized to accept that their main duties are to be wives and mothers. Ishita, without thinking of her B. Ed degree, follows marriage as the traditional destiny of a woman, but later on her broken marriage and her desire to adopt a child propel her to gain economic independence:

> But if she planned to adopt she was quite clearly shutting the door to one particular future…going to be a single parent… need more money. It is a lifelong responsibility. Now she had every intention of looking for a job as soon as she was able. (*C* 188)

Ishita also feels the constraints of her situation and blames her parents for an early marriage, "I wanted to work, you got me married', but her mother responds, 'At the time it seemed the right thing to do" (*C* 129). Kapur has boldly explained that women are allowed to access higher education as well as professional career only if they do not have children or are not able to conceive. Ishita faces similar condition. She unsuccessfully tries for a job in many colleges of Delhi such as OSC, St Columba's, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Vivekananda

Vidyalaya and Mater Dei Convent. She ultimately joins *Jeevan*, an NGO, with the help of Mrs Hingorani. It provides some meaningfulness to her life:

> To feel valued for the first time by the outside world. Mrs Hingorani asking for…. Every month 2,000 had to be found…. In July she was offered 2,000 monthly salary by Mrs Hingorani, her usefulness recognized, her position in the school entrenched. (*C* 136)

Additionally, Ishita is motivated to study further by Mrs Hingorani saying that "it will get you a job with more income, and that spells respect and independence" (*C* 178). She thinks of her work in *Jeevan* "a full-time occupation", but she and the itinerant Germans were the only people in it. "Social service in India was often a post-retirement choice" (*C* 179). She decides to pursue an MA in Social Work from the institute of Social Welfare in Bombay. After qualifying the entrance test, she travels to Bombay for the interview, accompanied by her parents (Chauhan and Gaur 183). It being her first time, she is nervous to face a group of five interviewers:

> They looked at her CV, how had she been occupied between the years 1991 and 1995? Married, oh, she had been married. No longer? What would happen if she married again? Why should they give her once precious seat if she had done nothing from 1991 to 1995 except be a wife? From the moment she had been born marriage had been the goal, and every choice reflected this. (*C* 180)

Ishita's life foregrounds the patriarchal preferences for education and work as far as a woman is concerned. Transgression of traditional roles is frowned upon, making the rejection of stereotypical gendered roles and movement towards self-hood complicated. Patriarchal system enforces the sexual binaries and invests the male with the power that his physical masculinity does not automatically endow him with. It is not only the "biological sex, but the culture which determines the gendered identities. Different and contradictory aims as far as education for girls and boys is concerned as well as the societal beliefs regarding their financial emancipation result in the economic marginalization of women" (Chauhan and

Gaur 184). Education and economic spaces are exhibited in *Custody* not only through Ishita, but also through Shagun, who is the wife of Raman Kaushik – a sales manager in a multinational soft drink company. Shagun had aspired to be a model, but such leanings were not tolerated by her family. Kapur writes:

> …she had wanted to be a model, but her mother was strongly opposed to a career that would allow all kinds of lechery near her lovely daughter. 'Do what you like after you marry,' she said, but after marriage there had been a child. Then the claims of husband, family and friends made a career hard to justify, especially since money was not an issue. (*C* 11)

Kapur presents the preset gendered concept that accessing career is considered more important for men in comparison to women. As Sagun states, "She had got modelling offers that might have led to screen tests, but then she had married very young and there had been the inevitable children. Now she was too old to start in films" (*C* 12). She is taught by her family that women's honourable career is marriage and motherhood. She also realizes that if "she had had a wish in life it was to be a homemaker, with husband and children, something every girl she had ever known effortlessly possessed" (*C* 185). The thematic motifs of *Custody* convincingly suggest that domesticity is also a governing factor for the economic impoverishment of women. As M. Z. Rosaldo points out, "The opposition does not determine culture stereotypes or asymmetries in the evaluations of the sexes, but rather than underlies them, to support a very general (and, for women, often demeaning) identification of women with domestic life and of men with public life" (23-24). The construction of femininity imposes that a woman should be a homemaker. Williams shows domesticity within the tropes of gender:

> Domesticity introduced not only a new structuring of market work and family work but also a new description of men and women. The ideology of domesticity held that men "naturally" belong in the market because they are competitive and aggressive; women belong in the home because of their "natural" focus on relationship, children, and an ethic of care. In its original context, domesticity's descriptions

of men and women served to justify and reproduce its breadwinner/ housewife roles by establishing norms that identified successful gender performance with character traits suitable for these roles. (qtd. in Davis 835)

In the novel Kapur points out that the expectations regarding performance are different from men and women. The following lines expose the stereotypes of gender, "She is still in college – what do you want? That she spend all her time in the kitchen" (*C* 22). Mrs Kaushik becomes happy for her divorcee son Raman when she realizes that the girl has "the heart of a homemaker" (*C* 272). Such gender hierarchies admire a woman's life associated with domesticity. In the words of Kapur, "The women here earned a living by cooking and cleaning, while their daughters stayed at home also cooking and minding toddler siblings" (*C* 134). Further, Kapur writes in the novel, "A woman with her values was incapable of visualizing a companionship beyond the mundane of domestic life" (*C* 100). The construction of femininity is governed by the power of family and work, which are also responsible factors for the marginalization of women economically. In this context, Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo argues in the *Women, Culture and Society*:

> The fact that a good part of a woman's adult life is spent giving birth to and raising children leads to a differentiation of domestic and public spheres...girls are most likely to form ties with female kin who are their seniors; they are integrated vertically, through ties with particular people, into the adult world of work. This contrasts with young boys who, having few responsibilities in late childhood, may create horizontal and often competitive peer groups, which cross-cut domestic units and establish 'public' and overarching ties. (23, 25)

He further comments:

> … growing up in a family, the young girl probably has more experiences of others as individuals than as occupants of formal institutionalized roles; so she learns how to pursue her own interests, by appeals to other people, by being nurturent, responsive, and

kind…Boys, in contrast, are apt to know manhood as an abstract set of rights and duties, to learn that status brings formal authority, and to act in terms of formal roles. (Rosaldo 26)

Kapur mentions that economic independence is an instrument by which women get self-confidence and potential to take decision individually. The novel explicitly suggests it, "At the brightness in her face, Mr Rajora wondered whether independence could go so far in making his daughter happy" (*C* 189). Kapur also explains that compared to girls much attention is given to boys' education. *Custody* highlights this fact through Arjun's and Roohi's education. Raman chooses not only the best education, but also the best school for his son Arjun, while neglects the admission of her daughter Roohi in school.

Like other gender theorists, Kapur envisions a world in which women's movement would be equally welcomed. Kapur's views echo the theory of Mill who explains:

Numerous benefits for allowing equal social position to women, among these benefits are: improved conditions for women in marital relationships so that they are no longer legally subject to the will of a cruel husband but are, instead, equal partners in the marriage; the removal of the 'self worship' instilled in men who believe they are better than women merely because of their gender and for any substantive reason; the creation of the family as a model of the 'virtues of freedom'; most importantly, the promotion of human progress and the greatest happiness for all through the addition to society of new and diverse intellectual forces which will result from improved and equal education and opportunities for women. (qtd. in Smith 181-182)

Thus, it is explored through the novels of Manju Kapur that girls' education is an unimportant subject for their family. Men govern almost all positions from public to private, while women engage themselves with passive occupations such as domestic, housekeeping and child rearing. The observation of Silvia Gherardil explores that gender stereotype ties "the masculine to the public, to production, to the word, to command, and opposes it to the

female, the private, reproduction, silence, obedience" (595). Additionally, the norms of patriarchal society compel women to unquestionably accept primary domestic responsibilities and believe in that they are born only for nurturance and household activities. Conventional gender tropes perpetuate the idea that men are breadwinners and meant for public sphere. The novels have also suggested that accessing education encourages girls to be independent. Women prove that they are as talented as men in public domain if they are given equal opportunity of higher education and work.

Pursuing such arguments within the theoretical framework of tropes of gender, this chapter has analytically explored how women's education is considered to be secondary, negligible and irrelevant owing to their sex. Kapur's novels i.e. *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, *Home*, *The Immigrant* and *Custody* have pinpointed that a girl is not groomed either to take up a job or economic independence by her education. By their education, girls are not only forced to fit to the domestic roles, but also compelled to believe that marriage and childbearing are the foremost and mandatory goals of their lives. Since their formative years, girls are conditioned to believe that education may enable them to find a better husband, but their ultimate goal lies in their performing the instrumental roles of wives and mothers, especially the mother of a son. Education too transmits the existing gender practices in which men explore the outside world and home is women's refuge. The fact that social provision assigns paid work to men and unpaid work to women, is one of the reasons that fashion women's education as secondary and having different objective in comparison to men. Women have not been given the opportunities of opting for higher education and professional career. They are socialized to accept their natural roles as homemakers and child caring which in turn produces economically and socially secondary status for them. For women, marriage is a sole aspiration, fundamental, undeniable project and wives/mothers are the focal roles, which bring them into conventional identity. Chapter fourth proposes the exploitation and oppression of women within the institution of marriage/motherhood on the ground of their sexuality.

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# CHAPTER 4

# Gender: Marriage, Motherhood and Sexuality

Marriage has always been regarded as the foremost and fundamental institution for regulating human sexuality. It is also considered a part of social ritual for getting physical, mental, emotional and civic maturity for the individual. The ceremony of marriage is one of those social institutions, which have a perpetual impact on the lives of men and women. In the case of women, marriage conventionally provides socio-economic security and is considered to be their destiny; ironically it also often becomes an institution of their exploitation on the grounds of sexuality and reproductivity. Over the centuries, the socialization of femininity conditions women to believe that their sexual functions are designed to please and satisfy their husbands' sexual needs. In such societal framework, they internalize an exaggerated sense of their acts and duties as wives and mothers since their early formative years. To become a mother after marriage is considered by the Indian society as a duty, which fulfils a woman's femininity. Within marriage, a woman, who cannot have the potential of reproduction, is taunted, stigmatized and considered as worthless, incomplete and not fulfilling her femininity. Analyzing the novels of Kapur, this chapter displays how through the social institution of marriage men manipulate women's reproductive capacity i.e. maternity and compel them to believe that their objective in life is limited to produce and raise children. The novels of Kapur also bring our attention to the Indian mind-set, which exhibits a definite preference for a male child. In the Indian scenario, priority is given to the birth of a male child. Sudhir Kakar illustrates in his text *Women in Indian Society*, "The preference for a son when a child is born is as old as Indian society itself. Vedic verses pray that sons will be followed by still more male offspring, never by females. A prayer in the *Atharvaveda* adds a touch of malice: The birth of a girl grants it elsewhere, here grant a son" (qtd. in Pallavi 69). The status of the mother of a son is considered to be superior in comparison to the mother of a daughter and is admired for giving a *kuldeepak* in the Indian context.

In the novel *Difficult Daughters*, Manju Kapur sketches the family of Lala Diwan Chand whose daughter-in-law Kasturi is conditioned by her formal and informal education to believe that a woman's happiness lies in giving happiness to her husband and in-laws. Family

is the first and primary institution of learning masculine and feminine roles for a child. According to Millett, family functions to "socialize children into sexually differentiated roles, temperaments and statuses, and to maintain women in a state of subordination" (qtd. Beechey 68). Kasturi also learns within her family that a girl "lives for others, not herself…. Marriage was her destiny. She was going to please her in-laws" (*DD* 15, 62). Through the picture of Kasturi, this novel describes the marital circle of a woman in which she has to actively manage domestic chores and perform dedicatedly the roles of a wife and a mother. As Kapur writes, "How trapped could nature make a woman?" (*DD* 07) Kasturi peacefully manages everything as her in-laws desired. Within "one year of Suraj Prakash's marriage the first child had come, and after that there was no stopping the woman" (*DD* 24). She gives birth to eleven children out of which six are girls while five are boys. Kasturi could not "remember a time when she was not tired, when her feet and legs did not ache. Her back curved in towards the base of her spine" (*DD* 07). Through Kasturi, Kapur expresses in this novel that a woman's capacities are reduced to the roles of childbearing and childrearing. The conventional concept of motherhood is like a trap, which implies a loss of individual liberty. Traditions encourage mothers to tolerate willingly a life of sacrifice, suffering and exploitation. The scrutiny of Adrienne Rich examines the negative meaning of motherhood in detail. The findings of Rich explore that a womb for a woman is a symbol of powerlessness. Further, her investigation exhibits that "motherhood is not only a core human relationship but a political institution, a keystone to the domination in every sphere of women by men" (Rich 216).

Elaborating on the institution of marriage, Kapur delineates that women are conditioned to accept that marriage is the only choice in life, which would enable them to have decorum and social prestige. Therefore, a daughter's marriage is prime and significant responsibility for her mother. In the novel, Kasturi, being a mother of six girls, is under pressure for finalising their marriages. Virmati, the eldest daughter of Kasturi is highly influenced by her qualified, though unmarried cousin Shakuntala. Virmati wants to pursue higher education like Shakuntala, while Kasturi wishes her to get married with Inderjit. Virmati's family has already fixed her marriage with Inderjit, an engineer. Instead of empathizing with Virmati's ambitions, her family is engaged in preparation of her marriage and assembling her wedding trousseau:

…so much bedding…this is a question of marriage…. It seemed to Virmati that her family could talk of nothing else but her wedding. About your getting married…Why, why not, when, who, where! Oof! All the time!... Every word they said had so little relation to her inner life that she felt fraudulent even listening to them, passively, immorally silent. (*DD* 58, 69, 70, 161)

Virmati rebels against her family's apathy towards her education. Her mother is unable to understand her disobedience. Virmati had "always been so good and sensible. How could she not see that her happiness lay in marriage a decent boy, who had waited patiently all these years, to whom the family had given their word?" (*DD* 60) Kasturi tries to convince Virmati for marriage by stating that Shakuntala is the only daughter of her parents, whereas she has the responsibility of marrying six daughters. To marry six girls was not "a joke, and nobody could help those who missed their destiny" (*DD* 16). She tells Virmati that marriage is a paramount opportunity for women to get social nobility in the patriarchal society. Single woman is regarded as incomplete, worthless, invaluable and even they cannot escape from female misery. Thus, this is the duty of every girl to follow the institution of marriage, have children and look after her home. Virmati's decision of pursuing higher education is looked at doubtfully by her mother. Kasturi unwillingly accompanies Virmati to Lahore and is surprised to see a small, dark, gloomy hostel room, which was assigned to Virmati and her roommate Swarna Lata. She miserably regrets on her condition:

My poor girl, for this she wouldn't marry. For living in a solitary, poky little room in a strange city, for eating hostel food, for the loneliness of single life…. Having an unmarried daughter nearing thirty was a fate so devastating that it must excuse any loss of temper….What Kind of *kismet* is ours that our eldest daughter remain unmarried like this? After Indu, it is now Gunvati's turn, but still that girl sits there, stubborn as a rock, never mind the disgrace or what the whole world is thinking, or what her future will be. (*DD* 115, 159,181)

Gender hierarchies always define women with reference to marriage. Domesticity helps girls to get this destiny. Their mothers train them to primarily take up household responsibilities. The eldest among eleven children, Virmati, has always been burdened with domestic chores. Even in her childhood, she is not entertained and pampered by her family. Her mother often declares, "You are the eldest, Viru, your duty is greater…. If you don't see things, who will? (*DD* 07, 58) Furthermore, her family's negative attitude towards her education leads Virmati to the illicit love of Prof. Harish Chandra. He is already married to Ganga, who, though illiterate is skilful in cooking, sewing and knitting. At the age of twelve, Ganga was married to Prof. Harish. After her marriage, "her mother-in-law made sure that she learned the ways of her in-laws' household from the moment of her arrival" (*DD* 40). Later on, giving birth to two children – a girl and a boy – she completes her responsibility for her family. Her mother- in-law "keeps saying how grateful she is to God for allowing her to see her grandson before she dies" (*DD* 122). Constricted within the household, Ganga is kept ignorant of her husband's relationship with Virmati. Mired within domestic responsibilities and gendered perceptions regarding feminine roles, Ganga is unable to imagine any liberated existence. Her conditioning is so complete that she is unwilling to accept her husband's proposal to study and improve her personality. In a way, her gendered perception pushes her husband towards Virmati with whom he is able to find intellectual and emotional compatibility.

Kapur exposes the duality of patriarchal norms through the relationship of Harish and Virmati. Harish is frustrated with his wife Ganga's illiteracy and finds a qualified partner in Virmati. He enjoys his life in two ways; that is of being a married man and also an ardent lover. Virmati realizes that Harish abuses her sexually when he conveys his reluctance to accept responsibility for her child. She is alone when she decides for the termination of her pregnancy before marriage, as Harish is not present. It is pertinent to cite Beauvoir in this context when she remarks that man "undoubtedly dreams of woman, he longs for her; but she will never be more than an element in his life: she does not sum up his destiny" (352). Further, Beauvoir comments, "Men tend to take abortion lightly" (508) and "it is often the seducer himself who convince the women that she must rid herself of the child" (506) or else force abortion on her, "so as not to handicap his future, for the benefit of his profession"

(509). Despite opting for termination of pregnancy, Virmati feels that she can have a future with Harish as his second wife:

> She felt a deep emptiness inside her, which she construed as yearning for professor. Oh, how she longed to meet him, to throw herself on his chest, babble out her story, feels his love and sympathy, his regret that he wasn't there pouring over her in a great tidal wave that would cleanse her of all guilt and sorrow! (*DD* 173)

When her mother Kasturi comes to know of her affair with Harish, she advises against it, "A man who is already married and a traitor to his wife can never give happiness to any woman. He is a worldly person caught in his own desires. Nothing solid" (*DD* 93). But Virmati, in spite of this unpleasant episodes, promises herself "a blissful marriage; after all, they had gone through so much to be together. Her husband would be everything to her. This was the way it should be, and she was pleased to finally detect a recognizable pattern in her life" (*DD* 207). She demands, "The only thing…she wanted were the red ivory bangles that the women of her family wore when they married" (*DD* 202). After the initial euphoria of her marriage is over, Virmati feels insecure owing to Harish's involvement with several responsibilities related with his first wife. The status of a second wife does not satisfy her. Beauvoir very effectively draws our attention to this fact in her seminal critique *The Second Sex*:

> It is the duplicity of the husband that dooms the wife to a misfortune…he wishes her to establish him in a fixed place on earth and to leave him free, to assume the monotonous daily round and not to bore him, to be always at hand and never importunate; he wants to have her all to himself and not to belong to her; to live as one of a couple and to remain alone. Thus she is betrayed from the day he marries her. (497)

The novel delineates the loneliness of a woman and her inferior position in the relationship with a man. Gradually, Virmati comes to regret her decision of marrying Harish:

> I should never have married you…. 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 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. (*DD* 149,
> 212)

Virmati's marriage with Harish adds to her problems. The miserable condition of Virmati is described by Vandita Mishra, "As a second wife, she must fight social ostracism outside the house and compete for the kitchen and conjugal bed with Ganga, the first wife, inside it" (qtd. in Srivastava 75). According to Jaidev, "Indeed, any sophisticated structure today functions not by direct, visible exploitation but by making the victims willingly, freely and happily give in to its imperatives" (57).

Pre-conceived notion about gendered roles of women, particularly within the institution of marriage, also create discord in the life of Virmati's daughter Ida. She is an educated woman with modern points of view and thinks that women are as capable as men. She has to struggle to get those rights which patriarchy has reserved for men/husbands. Ida represents a generation which has grown up with the belief that patriarchal norms are not rigid and can be challenged. She is in favour of foregrounding assertiveness on the part of women in all relationships. It will be pertinent to quote Margaret L. Cormack at this point:

> Few women want to be anything but happy wives and mothers…but
> the recipe for happiness is changing. One young lady smiled as she
> said, 'Peeling an orange and hand feeding it to my husband as I sit at
> his feet in humble adoration is not my idea of marriage. I want to be
> his intellectual and social companion, not his slave. (105)

Ida disagrees with her mother's approach for life and is critical of the fact that her mother had opted for the termination of pregnancy before her marriage. Her unwed pregnancy and its termination are unpalatable to Ida who had divorced her husband Prabhakar when he tries to force her for abortion. She states, "In denying that incipient little

thing in my belly, he sowed the seeds of our break up" (*DD* 156). Thus, the analysis of three generations of women – Kasturi, Virmati and Ida suggests that women are exploited and victimized by gendered tropes namely marriage and motherhood.

The novel *A Married Woman* gives a picture of Astha, a single child of her parents, groomed for marriage and motherhood as the foremost aims of her life. She holds the belief that marriage is the fundamental project to get social dignity and respect for a woman, while motherhood completes the identity of a woman. In the novel, Astha's mother Sita prays everyday for finding a good match for her daughter in the temple, which is established in her kitchen corner. Marriage is "seen as necessary for the creation of progeny and perpetuation of one's line, it is hardly surprising that so much emphasis was laid on the woman's role as child-bearer" (qtd. in Nabar 107). The "greatest event in family in India is a wedding, which celebrates and evokes every possible social obligation, kinship bond, traditional value, sentiment and economic resources" (qtd. in Jacob 174). The Indian custom of dowry empowers the bridegroom's family to demand cash and gifts from the bride's family. In today's consumeristic world, items like television, refrigerators, ornate saris and jewellery are assembled for dowry. Putting in order sheets, saris and jewellery for Astha's dowry, Sita declares, "When you are married, our responsibilities will be over… the *shastras* say if parents die without getting their daughter married, they will be condemned to perpetual rebirth" (*AMW* 01). One of the major feminists Simone de Beauvoir also explains in *The Second Sex*, "Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society. It is still true that most women are married, or have been, or plan to be, or suffer from not being. The celibate woman is to be explained and defined with reference to marriage…. unmarried woman is a pariah" (445, 450). She also comments that for girls "marriage is the only means of integration in the community, and if they remain unwanted, they are, socially viewed, so much wastage. This is why mothers have always eagerly sought to arrange marriages for them" (Beauvoir 447). Astha's mother Sita also supports this socio-cultural tradition for women. Without fulfilling the roles of wives and mothers, women are treated as wastage and pariah in the social milieu. The beliefs are instilled in Astha since her formative years that marriage is her destiny and man's love is the most essential aspect for a woman. Now her early youth is obsessed with waiting for a man:

By the time Astha was sixteen, she was well trained on a diet of mushy novels and thoughts of marriage. She was prey to inchoate longings, desired almost every boy saw, then stood long hours before the mirror marvelling at her ugliness. Would she ever be happy? Would true love ever find her? (*AMW* 08)

The impatient hope for a man usually leads a woman to humiliations and callous bitterness. It happens in the case of Astha also. She gets attracted towards a handsome boy, Bunty. However, her mother's interference does not allow this attraction to burgeon further. Later, she falls in love with another boy, Rohan and constantly daydreams about their marriage. Her fantasy evaporates when Rohan goes abroad for higher education. Astha enters her third year with "a desire to get her education over as quickly as possible. Every day was painful to her. She was constantly reminded of Rohan, in the coffee House, at the back gate, at their secret corner of the road, every evening at home" (*AMW* 31). Astha's upbringing in conventional middle class tradition pressurizes her to find a true love. The search of true love involves her in relationships with Bunty and Rohan before her marriage. The failed relationships push Astha to marriage. Astha's parents settle her marriage with Hemant, who is an American returned MBA boy. Astha is satisfied to know that her marriage has been finalized, "A deep seed of happiness settled in the pit of her stomach, she was married…she was now a homemaker in her own right, a grown woman, experiencing her first plane ride" (*AMW* 37). It is much later in her marriage that she recognizes the superficialities of Hemant's attitude towards her; the repressive circumstances of her marriage and unsatisfactory relationship with her husband propel her towards a lesbian relationship with Pipeelika Khan.

The novel also exemplifies the sexual account of men and women in patriarchal society in which women's sexual involvement before or outside marriage is a punishable offence whereas men are not prohibited from it. Patriarchal "civilization dedicated woman to chastity; it recognized more or less openly the right of the male to sexual freedom, while woman was restricted to marriage". For unmarried woman, "the attainment of sexual freedom…is made difficult by social customs" (Beauvoir 395, 454). During the honeymoon in Kashmir, Hemant elucidates his choice Astha, an Indian girl for marriage because of,

"Other men. It's not so unthinkable for them (American women) as it is for an Indian girl. This was a topic he had considered deeply. 'I wanted an innocent, unspoilt, simple girl" (*AMW* 41). Hemant is happy to get Astha, who is innocent and unspoilt in his opinion. His marriage with Astha represents the patriarchal culture which exposes different gender norms for men/women and does not allow a married woman to think beyond her husband and her in-laws' perceptions. The Indian tradition often uses terms like *swami* and *parmeshwar*, which mean mentor and god. Such terms reinforce the subordination of women in the Indian scenario. In the social construction of femininity, a married woman is responsible for the welfare of her family. Astha performs domestic duties with devotion to satisfy her husband as well as her in-laws. Kapur describes Astha's dedication to her family in the following lines:

> Back in Delhi, Astha submerged herself in the role of daughter-in-law and wife. The time spent in the kitchen experimenting with new dishes was time spent in the service of love and marriage. Hemant's clothes she treated with reverence, sliding each shirt in his drawers a quarter centimetre out from the one above so they were easily visible, darning all the tiny holes in his socks, arranging his pants on cloth wrapped hangers so there would be no crease. With her mother-in-law she visited and shopped in the mornings. (*AMW* 43)

The novel aptly explains the construction of gender and sexuality through Astha who devotes her life to be an ideal wife. Following the instructions of her husband, she wears sexy clothes in the bedroom. For him, "it is to increase married pleasure" (*AMW* 44). According to MacKinnon, "Women come to identify themselves as sexual beings, as beings that exist for men…" (531). For Greer, woman has been dictated and made to believe that "her identity exists in her body, she is exploited and oppressed by man on account of her sexuality, she is the sexual object sought by all men" (67). Binaries of gender construction treat women as inferior, passive and objects of sexual gratification of men. Astha shows her desire to have a child but Hemant refuses:

> You can't be so old fashioned,' remonstrated the progressive husband. This is like villagers, marry, impregnate wife, a pack of

children. No, no sweetheart, we need to be by ourselves. Time enough for these responsibilities later. With a young wife one can afford to wait. (*AMW* 56)

This incidence showcases that a woman has no control over such decisions and she is not liberated to take individually a decision of reproductivity within marriage. The novel explores the social condition of women in which not only their duties are designed to satisfy male sexual needs, but also their reproductive capacities are commanded by men. Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex* tries to resolve the dilemma by asserting that "the basis of women's oppression does lie in women's reproductive capacities insofar as these have been controlled by men" (qtd. in Beechey 69). Kapur explains that Astha is sexually exploited within her marriage and is also criticized for having given birth to a girl. When Astha is pregnant for the second time, Hemant makes his desire for a son clear to her, "I want to have my son soon. I want to be as much a part of his life as Papaji is of mine" (*AMW* 61). Astha inquires about his surety of getting a son and gets a reply from Hemant, "Of course we will have a son, and if we don't we needn't stop..." (*AMW* 61). Men in India are more concerned about their son and take it as an honour of their manhood. A man "conquers the world by the birth of a son; he enjoys eternity by that of a grandson; and the great grandfather enjoys eternal happiness by the birth of a grandson" (qtd. in Prabhu 242). Astha reminds Hemant that a girl and a boy should be equal and objects to such oblique pressures. Hemant says, "Of course they don't matter to me. I was so pleased Anu was a girl. But that doesn't mean we should not try for a boy" (*AMW* 61). Beauvoir comments in this context, "Parents and grandparents may barely conceal the fact that they would have preferred male offspring to female; or they may show more affection for the brother than the sister. Investigations make it clear that the majority of parents would rather have sons than daughters" (313). When Astha conceives for the second time, her mother hires a pundit for special pujas to be sure of the birth of a grandson. When Astha gives birth to a son, her mother Shanti is elated. "The family is complete at last," said Astha's mother piously, feeling her own contribution (*AMW* 68). In the Indian society, it is almost an obligation for a wife to produce a male child. A son's birth is celebrated more prominently than a daughter's. The rank of the mother of a male child is higher to that of the mother of a female child in the Indian scenario:

Astha was officially declared the mother of a son. Her status rose, and she pushed from her mind thoughts of what might have happened had she been unable to do her duty. She often looked at her family, husband, daughter, son. She had them all. She was fulfilled. Her in-laws frequently commented, 'Woman is earth,' and it is true she felt bounteous, her life one of giving and receiving, surrounded by plenty. Visitors to the house would say, 'A mother's love and then trail off, words collapsing into significant silence, which in turn washed over Astha and made her feel that she had partaken of the archetypal experiences marked out for the female race. (*AMW* 69)

Different feminists and gender theorists have attempted to explain the cultural preference for male child according to their own perspectives. The classical Marxist feminism stresses that the marginalization of women is a result of their conventional upbringing in the family. The novel also shows that different cultural patterns give preference to male gender. Friedrich Engels is of the opinion that "within the family the husband is the bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat" (65-66). Further, Engels writes that "from the very beginning of surplus production, the sole exclusion aims of monogamous marriage were to make the man supreme in the family, and to propagate as the future heirs to his wealth, children indisputably his own" (57-58).

Hemant's conventional masculine behaviour and busy schedule oppresses Astha but despite this, her heart is full of loves for him as "the lake was full of water…. [She] scolded herself for being so demanding. Hemant was busy, Hemant was building their future, she had to be adjusting, that was what marriage was all about" (*AMW* 42, 67). She not only adjusts with his busy days, but also supports him in tough situations. For instance, one day, Astha is informed by him of the increasing targets in the bank and of how much money his friends are making abroad. He regrets that he had come back to India but Astha comforts him, "Money isn't everything darling. Look, you have your family, me, our parents" (*AMW* 50). The novel rightly exhibits that Indian woman's mind is set by her upbringing that "the usual resolution of traditional feminine adventures and dilemmas is to achieve the safety of a home of her own with her prince who loves her" (Davies 73).

The tropes of gender indicate that a woman desires for a true companionship and love from her husband within the institution of marriage. Similarly, Astha is always willing to maintain a love relationship with Hemant, but she fails because of her husband who never tries to understand her feelings. Astha's desire for true companionship is also not reciprocated. She receives a jolt when she finds a condom while unpacking Hemant's suitcase after a journey, "Who had he slept with, he was in – love or had a relationship – or maybe he did. Some women might travel with him, She had read somewhere that women were often a part of business deals" (*AMW* 212-213). Hemant's extramarital affair and a stubborn neglect of Astha's feelings generate frustration and a sense of insecurity in her gradually pushing her close to Pipeelika. Astha meets Pipeelika Khan, wife of Akhtar Khan, for the first time in Ayodhya during the procession and participation in the rally which is organized in memory of Akhtar Khan. Pipeelika's hair and skin fascinates her. For Astha, "her hair was like a halo round her face, springing away from it, black, brown, red, orange, and copper, her skin was a pale milky coffee colour. She liked the way she smiled" (*AMW* 199). This kind of attraction and desire for a true love leads Astha to a homosexual relationship with Pipee, "Now sexually involved with another, she realised how many facets in the relationship between her husband and herself reflected power rather than love" (*AMW* 233). Hemant is critical of Astha's growing friendship with Pipeelika, though he has no inkling of the true nature of their intimacy. He comments, "Go with you and Pipeelika Khan to a gay film show? Are you out of mind, Az?" (*AMW* 235)  Kapur depicts, through Astha's relationship with Pipee, that gender and sexuality both are constituted by institutions such as law, media and family. The construction of heterosexuality as 'normal sexuality' provides privilege to men and women are oppressed by men in the account of their sexuality. In this novel, the trope of sexuality reinforces the arguments of gender theorists like Adrienne Rich and C. A. MacKinnon. It is also explained by A. Rich that female heterosexuality is "socially constructed and female homosexuality is natural" (qtd. in Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon 120). Goffman in an account of the 'arrangement between the sexes' observes, "The creation of a variety of institutionalized frameworks through which our 'natural, normal sexedness' can be enacted" (qtd. in West and Zimmerman 137). Kapur imparts that compulsory heterosexuality is the foundation of male power and their oppression of women. Moreover, in the institution of marriage men are authorized to exploit women as sexual commodities.

Similarly, Astha is only a sexual thing for Hemant who takes pleasure without thinking of her desire. As Kapur has written in the novel:

> Tired women cannot make good wives.... Men were so pathetic, so fucked up themselves, they only understood the physical….When she was with Hemant she felt like a woman of straw, her inner life dead, with a man who noticed nothing, with whom for that very reason it was soothing to be with. Her body was his… (*AMW* 154, 219, 287)

Kapur effectively exhibits the suffering of forced sex on women within the institution of marriage. Women are expected to act as perfect wives, householders and child caregivers. They are also compelled to fulfil and satisfy the sexual desires of their husbands. Simone de Beauvoir also points out that society looks at physical gratification as a duty of women toward their counterparts. She writes in *The Second Sex*:

> ...even the primitive societies that are not aware of the paternal generative role demand that women have a husband, for the second reason why marriage is enjoyed is that women's function is also to satisfy a male's sexual needs and to take care of his household. These duties placed upon women by society are regarded as a *service* rendered to her spouse. (Beauvoir 447)

In this novel, Kapur also explores that "sexuality does not mean pulverization of the female principle, and lionization of a dominant male. It proves that sexuality is a pleasure, not a power structure" (Tripathy 290). In a patriarchal society, heterosexuality is accepted as a normal or natural sexual relation for men/women and homosexuality is considered as 'sexual inversion' or 'contrary sexual feeling'. There are many assumptions in society, which shape homosexuality as a third sex. According to Stevi Jackson:

> Heterosexual and homosexuality (these are the only two sexualities referred to) as constructed through gender categories: the categories heterosexual and lesbian could not exist without our being able to define ourselves and others by gender. To desire the 'other sex' or indeed to desire 'the same sex' presupposes the prior existence of

'men' and 'women' as socially – and erotically – meaningful categories. Desire as currently socially constituted, whether lesbian or heterosexual, is inevitably gendered. (176)

In this novel, Kapur exemplifies the approach of the post-modern critics who destabilize the binary of gender categories by which the same sex intimacy appears natural. Foucault also emphasizes on the demolition of gender binary in *The History of Sexuality*:

There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourse on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty and 'psychic hermaphrodit-ism' made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of 'perversity'; but also made possible the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began that speak in its behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturality' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified. (101)

Sexual satisfaction, according to Bristow is "a fundamental human need" (12). Women are often considered to be sexually cold and passive in comparison to men in the Indian society. Their sexuality is normally conceptualized on the basis of their husbands' parameters. In the Indian scenario, men prefer those women who do not display active sexual desire and pleasure. In the novel, Astha breaks the rules of gender hierarchy. Kapur also explains in the novel, "A willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day and an obedient mouth were the necessary and prerequisites of Hemant's wife" (*AMW* 231). Astha gets love, care, affection and an understanding from Pipee. She remarks, "My whole life is a fabric of lies you are the one true thing I have" (*AMW* 242). She deconstructs male-female stereotype norms by having a lesbian relationship and challenges the rigidity of a male chauvinist society. Through Astha Kapur depicts the intricacies of hetero/homo-sexual relationships, and shows how within gendered binaries and structures the husband unquestioningly commands his wife. In this novel tropes of gender exhibit "a graphic description of the difficulties" which crop up after marriage and it is often seen no better than "a cage by the modern woman with independent ideas and views" (Sharma 349). Through

the institutions of marriage, motherhood and sexuality, Kapur sharply reacts against the "social and moral norms of the traditional society in which women are caught up in a paroxysm of neglect and humiliation" (Sharma 350).

Kapur in *Home* elucidates the marginalization and exploitation of women characters – Sona and Nisha who have to face torture and humiliation as wives and mothers. Through the portrayal of both characters, the novel also reveals that women are oppressed psychologically, mentally and sexually within their marital home. Tracing the theme of this novel, Kapur tells about Sona, the wife of Yaspal and the eldest daughter-in-law of the Banwari Lal family. Sona was studying in her first year of college when she was proposed by Yaspal. Her love marriage with Yaspal ruins his parents' plans to bring heavy dowry through the bride. In the Indian society, dowry i.e. gifts and cash is given by bride's family to bridegroom's at the time of marriage. The amount of dowry with a bride is also treated as a social prestige by the bridegroom's family. In this regard, boys' family demands heavy dowry from girls' family during marriage. Yaspal's mother wails, "The girl must have done black magic to ensnare him" (*H* 03). Sona is disliked by her in-laws owing to the absence of dowry. She is often compared with Sushila, her sister in-law, who was given a substantial dowry at the time of her marriage, "a scooter, furnished the four rooms of the second story with a fully stocked kitchen, fridge, cooler, double bed, dining table, chairs, and an upholstered sofa set in red velvet" (*H* 12). Constant comparison affects her adversely, compelling her to think, "...how poor in gifts her own marriage had been three years ago" (*H* 12). In conventional Indian society marriage can take place only after fulfilling the demands of the groom's family. Pallavi Sharma writes in her article "Dowry System a Curse on Indian Society" that "woman has zero political status in family .... dowry is considered to be a compensation for that worth-deficiency" (qtd. in Narayan 74). In the novel, Kapur also highlights the ill impact of dowry through Sunita. Banwari Lal's daughter Sunita dies at the age of 32 because of dowry. Sunita's husband Murli was "always on the lookout for money. And that was the real reason for Sunita's death.… Dowry must be…" (*H* 20, 224). Dowry in India has lead to numerous tragic episodes and finally death of the girls. Vrinda Nabar poignantly remarks in *Caste as Woman*, "Dowry related deaths have received considerable attention, but they have not been eye-openers in any revolutionary sense, since dowry is still demanded or blatantly, and given" (161)

Another trope of gender taken up by Kapur in her novels is that the purpose of marriage is considered procreation in the Indian society. Women are created "for offspring; a woman is the field and a man is the possessor of the seed" (Dube 24). According to Mehta and Kapadia, "A woman is recognized as fully adult and complete in the true sense on attaining motherhood" (440). Motherhood in India is regarded as a core and fundamental component of womanhood. Childless and without a son, women endure many atrocities and tortures in the conventional Indian society. The pressures to conceive and particularly to give birth to a male child are rife in the Indian society. Kapur delineates the attitude of Sona's mother-in-law towards her, "Every gesture suggested the daughter-in-law had no right to exist, and if she had to live, why was she doing it in their house?" (*H* 11) Sona was unable to conceive within two years of her marriage and hence is considered as incomplete and worthless and is burdened with domestic chores. She is also taunted by her mother-in-law, "What can you know of a mother's feelings? All you do is enjoy life, no children, no sorrow, only a husband to dance around you" (*H* 18). This reflects the gendered identity of a woman whose existence is not accepted worthy without a child in her married life. Such fictional narratives are based on the societal practices of negating the self hood of women and reducing them to the status of a vessel. Social indoctrination conditions women also to define their self-worth accordingly. Women are encouraged to observe various religious ceremonies for this purpose. Sona wishes to complete herself by having a baby. Sona could have a daughter – Nisha – after ten years of her marriage. During these years she had followed a strict regimen of fasts and rituals. Kapur, in the novel portrays the account of her scarifies for a child:

> Every Tuesday she fasted. Previously she would eat fruit and drink milk once during this day, now she converted to a *nirjal* fast. No water from sun-up to sundown. She slept on the floor, abstained from sex, woke early in the morning, bathed before sunrise. For her puja she collected fresh white flowers, jasmine or chameli, unfallen, untrodden, from the park outside the house. In the evening she went to the local temple, buying fruit on the way to distribute to as many Brahmins as she could. (*H* 14)

Illustrating Sona's sacrifices, who being issueless is inflicted with numerous taunts from her in-laws, Kapur proves that "all the suffering in the world was not enough to make that woman human" (*H* 18). She prays to Lord 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" (*H* 19). In the absence of her own child, Sona is pushed to act as the mother of Vicky who is the son of Sunita. Her mother-in-law says, "Beti, now you are his mother. God has rewarded your devotion. Sometimes our wishes are fulfilled in strange ways" (*H* 26). Wishing her own child, Sona continues to look after him like a son. Thematic tropes of gender explain that the identity of a married woman is absorbed by her capacity of reproduction.

After some time, Sona gives birth to a daughter, who is christened as Nisha. The family is jubilant and expects that soon a son, a true heir to their business, would also be born. Sona's next child is a boy and with this birth, it is considered that she has completed her duty for the family. "God has rewarded you' cried the mother-in-law, clutching the day-old boy to her withered chest. At last the name of his father and grandfather will continue. Now the older one has a complete family I can die in peace" (*H* 48). Over the centuries, "son preference has led to female infanticide and neglect of girl children" (qtd. in Xiaolei et al. 87). Bearing a baby boy is understood as the obligatory duty of a woman in the conventional Indian structure. Kapur not only brings our attention to the Indian attitude of privileging a boy to a girl, but also highlights that the status of the mother of a son is superior to the mother of a daughter in the Indian society. Vrinda Nabar writes in *Caste as Woman*, "Discrimination between the sexes in India begins at birth, or even before it. It starts before the child is born, in the mother's womb. None of the conventional blessing showered upon a pregnant woman mentions daughter" (51). Nisha, a daughter of Sona and Yaspal is the only girl among five children of the Banwari family. Despite this, she is not treated affectionately by her family. During her early childhood, she is abused sexually by her eldest cousin Vicky who "put his hand on the inside of her beckoning thigh and whispered, how soft you are Nisha. He began to trace the elastic of her panties all around the leg" (*H* 56). The following lines show the ignorance of Nisha. She is so young that she does not know what is happing with her:

What are you doing? Chee, that's dirty, take your hand away', she cried but he pushed his hand inside, touching the place where she did su-su, tracing the slit that divided her. Nisha wriggled even more frantically – 'I'll tell everybody how dirty you are' – but his grip tightened, and his arm pressed her thigh down so that both her legs were parted, and the slit was looser. A little su-su she could not help came out and wet his hand. She tried to draw her legs up and away from him, but he forced himself closer. (*H* 56-57)

Nisha is warned by Vicky not to disclose her sexual abuse to anyone, "If you say anything to anybody, they will beat you. They will lock you up, and never let you go to school. She was so young that she could not understand what was happening with her. She freed herself, got up unsteadily" (*H* 62). Vrinda Nabar is of the opinion that Indian girls are socialized to suppress any type of sexual abuse. She remarks, "An unpleasant encounter is usually suppressed, because these subjects are not open to frank discussion. Moreover, she is ashamed, ever scared that she will be accused of having provoked the incident" (Nabar 92). In her innocent young age, Nisha has to put up with the devastating effect of sexual exploitation. She does not eat and sleep properly. Nisha tries to explain the reason behind her psychological and mental disturbance but nobody understands it. "I wasn't upstairs,' Nisha replied, stung, tears filling her eyes. 'I was here only. Vicky also,' She choked on the word" (*H* 63). In this context, Beauvoir explains:

Fated as she is to be the passive prey of man, the girl asserts her right to liberty even to the extent of undergoing pain and disgust… she is above all sadistic: as independent subject, she lashes, flouts, tortures this dependent flesh, this flesh condemned to the submission she detests-without wishing, however, to disassociate herself from it. (377)

Furthermore, Beauvoir claims:

The social significance of the toilette allows women to express, by her way of dressing, her attitudes towards society. If she is

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submissive to the established order, she will assume a discreet and stylish personality. Here there are many possible nuances: she can present herself as fragile, childlike, mysterious, frank.... She will certainly keep it appropriately to her appearance; the colour of her gown will favour her complexion, its cut will emphasize or improve her figure. (545, 547)

By the time, Nisha is seventeen, her mother Sona starts contemplating marriage for her. She is careful about her dresses. On the marriage of her cousin Ajay, "throughout the wedding preparation Sona paid Nisha's clothes special attention. The girl was now seventeen, it was time that clothes were engaged to do their job properly. If someone from good family likes Nisha, our worries will be over" (*H* 136-37). As Greer points out that "every survey ever held has shown that the image of an attractive woman is the most effective advertising gimmick…nobody wants a girl whose beauty is imperceptible" (67, 68). But Nisha's horoscope has made her a *manglik* and she should wait unless a *manglik* match could be found for her. According to Indian astrology, "*Mangal Dosha* is an astrological combination that occurs if Mars (*Mangal*) is in the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 7th, 8th, or 12th house of the ascendant chart. A person born in the presence of this condition is termed a *manglik*" ("Mangal Dosha". Web.). *Mangal Dosha* is understood to be unfortunate for marriages, "causing discomfort and tension in relationship, leading to severe disharmony among the spouses and eventually to other bigger problems" ("Mangal Dosha". Web.). It is also astrologically considered that if a *manglik* gets married to a *manglik*, the negative condition can be reduced. This superstition consolidates the patriarchal marginalization of women. Its illustration as a trope by Kapur exhibits how such gendered indoctrinations construct boundaries for a daughter's family, forcing limited options. In the case of *manglik*, the Indian parents give priority to *manglik* match. Sona, the hectoring mother, doubles her efforts to compensate *manglik* effect:

> Nisha needed to be grounded in the tradition that would make her a
> wife worth having. The art of service and domesticity should shine in
> her daughter so brightly that she would overcome her negative karma
> to be a beacon in her married home. (*H* 128)

Kapur depicts that marriage is judged as the only choice to be secure and respectful for girls. It is almost mandatory for girls to follow marriage at a certain age. But being a *manglik* Nisha's marriage is late and she is permitted by her family to join Durga Bai Girls College for English Honours. On the way to college, she meets Suresh, who is a student of Khalsa College of Engineering and belongs to a business family. After frequent meetings with Suresh, Nisha falls in love with him. He proposes her, "Arre, yaar, let's get married" (*H* 153). In response Nisha ventures, "Mummy papa also did love marriage" (*H* 153). Further, Suresh, emphasizing on "it's boring only going to film halls and the University lawns" (*H* 188), takes his friend's room in Vijay Nagar and convinces Nisha, "so we can be alone together" (*H* 188), but Nisha restricts him from transgressing the limits:

> She would not allow Suresh to fully undress either her or himself, there was only so far his love could carry him. It is just as well there is something left for when we are married….We should wait till we are married. (*H* 189, 191)

Kapur in this novel also addresses the caste system in India. The word *caste* etymologically originated from the Portuguese language. It means breed or race. The caste system is based upon the hierarchal arrangement of society in four different classes, traditionally known as *chaturvarna*. The prevailing rigidity of the caste structure does not allow to contact with a person of a lower caste and prohibits inter-caste marriages. Suresh, who belongs to a poor, lower *Paswan* caste, is not accepted by the Banwari Lal family as a suitable groom for Nisha. Sona is furious when she comes to know of Nisha's affair with Suresh, "This girl will be our death. My child, born after ten years, tortures me like this. Thank God your grandfather is not alive…my daughter goes to the street for hers" (*H* 197). Nisha is not able to understand such reaction, "what harm is there if first we got to know each other? How can tell him to send his family to talk to my family if I don't know him first?" (*H* 201) This statement shows the modern approach of Nisha for marriage. As Beauvoir writes that under the patriarchal subordination, "a woman often finds herself compelled to reduce against her will" (510). Failing in her marriage with Suresh and the lack of marriage proposals being a *manglik*, Nisha starts her business. Her family grants her the

permission to begin her business, and simultaneously continues the efforts for her marriage. Kapur mentions their efforts for her marriage in the novel:

> The women of the Banwari Lal family had never been advertised for. There was always someone belonging to someone in the extended family with the essential prerequisites of caste, community, and like-mindedness. But Nisha's circumstances demanded a larger playing field. An ad was placed in the *mangli* section of *The Hindustan Times*. (*H* 224)

A daughter's marriage is undoubtedly the focal priority of her family. Her family considers her marriage more important than her career. Even a girl is socialized to have a desire of marriage and motherhood. Nisha gets married to Arvind, a thirty four year old *manglik* widower who has no objection to her working position. After getting married, Nisha adjusts and compromises not only with his family, but also with the business she had started before her marriage. Nisha surrenders her business and tries to receive his love and affection. Sometimes, she fights with him to get his attention, "Why did he have marry if he was to treat his wife to indifferent looks, she thought, sweeping aside the tenderness he showed at night. She wanted something in the day as well" (*H* 329). Nisha feels ignored owing to Arvind's neglect. She remarks, "If you are never going to talk or share things with me, why don't you take me back to my mother's house? You have done your duty, married and made me pregnant. When the baby is born you can collect it" (*H* 329). She is frustrated with Arvind's strange behaviour but feels that her pregnancy somehow compensates for such lack of intimacy. She feels suddenly vibrant, "friends, relatives, husband, babies all mine…all mine. Ten months after Nisha's marriage, twins were born. One girl, one boy. Her duty was over. (*H* 335-36). Nisha's motherhood resolves her problems with her husband and mother-in-law. According to Sudhir Kakar, "It is in her motherhood that her society and culture confines to her a status as a renewer of the race and extends to her a respect and consideration which was not accorded to her as a mere wife" (79).

Another novel of Kapur *The Immigrant* also delineates how gendered tropes in the institutions of marriage and motherhood subvert women on ground of their sexuality. The

novel begins with the thirtieth birthday celebration of Nina, the protagonist of the novel. She is an unmarried woman, about thirty and teaching in a college. Her "womb, her ovaries, her uterus, the unfertilized eggs that were expelled every month, what about them? …had she been married, thirty would have been heralded as a time of youthful maturity, her birthday celebrated in the midst of doting husband and children" (*TI* 01). Nina is a teacher at Miranda House in New Delhi but she is socially regarded as nothing because as yet she has not completed the assignment of marriage. True, ''the major topic of discussion in the last eight years had been Nina's marriage – who, when, where, how?" (*TI* 03) The novel exposes that to follow the institution of marriage is mandatory for every woman for retaining a social prestige. Furthermore, elaborating on the institution of marriage Kapur mentions in the novel, "We are conditioned to think a woman's fulfillment lies in birth and motherhood, just as we are conditioned to feel failures if we don't marry" (*TI* 230). The depictions in the novel echo the viewpoint of gender critics who have repeatedly pointed out that in a patriarchal society, women are considered fulfil their femininity through their marriage and motherhood. Greer emphasizes on the institution of marriage and motherhood commenting that:

> Single women do not escape female misery because of the terrific pressure to marry as a measure of feminine success. They dawdle and dream in their dead-end jobs, overtly miserable, because they are publically considered to be… The mockery of spinsters and acid faced women is not altogether the expression of prejudice, for these women do exude discontent and intolerance and self-pity. (316)

Marriage is "necessary to the construction of the respectable women" (Skeggs 102). Single women are looked down upon and mocked by society, this is one of the reasons that Indian mothers are very obsessed about their daughters' marriages. Nina's widowed mother Shanti has prayed and fasted for ten years for her daughter's marriage. Finally, Shanti gets a decent marriage proposal of an NRI Ananda for Nina. It is also clear to Shanti that she cannot find a suitable Indian marriage proposal for Nina. Nina, who has spent many bitter years after the death of her father, wishes a happy wedlock with Ananda. Kapur rightly points out, "Nina wanted to settle down, she wanted children, she could continue in the same rut for years…this could be her last chance. What were the odds of marrying after thirty?" (*TI* 73)

Kapur has also described the conventional normativity in her masculine characters. In the novel, she has sketched the character of Ananda, who is a well-established dentist in Canada. He is offered an Indian marriage proposal of Nina through his sister Alka. Ananda is afraid to take a Canadian girl because of his sexual dysfunction, "if he married a local girl, he would find himself in a difficult situation" (*TI* 35). He could not expect docile behaviour from a Canadian girl. This is the reason for him to choose an Indian girl. He knows that he can expect only for an Indian girl who will accept him unquestioningly even with his premature ejaculation:

> As a wife she would show…patience and understanding to any little problem that might crop between them. He saw now that many of his difficulties with women in Canada had come from his anxiety to prove himself. He put his hand protectively around his organ and caressed it gently. Poor thing, it had such a hard time…but now that trauma was going to end. A loving mistress [his wife] was about to enter the picture. (*TI* 85)

Indian patriarchal society, within the institution of marriage, exposes the identity of a woman as a wife who is always "expected to perform the docile, passive and sympathetic role. The dichotomised difference between husband and wife in marriage is characterised by opposition, polarisation, hierarchy and the devaluation of the wife as a social role" (qtd. in Siraj 187). Marriage, for some, "preserves a prevailing symbolism of God, nature, tradition and procreation – which makes it deeply unappealing" (Kitzinger and Wilkinson 141), since it encourages nurturing and self-sacrifice. Women, in the "fulfilment of ideal forms of femininity, are required to be compassionate, empathetic and sensitive to others, and women who do not display these qualities (those who are stoic or uncaring) are perceived to be lacking in femininity" (Jaggar 157). Ananda expects Nina to compromise with his premature ejaculation and Nina, expecting a happy married life with him immigrates to Canada. She feels a strange frustration in the absence of the moral and emotional support of her husband in Canada and soon her married life suffers from monotony. P. N. Khanna has rightly pointed out:

The woman thinks that she was marrying prince charming who through his love will endow her with his splendor and the man thinks she is an angel. The trouble starts when they insist on keeping up their expectations which go beyond reality, ignoring the fact that each one is a human being with the limitations of humanity. (64-65).

In the initial period of her marriage, Nina's reading habit keeps her busy. She has to wait for long hours for Ananda to come back. She waits patiently and unquestioningly. Khanna distinctly points out:

Marriage is a union of two personalities in its entirety. Marital relationship has not to be a narcotic where the two are lost in each other at the biological level. Although two people can be in love without communicating, but love in marriage rarely grows or endures unless communication is present. Husband and wives who do not sincerely enjoy each other's company are missing one of the most pleasurable and satisfactory experiences that life can offer. (525)

Further, Kapur describes about sex, which is the fundamental requirement in the relationship of husband and wife. For Nina, "Sex was a form of communication, and if they couldn't communicate on this most basic level, what about everything else?" (*TI* 183) Empathizing with the lack of proper sexual functioning on the part of her husband, Nina supports and suggests him to meet doctors like Masters and Johnson. Doctors who are known for their specialization in this area. "Please, darling, it will make such a difference to our marriage. Don't you want to have better sex?" (*TI* 184) Ananda's rejection of Nina's request symbolizes patriarchal disdain for questioning male potency. He is contemptuous towards Nina in his rejection of a just demand:

Are you implying it's my fault we don't have sex more often? Don't you know how much I want it? But while you just sit around and relax at home, I am at the clinic working hard to make a living.

Dentistry is very fine work, you know.… One wants to be thought of

as more than a sex machine. (*TI* 178, 307)

This incident brings into light gendered behaviour, which does not allow a husband to accept disease/improper functioning of his sexual organs in front of his wife, taking it as an insult to his manhood. Ananda consummated his marriage with the help of his dental anaesthetic spray (*TI* 136), but he does not want to admit it in front of Nina. He knows he "had miles to go before he reached his goal of pounding some woman to sexual pulp, but with marriage, he had gained confidence. One day he might try again with a white woman. He loved his wife, but he didn't want to feel that she was the only one in the world that he could have sex with" (*TI* 149). He realizes his sexual blunder and goes to California for cure without informing to Nina. He enjoys his treatment. "It's obvious how sex with your wife can't be the same as sex with a total stranger in a medical situation" (*TI* 207). After completing his treatment, Ananda establishes sexual relationship with Mandy, a white woman and his assistant in the clinic to be sure of it. For the four days that "Nina was going to be away he would spend every night with her. He would show her his apartment. He would take her out for dinner. Now he had to go" (*TI* 250).

Kapur has shown how from Nina's perspective, her marriage with Ananda is incomplete and exploitative. Unable to structure her days independently, she also has to put up with her husband's sexual incompetence. The sexual dysfunction of her husband reminds her of premarital sex with her lover Rahul:

Involuntarily comparison arose. Rahul, with his obsessive talk of sex,

endlessly curious about what she felt in what position, this technique

versus that. His little virgin, he replied, who needed to be educated so

they could feel as much pleasure as possible. That was what love was

all about. (*TI* 90)

Throughout the novel, Kapur explains the different meanings marriage has for men and women. For men, marriage is about "companionship and legitimacy, passion [is] reserved for a mistress. However, within romantic discourses, for women, attraction was about love, sex the expression of love" (qtd. in Vincent and Caryn McEwen 40). For Nina,

her marriage is meaningless without love and love expressed as sex. She toys with the idea of going back to India but discards the notion owing to prevalent societal rigidity in India, "No question of platonic level there. Every male-female interaction was suspect" (*TI* 249). She joins a professional library course so that she can be independent in Canada. During this course, she meets Anton and develops intimacy with him:

> Anton and she were not into having a relationship; it was purely a meeting of bodies, a healthy give and take….For the first time she had a sense of her own self, entirely separate from other people, autonomous, independent. So strange that the sex did not make her feel guilty, not beyond the initial shock. Easy, she was amazed it was that easy. Her first lover had taken her virginity and her hopes, her second lover had been her husband, her third had made her international. (*TI* 260-61, 269)

Sexual fulfilment is one of the basic requirements of men and women. Women are normally discouraged from revealing their active sexual desires. Greer is of the opinion that the insistence of "passive sexual role"…is the chief instrument in the deflection and perversion of female energy" which result in the "denial of female sexuality for the substitution of femininity or sexlessness" (77). Through Nina, Kapur challenges the account of women's sexuality. Kapur writes in the novel, "Togetherness was the important thing. To be critical of how it was achieved was against the spirit of marriage" (*TI* 89-90).

It is pertinent in this context to quote Rebecca Wulvik. R. Wulvik comments that people after completing their education find "a mate, getting married and then giving birth to the perfect child or children in order to create a family". This is the nominal circle of society but every couple's life happens smoothly it is not sure. "The ability to procreate is a universal, biological assumption that is unchallenged until couples are faced with reproductive difficulties" (qtd. in Wulvik 01). Childbearing is considered to be a natural course in the lives of couples. Infertility is usually stressful and devastating. Emphasizing on the role of mother, Chodorow remarks, "This is the first and most important role for women to attain. No matter how technologically advanced society becomes, a woman should not be

distracted from this goal" (qtd. in Shipley 156). Kapur highlights that motherhood is the most vital aspect of women's lives but they do not have command over their reductive capacities. Men control and manipulate their reproduction. Realizing that the cement of children is lacking in their marriage, Nina requests her husband, "Please, please Ananda consult *someone*. Am I the only one here who wants a baby?" (*TI* 166) The novel explains the domination of men over women's reproductivity through Nina who wishes to have the joy of motherhood, but he considers:

> To get pregnant as soon as you married was a very stupid, backward thing to do…if children were so important to her, she should have suggested a fertility test before the engagement…. His wife was conservative after all, in different ways he kept coming to that conclusion. He was the true Westerner, she the true Indian. (*TI* 167, 295)

Nina fails to conceive owing to the sperm dysfunction of Ananda. Kapur explains that generally women are rebuked by patriarchal society for infertility even though "one third of all infertility cases stemmed from male causes, of which the majority centred around abnormalities in the sperm" (*TI* 169). The novel shows that infertility is not particularly a woman's problem. Nina adjusts and compromises to keep a strong marital bond with Ananda. After her marriage, she adopts Western dressing style and eating habits which suit her husband. Nina does not enjoy a normal martial life because of her husband's sexual inadequacy. Her desire for a child is also ignored by her husband as he glosses over his own incompetence by treating her demand as a "stupid and backward thing" (*TI* 167). The infidelity of her husband and dissatisfaction with her marriage lead Nina to the search of selfhood and economic independence. To conclude this novel by Sushila Singh's comment:

> Their marriage ends for Nina in going away from her husband. She needed to be herself. With her mother dead…she had nothing tying her down anywhere. Nina lives her life in parts willing to belong but everything she experiences is temporary. (1015)

In *Custody*, Kapur portrays the marital life and discord of Shagun and Ishita. Shagun and Ishita are depicted as foil and counterfoil in the novel. Their character portrayal presents gender tropes prevalent in contemporary Indian society. How the dissatisfaction of their marriages pushes them beyond the constriction of gendered practices is distinctly exhibited in the novel. Shagun and Ishita both challenge the rigidity of a male chauvinist society in different ways. Shagun was only twenty-two when she had been persuaded for her marriage by her mother, "Beta, such a good match…so reliable he is, you will never have to worry about a thing. Your life will be comfortable, secure and safe" (*C* 27). This approach of Kapur is similar to Beauvoir's concept that "if a man is reasonably eligible in such matters as health and position, she accepts him, love or no love…marriage then are not generally founded upon love" (453). A woman tends to "look for a husband who is above her in status or who she hopes will make a quicker or greater success than she could" (Beauvoir 450). Thus, she gets married to Raman. Marriage has been "understood in very different terms at other times in our history primarily as an economic, social, or political alliance within which satisfaction and romantic love was not particularly important" (qtd. in Hill 10). Marriage in accordance with the preset social and cultural norms is mandatory to get not only women's safety and security, but also for their social dignity. Emphasizing on marriage as a sign of social dignity for women, Kapur explains that a woman has been "brought up to marry, to be a wife, mother and daughter-in-law" (*C* 27). Marriage is the destiny of women, which should be pursued by everywoman. Shagun has two children – a boy Arjun and a girl Roohi, but in her conjugal life, Shagun is frustrated with Raman's dedication to profession. She is sick and tired of being alone. Voydanoff also emphasizes that the engagement of long hours in job create discord in happy marital life. Furthermore, P. Voydanoff is of the opinion that "an increase in hours spent in employment is related to higher levels of work/family conflict" (191). Shagun also never questions this destiny, but single parenting irritates her. Kapur in the following lines describes her irritation with her second pregnancy:

> Why weren't you more careful? ... you were supposed to get a
> vasectomy, but of course you did nothing. Too busy all the time…I'll
> 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? (*C* 17-18)

The conventional notion of motherhood encourages mothers to willingly bear their sufferings and exploitation. Traditions push mothers to "sublimate a whole series of natural urges or at least believing that she should endeavour to do so" (qtd. in Gaur 55). In this context, Beauvoir remarks that woman has "ovaries, a uterus: these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature" (15). According to Oakley, "mothers are not born but made" (qtd. in Siraj 187). Similarly, the analysis of Rich too contends that "the womb – the ultimate source of this power – has historically been turned against us, and itself made into a source of powerlessness" (68). During her joyless, dismal and uninteresting life, Shagun meets Ashok Khanna and is attracted towards him. Soon they have an affair. To maintain an extramarital relationship is not easy for Sagun. She feels guilty. Guilt sees "accusation everywhere, in the glance of a servant, the fretful cry of a child, the stranger staring on the street, a driver's insolent tones" (*C* 01), but she is motivated by Ashok, "Dina left her husband. She found happiness before she died. She followed her heart. And you must follow yours. We only have one life to live and everybody wants to live it the best they can" (*C* 85). Her love affair with Ashok enhances her life and she realizes that:

> …a lover would add to her experience, make up for all the things she had missed having married straight out of college….She knew she would have to pay heavily for this happiness, but at least, dear God, she would have a happiness she never had before. If she were to die tomorrow, it would be as a fulfilled woman. (*C* 86,113)

It is pertinent to quote Simone de Beauvoir in this context:

> A woman dreamed of herself as seen through men's eyes, and it is in men's eyes that the woman believes she has finally found herself…the woman in love feels endowed with a high and undeniable value; she is at last allowed to idolize herself through the love she inspires. She is overjoyed to find in her lover a witness. (656)

Shagun tries to celebrate her sexuality without the constrictions of an unhappy marriage and wants to seek divorce from Raman. Her mother Mrs Sabharwal rebukes her, "You think all wives love their husbands? But they stay married. You are so idealistic, you don't think about the long term. What about society, what about your children?" (*C* 79) Shagun is unable to explain her perspective to her mother:

> She wanted nothing from him – nothing except her freedom. Not a shred, not a pin, not a rupee would she keep of their former life…. She had asked nicely for a divorce, been prepared to sacrifice, but the man refused to admit the marriage was over, slammed the phone down on her, what other choice did she have? (*C* 141, 257)

The institution of marriage has a primacy for the relationship between a husband and a wife, but this relationship is considered to be incomplete without children. If they are not able to have children, they will be blamed for infertility by family and society. In Indian circumstances, it is normally the women, who are stigmatised. In other words, infertility is "viewed as deviance from the cultural norms, rendering a woman helpless; it is also grounds for divorce" (qtd. in Mehta and Kapadia 438).The personality of women has been trained to have the bliss of motherhood from their early youth. A childless woman is considered to be meaningless and wasted. As pointed out by Carol M. Anderson, "Motherhood is usually identified as an essential part of being a woman, to an extent that women without children are usually portrayed as unfulfilled and incomplete" (42). It is also proved by many critics that the infertility experience of women leads them into "marital, social, cultural, and medical consequences" (qtd. in Naab 01).

Ishita, another major woman character of the novel is also a victim of such bias. She is married to Suryakanta, who is the only son of his parents. Within eighteen months of their marriage, his family starts to make noises. They are "beginning to ask, why haven't you conceived?" (*C* 56) Furthermore, she is forced by her in-laws to do the "special *jap* 108 times a day. And fast on Tuesday" (*C* 56).  Infertility has sown the seed of divorce in the life of Ishita. The norms of society do not allow a husband who is the "only son, living at home with an infertile wife – no… pressure on the husband to divorce her?...It is essential that

Suryakanta have a child. As the only son, he has to make sure that the bloodline of his forefathers continues" (*C* 61, 69). Kristeva mentions in this context, "We live in a civilization where the consecrated (religious or secular) representation of femininity is absorbed by motherhood" (*The Kristeva Reader* 161). Further Kristeva comments, "The mother's existence is where 'nature' confronts 'culture'" (238). Within the marriage, a wife is a medium for the offspring of her husband. Ishita has failed to perform this culture owing to "a womb that didn't function. The family wanted a child, she couldn't produce one" (*C* 290). Suryakanta does not consider the option of adoption because her mother declares, "My boy is young and healthy, his sperm will be good" (*C* 65). His family begins the search of a new wife for Suryakanta by hoping that they will get a *kuldeepak* (son) from her. Suryakanta attempts in favour of his family. Kapur explains in the novel:

> …Ishita felt annoyed with her husband. He was twenty-seven, had never done anything without his parents' permission?.... He doesn't even touch me anymore. In bed all she saw was his back. And last night, he moved into his parents' bedroom. She felt degraded, a non-person, certainly a non-woman. He was determined there should be nothing left between them. (*C* 62, 71)

According to Beauvoir, "Marriage incites man to a capricious imperialism: the temptation to dominate is the most truly universal, the most irresistible one there is; to surrender the child to its mother, the wife to her husband, is to promote tyranny in the world" (483). Bearing a child, a woman completes her femininity and strengthens her marital and familial bonds. At the moment Ishita thought it "easier to commit suicide that to live. From the day of her wedding she had thought of this family as hers, revelling in the togetherness, sharing and companionship. Now instead of love all around her, there would be rejection" (*C* 63-64).

Ishita's parents try to convince her for remarriage and settle down in life. Ishita faces the devastating effect of "infertility and loss of normal anatomy" (*C* 55). Thus, she declares, "She was married to her work, not one suitor could give her a similar satisfaction" (*C* 139). Furthermore, she request to her parents, "I wish you would understand how sick I am of this whole marriage business" (*C* 188). Her parents remark that "marital satisfaction is much

more important to personal well-being than occupational success, religion, housing, or finances combined" (qtd. in Hill 11). On the one hand, Ishita's parents try to convince her for remarriage, on the other hand, Raman's mother convinces him for remarriage with Ishita.

In this novel, Kapur also portrays the socio-cultural conditioning of sexuality. Women do not have control over their bodies in a patriarchal set-up. Ishita is not interested to maintain sexual relation before her marriage.  As Kapur points, "From her upbringing, of course. Everybody knew that decent girls should and shouldn't do" (*C* 298). In this context, Beauvoir highlights man's perception of woman's sexuality, "that she should be in no way independent, even in her longing for him" and woman is "obliged to offer man the myth of her submission, because he insists upon domination….Since she can only *be,* not *act*" (381, 397). After Raman's insistence, Ishita agrees to premarital sex even though she had not sought it initially. In this context, Greer explains that when women find that they have "no way of controlling the sexuality of their men folk" they suffer with "femininity insecurity". She further mentions:

> A woman is so aware of being appreciated by her husband as a thing, and a stereotyped thing … that she herself can see no reason why he should not covert the bosom exposed to him by another guest at dinner, especially if she is miserably afraid that in terms of the stereotype the exposed bosom shapes up better than hers. (Greer 175)

Ishita follows Raman's instructions without any complain before and after her marriage. Kapur depicts his instructions for her clothes, "Don't do striptease, but there is no need to wear this ridiculous garment. It hardly ever does what it is supposed to do" (*C* 338). Further he comments on her, "So stupid, hiding your breasts from your husband, he said as his hand wandered" (*C* 338). A "wife's only worthwhile achievement is to make her husband happy-it is understood he may have other more important things to do than make her happy" (Greer 307).

The exploration and examination of Kapur's novels from the perspective of tropes of gender in this chapter shows that women are conditioned to believe that marriage is their sole objective in life. For women marriage is the only option which enables them to achieve social

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prestige in the Indian society. Marriage is not primarily a sexual relationship; it is a process of procreation and rearing of children. Without the cement of a child, marriage is considered as banal and incomplete. It is almost an obligation in the Indian society for a wife to produce a male child. A son's birth is celebrated more prominently than a daughter's. The rank of the mother of a male child is higher to that of the mother of a female child in the Indian scenario. In this context, Indian mothers are obsessed with their daughters' marriages and train them for the performance of wives, mothers and daughter-in-laws. The novels of Kapur also highlight the sexual account of women. Within the institution of marriage, men are authorized to exploit women as sexual commodity. Kapur effectively exhibits the sufferings of forced sex on women within their marriages. Binaries of gender construction treat women as inferior, passive and objects of sexual gratification of men. Society looks at physical gratification of men as a duty of women toward their counterparts. Kapur also portrays the socio-cultural conditioning of sexuality. Feminine sexuality and the sexual needs of women are often ignored by men. Women do not have control over their bodies in a patriarchal set-up. Women are not liberated to celebrate their sexuality without the constrictions of marriage and are marginalized in the institutions of marriage and motherhood on the ground of their sexuality.

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# CHAPTER 5

# Conclusion

This research work is an attempt to trace the tropes of gender in the novels of Manju Kapur, namely *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008), and *Custody* (2011). A study of Kapur's novels reveals the socio-cultural aspects through which gender distinctions are constructed and developed. These novels challenge the pre-conceived notion of gender as biologically ordained and reinforce it as a socio-cultural outcome. In other words, the activities and behaviours of men and women are shaped as masculine and feminine by socio-cultural impacts, influences and conditionings. Gender theorists and critical thinkers also support this argument that gender constructs the concept of sex and emphasize that sex is not as powerful an instrument as gender in distinguishing our behaviour as men and women. Furthermore, Gender theorists and critics, refuting biological theories, substantiate that gender identity is more important than the sexual identity and is structured by socio-cultural practices.

A close scrutiny of Kapur's novels investigates various tropes which collectively influence the construction of gender hierarchy. Kapur's novels exhibit how the tropes of gender related with cultural conditioning, patriarchal notions and socialization, familial instructions, limited education, economic constrictions, domestic chores, dowry, marriage, motherhood and sexuality, are responsible for women's secondary and inferior position in the society. These influential tropes of gender manipulate and almost decide the destiny of women as submissive objects. Kapur's novels challenge the patriarchal conditioning and socialization of women by criticizing the subsistence of those myths and rituals, which reinforce the marginalization of women in a male chauvinist society. Her writings also unravel the truth that women have been victims of conventional gender ideologies, which suggest how women should behave in a society structured by male domination. Along with the construction of femininity, Kapur's fictions also expound the construction of masculinity and suggest that patriarchal conditioning is also exploitative for men. According to S. F. Parsons, "Men too have become subjects to patriarchy, being trained to carry out the violence

and aggression against women which it requires for its sustenance, a role which also damages their emotional and psychic lives" (51).

In the field of education and consequentially in the sphere of economic activities, women are normally suppressed and occupy an inferior position. Unlike boys, girls are restricted from opting for a vocational course. Women's traditional education offers them limited courses, which are useful in the better management of their married life. The purpose of their education is to train them for their household responsibilities. Kate Millett is of the opinion that "the kind and quality of education is not same" for boys and girls; where, "humanities and certain social sciences" is assigned to women, "science and technology, the professions, business and engineering" are coded as masculine (42). Women are treated as weak, passive, domestic and "made for child care, home care, and husband care" (MacKinnon 530). Domesticity is a prevailing societal trope of gender, which coerces women to believe that their actual and imperative education begins in the kitchen only. Gender stereotypes treat men and women differently. Men are considered as intelligent, competitive and efficient and are supposed to be the part of public sphere; while women are relegated to weak, soft and secondary positions and are considered to be fit for domestic chores. The limited opportunities of higher education and the absence of professional choices prohibit them from having equal footing with men.

Marriage and motherhood are projected as the necessity for survival of women in a male governed society. Gender theorists have always considered marriage as an unequal relationship. The institution of marriage considered to be necessary for both sexes, is also governed by patriarchal power structures, resulting in women's subordinate position. According to the mores of society, women's economic security is also dependent on marriage. Marriage is an inevitable fate of women. It is almost compulsory for women to be married at a certain age. Unmarried women are looked down upon, mocked at and criticized in a male dominated society. Within the institution of marriage, women have to face suppression and endure sexual exploitation. A woman is treated as a sexual commodity for man even within marital institution. The man "projects himself towards the other without losing his independence; the feminine flesh is for him a prey" (Beauvoir 393). Society not only prohibits women's sexual freedom, but also "strictly forbid[s]"... their "attempt to

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express their own pleasure" to men. (Irigaray77). Women are often discouraged from revealing their active sexual desires. Kapur aptly exhibits the sufferings of forced sex on women within the institution of marriage. Patriarchal society looks at physical gratification as a duty of women toward their counterparts. Within the institution of marriage, men control not only their sexual freedom, but also their reproductive capacities. Women are unable to take their individual decisions related to the birth of their children in a patriarchal set up. Men manipulate their potential of maternity to produce a male child. Kapur distinctly delineates the Indian scenario in which a woman is obligated to bear a son.

This thesis has attempted to investigate the aforementioned tropes of gender analyzing Kapur's novels in detail (*Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, *Home*, *The Immigrant* and *Custody*). Kapur's male and female characters reveal the impact of gender traits on the basis of these tropes. Her novels challenge the sexual account of men and women, which employs them to different positions and professions. The distinction between the sexes restricts women to limited places. Conventional gender hierarchy is subverted by Kapur with the portrayal of courageous and determined women. Kapur endows her women characters – Virmati and Ida in *Difficult Daughters*; Astha and Pipeelika in *A Married Woman*; Nisha in *Home*; Nina in *The Immigrant*; Shagun and Ishita in *Custody* – the rebellious strength against the patriarchal ideology. Manju Kapur echoes gender theorists like Helene Cixous who suggests that women can deconstruct the norms of patriarchal language by breaking "out of the snare of silence" (251) and express themselves through speaking or writing. Kapur's female characters refute those oppressions and subjugations which are imposed on them by a patriarchal society.

Gender Studies emerged in 1980's, though the seeds of feminine gender being a social construct were sown as early as in 1949 by Simone de Beauvoir. The differentiation between sex and gender is explored by other feminists too, such as Betty Friedan, Kate Millett, Shulamith Firestone and Germaine Greer, as an important topic in their theoretical and political analysis of the relations between men and women to fight for the cause of women. Woolf, Friedan, Millett, Firestone and Greer speak in favour of women's economic independence and space. These feminists express their concern for women's freedom from gendered stereotypes roles. Postmodernist gender theorists destabilize binary of gender

categories and highlight the notion of 'performance' or 'doing' which constitutes a core identity of gender. The works of gender theorists like R. J. Stoller, A. Oakley, G. Rubin, C. Delphy, M. Wittig, N. Chodorow, A. Rich, C. MacKinnon, C. West, D. H. Zimmerman, J. Butler, J. W. Scott and J. William analytically expose the fact that gender is a product of socio-cultural traits and characteristics and that it can be appropriately displayed by both men and women through their performances. Postmodernists gender theorists demolish the fixed and stable identity of gender and argue that socio-culturally constructed identity is a changing and shifting identity. Furthermore, they assail the account of compulsory heterosexuality and foreground the options of alternate sexuality. The contribution of these postmodernist gender theorists exhibits that gender is an achieved category.

In order to justify the arguments of construction of gender, the present work establishes various tropes of gender, which certainly cause the exploitation of women. This thesis revolves round the tropes of gender, which strongly influence the identity and existence of a woman. These tropes of gender are based on cultural conditioning, patriarchy and socialization in terms of education, economy, domesticity, marriage, motherhood and sexuality – in all these spheres and institutions women are given a secondary status in comparison to their male counterparts. The influence of these tropes is visible since the childhood of women. Gender hierarchy is imposed on them through their socialization in the patriarchal society. The limited and constricted opportunities for education and economic dependency, domesticity, compulsion to marry and motherhood generate unequal behaviour and status for them. Women's sexuality as one of the basic grounds for marginalization is analyzed deeply and closely in the novels of Kapur.

Chapter II discusses Kapur's novels from the perspective of "Cultural Conditioning, Patriarchy and Socialization". Her novels exhibit how the tropes of gender shape individual identities as feminine or masculine and also explain how the socio-cultural structure dominates women, encouraging men to easily adopt the positions of dominance. The novels expose patriarchy, which constitutes men as socially superior, logical and capable to rule over women. Patriarchy exploits and subjugates women because of their sex. In the novels of Kapur, the thematic tropes of gender suggest that a woman becomes feminine through her socio-cultural conditioning which limits her choices. This chapter analyzes how the gendered

and thematic tropes of cultural conditioning, patriarchy and socialization shape up the fate of feminine gender as an inferior and secondary in the novels of Manju Kapur. Kapur's female protagonists – Virmati, Astha, Nisha, Nina, Sagun and Ishita – are bold and strong with determined desires. They try to deconstruct those tropes of gender and trammels of traditions, which constrict them in the roles of daughters, sisters, wives and mothers only. They revolt against a male dominated society and struggle to assert their individual identity.

The beginning of this chapter describes the brief introduction and meaning of cultural conditioning, patriarchy and socialization, which makes it easy to comprehend the investigation of these tropes of gender in the novels of Manju Kapur. Kapur in *Difficult Daughters* traces three generations of women namely Kasturi, Virmati and Ida. The aforementioned characters expose the oppression of women as a result of socio-cultural conditioning and the governing orders of patriarchy. In first generation, Kasturi, the mother of Virmati, is the voice of a male chauvinist society. She unknowingly holds those conventional values and ideologies, which promote the instrumental role of patriarchy. In second generation, Virmati, the eldest among eleven children of Kasturi and Suraj Prakash in Amritsar, performs her duties as a second mother to her younger siblings. The portrayal of Virmati unfolds the social expectations from women as nurturers and caregivers. These roles are inculcated in young girls right from childhood by giving them various responsibilities to look after their families. Virmati, the protagonist of the novel, is rebuked by her own family as she opted for higher education and love marriage. In third generation, Ida, the narrator of the novel, does not believe in the conventional roles of women as wives and mothers, which are made compulsory for a woman's respectability. She states, "I feel my existence as a single woman" (*DD* 03). Ida does not accept feminine inheritance of "adjust, compromise and adapt" (*DD* 256). Discarding these deep-rooted feminine values, Ida declares that she knows what she deserves and how to get it. Throughout the novel, the character of Ida brings to light the patriarchal structure in which the activities of a woman are appreciated and considered laudable if she follows the instructions of her father, brother, husband or male children. Analyzing the three generations from the point of view of gender, this novel has examined that the refusal for arranged marriage, desire to get higher education, craving for independence and ignoring conventional responsibilities of caregiver for husband and children are the factors through which some of the daughters are showing their rebellion as

not fulfilling their femininity. As per the social norms, such daughters are considered to be difficult for their families.

Astha, the protagonist of the second novel *A Married Woman*, deconstructs the stereotypes of gender binary by opting for lesbian relationship. She challenges the existing social factors, which are responsible for shaping gender identity as men and women. Her upbringing in conservative middle class also reveals fixed and seemingly unchangeable stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. Family is the main institution to promote gender tropes from the formative years of girls and boys. In a male governed society, women are trained to serve and obey men by their education. The narrative tropes of *A Married Woman* unfold that women are born to serve and please men as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers as per the social norms. Astha's parents settle her marriage when they have a proposal from Hemant Vadera, working as an assistant manager in a bank. In the beginning of her married life, Astha tries to behave like a conventional wife. Within a few months however, her conjugal life suffers from monotony because of her husband's insensitivity to her emotional needs. Astha is always willing to maintain harmony in her married life, but she fails without the empathy and support of her husband. Women face several problems and struggle hard because of their gender. Their identities are conditioned by traditions and patriarchal set up. Astha gradually realises that she is a negligible figure in Hemant's life. He uses his masculine power to dominate and humiliate her. The humiliation and neglect push her to a lesbian relationship with Pipeelika Khan.

*Home*, Kapur's third novel, also portrays the hollowness of conventional gendered stereotypes. The thematic tropes of the novel extensively explore the conservative gender practices which imprison women within home, encouraging them to submissively accept their contingent secondary status. Analyzing the influence of family and gender socialization, which mould the thinking patterns of a girl, this novel investigates women's incarceration within socio-cultural structures as well as their biological exploitation due to gender distinction. Nisha, the female protagonist of the novel, belongs to a highly conventional family. The portrayal of her background showcases the enormous vice of caste which has gripped the Indian society and reinforced the gender based taboos. Tracing the life of Nisha from her childhood to adulthood in the novel, Kapur highlights the differences between the

upbringing of a boy and a girl in a patriarchal society. The socialization of girls restricts them to stay inside the house right from their childhood. The very traits of femininity impose that marriage is their ultimate and household activities are their primary occupations. Over the centuries, the socialization of femininity has conditioned women to accept that marriage and childbearing should be the only ambitions of their lives. Under this framework, gender decree confines women to stereotypical femininity and as a social script it is transferred from generation to generation.

The thematic motifs of *Home* suggest that the social conditioning is unequal for boys and girls. Owing to their different socialization, the parameters of treating both sexes are dissimilar and unequal. For instance, Raju, the son of Banwari Lal family, is treated with care and attention; in contrast, the family ignores Nisha who is sexually exploited at a tender age. The novel also exposes the gender bias by narrating Raju's poor academic performance and contrasting it with Nisha's brilliance. These traits are discernible in the novel when Raju is always appreciated and Nisha is criticized even though she is "more intelligent, methodical, and independent" than Raju (*H* 295). This concept of Kapur is similar to Kate Millett who demonstrates in the *Sexual Politics* that masculinity is recognized as "aggression, intelligence, force and efficacy" whereas feminine traits are believed to be "passivity, ignorance, docility, and ineffectuality" (26).

In *The Immigrant*, the central figure is Nina, a teacher of English at Miranda House, who lives in Delhi with her widowed mother Shanti. Like all other Indian mothers, Shanti wishes to get her daughter Nina married at certain age. Ultimately, Shanti finds an NRI bridegroom for her. Nina's struggle is different from Kapur's other protagonists. Whereas other protagonists struggle against the gendered mores of eastern society only, Nina's struggle spills out against the Western backdrop also. This aspect of *The Immigrant* showcases the commonalities of gender issues in dissimilar and diverse societies. In India, she fights to provide a better life to her widowed mother without the help of a man while in Canada Nina also struggle against her loneliness and changing preferences. In this novel, Kapur has highlighted Nina's experiences of daily life as an immigrant from the perspective of gendered tropes. Kapur describes how Nina's arranged marriage with an NRI reshapes her preferences for food and clothing. Her husband compels her to wear Western clothes and to

become a non-vegetarian. Thematic gendered tropes related with cultural conditioning patriarchy and socialization delineate that men are socially superior and independent to take their decisions, whereas women are not allowed to assert their individuality. Nina has already faced a long cycle of sorrows in her adolescence without the supportive presence of a man as father/uncle/brother in a patriarchal society. She expects to have a happy married life in Canada. Nina does not get moral and psychological support from her husband, which is necessary for her to settle down in Canada. Alone in Canada, she is emotionally, financially and socially dependent on Ananda. This novel of Kapur also supports the tropes of gender, namely cultural conditioning, patriarchy and socialization, which generate helplessness, loss of control and a lack of confidence in women.

In *Custody*, the lens of gendered tropes deals with two central figures, Shagun and Ishita, who struggle for their individuality and autonomy in a male dominated society. Shagun, the wife of Raman and mother of his two children, wants to live on her own terms. Like Astha and Nina, she is one of the bold characters of Kapur, who go beyond social norms and challenge the prevailing trammels of traditions. Another central character is Ishita, who is completely victimized by patriarchal society. She is divorced by her husband Suryakanta, because she could not bear a child. A conventional society does not allow a childless woman to live happily within her marital home. The novel addresses gender tropes in a complex multi-layered manner. It is difficult to compartmentalize women characters of this novel as conventional or unconventional in a simplistic manner.

This chapter has investigated, by applying the arguments of major gender theorists, that women's passivity is constructed because of their socialization and upbringing, which is different from men in patriarchal society. Women are conditioned to derogate their own positions and believe that they are obligated to care for men. The instrumental lens of gender tropes shows how men and women are framed within different social-cultural roles, norms and anticipations as reflected in Kapur's novels from *Difficult Daughters* to *Custody*. Men control almost all positions related to public as well as private while women engage in particular occupations such as domestic, housekeeping and child rearing. Kapur's novels echo that the limitations of choices are imposed on women by cultural conditioning,

patriarchy and socialization. The narrative gender tropes of this chapter pertinently display sexual discrimination in a male governed society.

Chapter III entitled Education and Economy has attempted to analyze limitations imposed by gendered notions on women's education and their linkages with their economic dependence on men as exhibited in the novels of Kapur. Tropes of women's socio-cultural conditioning are reflected in the ways they are allowed to perceive and pursue education. Conventional gendered notions governing women's education limit it to enabling them to better manage household chores and childcare. It is not linked with their autonomous selfhood as it is for men. Patriarchal imperialism has fixed limited and different objectives as far as education for women is concerned. The indictment of gender tropes delineates that social convention restricts women from opting for non-conventional choices in terms of disciplines and professions. Instead of self- actualization, women are encouraged to opt for an education, which enables them to take care of domesticity and married life. Educational provisions and traditions groom women's personalities to take the charge of household responsibilities and men's personalities for shouldering economic responsibilities. In the existing patriarchal scenario, boys are expected to access higher education and gain financial independence as soon as possible whereas girls are expected to give unquestioned priority to their marriage. Thematic tropes of gender also point that the absence of choices prohibits women to have equal footing with men in public sphere.

The first novel of Manju Kapur titled *Difficult Daughters* shows through Virmati, the protagonist, how education plays a vital role in woman's struggle for emancipation. For Virmati, education is an instrumental tool by which she can defy gender stereotypes and prefixed roles. Since her childhood, she was pressurized to take the responsibilities of upbringing her younger siblings. Despite it, she is determined to pursue higher education. Virmati is influenced by her qualified cousin Shakuntala and like her wants to establish her independent identity. Virmati's parents do not take her interest in higher studies seriously. She remarks, "My parents are unwilling to send me to Lahore to study further. I am so far determined that nothing should stop me" (*DD* 122). Her mother tries to ensure her future by giving her culinary education. Her family's aggressive refusal to allow her to study further leads Virmati to seek support in Harish Chandra, her teacher, who encourages her to study

further. Virmati's family ultimately allows her to go to Lahore for further study. After the completion of her BT, a teacher's teaching program, she is offered the position of headmistress in Sirmaur, an independent state in undivided India. Virmati's mother tries to dissuade her from accepting the job offer stating that her professional career will make her so independent that she can take strong steps to settle down without her marriage. The thematic tropes of *Difficult Daughters* exhibit how education and economic independence are normally considered to be a masculine domain and that how women are encouraged to adjust with familial responsibilities.

Kapur's *A Married Woman* highlights the complex web of education and economic independence in the life of a married woman. The protagonist of the novel Astha yearns to acquire respect, freedom of expression, equality, as well as financial independence in her life. Tropes of the novel exhibit patriarchal system in which men take financial charges while women are groomed for shouldering household works. Girls' education is understood as an option, which enables them to find a good husband. The prefixed traditions of patriarchal educational patterns train girls to be socially and economically dependent on men. The novel also illustrates that the men-folk of the family decide what occupations are suitable for their women. Hemant, Astha's husband, decides that she should join teaching profession. However, Astha soon realizes that Hemant not only criticizes her job, but also mocks at her duties by commenting that teaching is not "a serious job, just go and talk about poems and stories" (*AMW* 68). *A Married Woman* describes that Astha is permitted to teach in a school, as it is an activity which allows women an engagement without impinging on the blocks of leisure available to men-folk. This novel also clearly states how a woman's dedicated involvement in her profession is frowned upon. Hemant does not tolerate any compromises in his comfort level owing to Astha's involvement in her work. Through Astha, Kapur also explains that women do not have any control over the money which has been earned by them. The narrative tropes about education and economy, of this novel show Astha's struggle to assert her individuality in a male dominated society in which men are naturally encouraged to take decisions both in public and private domains.

The third novel of Kapur captioned *Home* delineates how gendered perspectives in the sphere of education generate hindrances in women's independence. Through Nisha, the

central figure of the novel, Kapur highlights that in comparison to boys parents often pay less attention to the education of girls. For Nisha's parents, her education is not a serious issue. They view girl's education as an option, a time-gap arrangement till she is married. Thus, Nisha is permitted by her family to join a College for English Honours with instructions that higher education is just a time pass. She has been asked to take it lightly as the only purpose of this course is to have better opportunity in marriage. The novelist emphatically conveys that in such a scenario the idea of seriously pursuing professional desires is an anathema as the girl is destined to marry. Nisha is preached by her mother that the primary responsibility of a woman is to look after her home, husband and children. She should give them food which has been cooked by her own hands. Such statements reveal that the socialization of women shapes their mind to give priority to marriage, rather than education. Nisha defies her family tradition by starting a clothes' range named as 'Nisha Creations'. Her successful business can be understood in terms of Butler's theory, which defines that performance constructs a real identity for men and women.

The gender tropes related to education and economic are portrayed in the novel *The Immigrant* with a modernist twist. Education is the means, which permits Ananda to escape the drab reality of India. Almost in a similar manner, it becomes a gateway for Nina also. Ananda is familiar with the difficulty of living in Canada without having a good command over English. At the Indian club in Canada, Ananda is amused at the situation of some Indian girls who cannot speak English properly. As a result of such experiences he feels satisfied that his sister has selected Nina as a bride who is an English teacher and undoubtedly has an excellent knowledge of English language. Such academic background becomes lucrative for a girl who has to settle in Canada after her marriage. Her linguistic capabilities would allow her to mix up in the new cultural moorings and maybe she would add to the family income also. Nina's education not only helps her in marrying Ananada, but also supports her during immigration formalities at the time of her entry in Canada. She completely satisfies the Canadian officers by her appropriate answers. Nina's education makes her confident and positive. She neutralizes her loneliness and alienation in Canada with her habit of reading. Nina also tries to eradicate her infertility by working. The lens of gendered tropes exhibits that education as an instrument develops self-confidence and encourages women to be

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independent. This novel rightly explains that the aim of education is to expand women's personal as well professional spheres.

The novel *Custody* also illustrates how limited objectives of education and the absence of choices put several obstacles for women. Such obstacles based on the lack of education and economic spaces can easily be seen in the lives of Shagun and Ishita. Through the characters of Shagun and Ishita, this novel highlights the issue of professional career. Shagun tries to start her professional career by modelling, but her mother opposes it strongly. Shagun's mother holds the conventional perception that a woman's primary career is her marriage and that above all she should be a homemaker. Thematic tropes reveal prefixed educational traditions in which a woman is not normally allowed to pursue a professional career. Ishita, another central character, wants to pursue B. Ed. to get a good job. Her parents force her into marriage. Gradually, her broken marriage and her desire to adopt a child compel her to pursue economic independence.

In this chapter, a close analysis of Kapur's novels highlights key points through which it is defined that men take the charge of almost all positions whereas women are forced to accept limited opportunities in the field of education. In gendered surroundings, parents view girls' education as an option and believe that girls' education fills the time gap of marriage. Women are also not given a separate economic space in a male dominated society. They are not allowed to have any control over the money which has been earned by them. Thematic tropes of gender related with education and economic spaces show Kapur's point that equal opportunities of higher education, training and professional career should be available to women. An access to higher education and economic spaces help them to become confident and courageous. Kapur's female protagonists Virmati, Astha, Nisha, Nina, Shagun and Ishita emerge with strong determination in her novels. They fight against the rigidity of patriarchal society, which restricts women from pursuing higher education and economic freedom. Their education and economic independence support them in the way of their emancipation.

Chapter IV entitled Marriage, Motherhood and Sexuality has taken up the exploration of the thematic tropes discernible in Kapur's novels from the perspective of gender. Conventional mind-set views the relationship between man and woman within the institution

of marriage as truly sacred and indissoluble. According to Erikson, "Marriage is an integration of two individual dispositions to bring up the next generation. Female identity is formed by the inner-space destined to bear the offspring of the chosen man" (qtd. in Gopinath 50). For women, marriage is considered to be their destiny and their life is supposed to be unfulfilled without it. Along with other institutions, men and women belong to unequal relationship in this institution also. J. S. Mill defines a woman's marriage as one of worst forms of slavery. He remarks, "…no slave is a slave to the same lengths and in so full a sense of words, as a wife" (207). Women face several tortures within the institution of marriage on basis of their sexuality. In this institution, men not only command over their sexual functions, but also manipulate their reproduction capacities. Within marriage, women are compelled to conceive a male child in the Indian society. Kapur's novels bring our attention to the fact that the birth of a male child is welcomed more joyously in the Indian scenario. This chapter displays how women are oppressed and manipulated by men within their marriages.

*Difficult Daughters*, analyzing three generations, depicts how women are marginalized by the institutions of marriage and motherhood on the basis of their sexuality. The portrayal of Kasturi, Virmati and Ida represents the rigidity of gender norms which have not incorporated any fundamental changes. *Difficult Daughters* illustrates how over the passage of time certain conditions have changed, yet the constrictions of gendered practices have remained unyielding. Kasturi gives birth to eleven children within her marriage. Household chores sap her energy and she is unable to think beyond it. Her daughter Virmati and granddaughter Ida are able to exert their choices, yet have to face social censure. Virmati's affair with Harish leads her to a miserable condition. She terminates her pregnancy before her marriage. Later, her marriage with Harish, who is already married, leads to her social ostracism outside home and struggle for the marital bed with Ganga, the first wife of Harish, inside it. Ida divorces her husband Prabhakar when he tries to force her for an abortion. Thus, elaborating on the characters of Kasturi, Virmati and Ida, this novel delineates how women's sexual functions and reproductive capacities are manipulated by the tropes of marriage and motherhood.

In *A Married Woman*, Kapur deals with homosexual relationship. Kapur traces how Astha, the protagonist of the novel is compelled by her circumstances to have a lesbian relationship. Astha, the only child of her parents, is nurtured on the sole belief that marriage is the destination of her life. Her mother Sita trains Astha to become a perfect wife. Her parents settle her marriage with Hemant, who is an American returned MBA boy. In the social construction of femininity, a married woman is responsible for the welfare of her family. Astha performs domestic duties with devotion to satisfy her husband as well as her in-laws. In the initial period of her marriage, she strives hard to become an ideal wife. She wears sexy clothes on the demand of her husband, but Hemant's conventional masculine behaviour oppresses her. Within her marriage she is sexually exploited and feels depressed by her husband's oblique pressures to give birth to a son. The infidelity of her husband pushes her to have an intimacy with Pipeelika Khan. Astha gets love, care, and mutual understanding by having a lesbian relationship with Pipee. Through Astha, Kapur depicts not only a homosexual relationship, but also patriarchal-set up in which a husband commands over his wife and his status is considered to be superior.

The exploration of marriage, motherhood and sexuality tropes in *Home* are also illustrated that women face torture and humiliation as wives and mothers. This novel exemplifies it through the portrayal of Sona and Nisha who bear the oppression psychologically, mentally, sexually within their marital home. Sona was unable to conceive within two years of her marriage. Without a child, Sona is considered incomplete and is burdened with domestic chores. Nisha is the only girl among five children of the Banwari family. During her early childhood, she is abused sexually by her eldest cousin Vicky. Furthermore, her horoscope has made her a *manglik*. According to the Hindu astrology, a person born in the presence of Mars (*Mangal*) is called *manglik*. *Mangal Dosha* is understood to be ill fated for marriages in the Indian society. It is also astrologically considered that if a *manglik* gets married to a *manglik*, the negative condition can be reduced. Unfortunately, Nisha's family was unable to find out a *manglik* match for her after certain age. The absence of marriage proposals helps her to take permission for business. She starts a boutique 'Nisha Creations'. But this does not sooth her parent's anxiety. For them their daughter's marriage is undoubtedly the main priority of her family. Her family considers her marriage more important than her career. Ultimately, they found a *manglik* marriage proposal

from a *manglik* boy, Arvind, for Nisha. She gets married to Arvind, a thirty four year old widower. After marriage, Nisha adjusts with him, with his family and also with her own business. Finally, Nisha surrenders her business and unquestioningly accepts the constricting life of a married woman in a traditional setting. She yields to the gender conditioning which envisages that the fulfillment of a woman's life lies in marriage and motherhood.

Kapur's *The Immigrant* also underlines marriage, motherhood and sexuality institutions of gender. This novel opens with the thirtieth birthday celebration of Nina, the central character of the novel. She is an unmarried woman, about thirty, who teaches in a college. Nina is a teacher at Miranda House, New Delhi, but socially she is regarded nothing as yet she has not been married which is a prime social duty. In patriarchal society, women are looked at worthy by fulfilling their femininity of marriage and motherhood. Nina, who has spent many bitter years after death of her father, wishes a happy conjugal life with NRI Ananda. Nina does not enjoy a normal married life with Ananda owing to his sexual incompetence. She realizes that she is unable to celebrate the joy of motherhood because of his sexual inadequacy. The lack of true companionship and dissatisfaction of her marriage compel her to establish her individual identity.

In *Custody*, Kapur has delineated the marital discord of Shagun and Ishita. Shagun's dissatisfactory married life leads her to look for a companionship outside her marriage. She exhibits the courage to rebuild her life by deciding to divorce her husband and marry Ashok Khanna. She struggles hard to get freedom from her husband and live with Ashok. Ishita, another major female character of the novel, is a victim of the patriarchal biases towards the infertility of a woman. Her in-laws decide that she should be divorced by her husband as she is unable to give birth to a child. Her character portrayal is a story of indictment of women's hierarchal roles. Conventional norms regard that the fulfilment of a woman lies in the role of a mother.

The novels of Kapur demonstrate that in the Indian society a woman is brought up to marry and to become a wife and a mother. Women are socialized to admit that marriage is the only option in life to attain decorum and social prestige for them. Unmarried women are considered to be pariahs and have to face social ostracism and consequential insecurities. Owing to societal pressures Indian mothers are obsessed with their daughters' early

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marriages. They teach them that the reputable identity of a woman is achieved by her quality to look after her home, her husband and her children. Social provision of compulsory heterosexuality is another significant mechanism by which men are projected as superior and logical and are assigned the social authority to command over women. In a patriarchal and gendered society, the institution of marriage has been developed as having unequal relationship. Marriage is a phase of bondage for women in which they are sexually exploited and used as sexual objects by men. Patriarchy within the institution of marriage manipulates women's motherhood and conditions them to have a definite preference and obligation to give birth to a male child.

By analyzing, citing and elaborating the tropes responsible for the construction of gender identity, this research concludes that gender is constituted by society and culture. Manju Kapur's novels aptly delineate this aspect that the lives of men and women are deeply conditioned to follow numerous social provisions, norms and conventional traits. The conclusion summarizes the aforementioned deliberation and discussion on the basis of tropes of gender as illustrated in the novels of Kapur. Her novels advocate the dissolution of gender boundaries and those practices which constrict women on the ground of their sexuality. It is distinctly examined by her novels that the tropes of gender namely, cultural conditioning, patriarchal norms, socialization, gendered education, constricted economic spaces, domesticity, institutionalization of marriage and motherhood marginalize women on the basis of their sexuality. The portrayal of her novels explains that gender is not determined by sex, rather than it is a socio-cultural outcome, which is achieved by both men and women through their performances, deeds and actions. The scrutiny of Kapur's novels showcases that the dissolution of gender boundaries proposes the ways through which both men and women may transcend the limitations posed by the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. In the final denouement of Kapur's novels, we find that her women characters struggle to challenge stereotyped attitudes and ideologies. Thus, Manju Kapur deconstructs tropes of gender by destabilizing the boundaries of gender and sex in her novels.

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