CHAPTER- IV

INDIAN CULTURE- TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

The contemporary Indian novelists in English are living and writing in perhaps the most complex phase of Indian society and culture. As fast and unprecedented changes have been taking place in the society, the identity of individual in general, essentially that of a woman in particular is changing drastically. The innovations in the field of Science and Technology, the fast communicating devices such as mobile, internet, Media- both print and visual and entertainment channels have changed the Indian way of life significantly. The wide spread of English education and Globalization are no doubt a major influencing factor on the Indian society. Such a change no doubt has brought the world closer than before. These factors have stirred the social, economic, political and cultural spheres of India with a number of possibilities and probabilities gearing up to meet the new challenges. However, it is quite interesting to note the changes that are taking place and confronting/contesting the traditional value systems which are still in practice in the Indian society.

Before examining the novels that have been selected in this chapter Indian Culture- Texts and Contexts, it is quite pertinent to deliberate on the word ‘Culture’. The word ‘Culture’ denotes “the custom and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group” (Web Source). The word ‘tradition’ comes from the Latin word ‘tradition’ means "to hand down" or "to hand over". Oxford Advanced Learner’s English Dictionary defines Culture is “the custom and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country” (370). The word Culture is derived from the Latin word cultura meaning “to cultivate” It generally refers to the patterns of human activity
and the symbolic structures that give such activities significance. According to T.S. Eliot, there are three ways of regarding culture, as that ‘of the individual, of a group or class, and of a whole society’. The culture of a whole society comprises urbanity or civility, learning in all branches, philosophy, and the arts. Culture is something alive and its effects are seen in the whole society.

Indian culture is one of the oldest cultures having five thousand years of history. The word culture is viewed as synonymous with a woman, as women have been the fosters and preservers of culture of the soil since time immemorial. Women have occupied and enjoyed high status in India since ancient times. They were educated and respected members of the society. “Woman in ancient India appeared free, emancipated, well educated and highly respected members of the society” (Vijay 18). The Hindu moral code, known as The Manu-Smrithi or The Laws of Manu denies women an independent and free existence apart from that of her husband or his family. “Her father protects [her] in childhood, her husband protects [her] in her youth and her sons protect [her] in old age; a woman is never fit for freedom (Manu 328). Why and how “women gradually lost their respected position is not clear even today. Historians point out that it was after the Aryan invasion before 1500 B.C. that women started losing their status, denied rights and were given status inferior to that of men in the society. The traditions and customs restricted the orthodox Hindu women’s life until very recent times. It shows that women are the targets of the whole family. There is a division of work within the family. Men do all the outside work, including a job and women are in charge of looking after the family. The Indian joint family is patriarchal constituted by a group of persons related in the male line and subject to absolute power of the elder or eldest male member of the family. It is
due to the Western Impact and English education, feminist movements during the early part of the twentieth century, followed by globalization, women all the world over as well as in India seem to have risen from slumber/hibernation and have been responding quite positively to feminist movements (vijay 13).

Ever since the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatarjee’s *Rajmohan’s Wife* in 1864, quite a number of novelists have been portraying women in their works as long-suffering wives, mothers, daughters, widows being perpetually silenced by patriarchy. The ideal and traditional, oppressed women have persisted in Indian culture all through by religious images of goddesses devoted to their husbands such as goddesses Sita, Savithri, Draupathi to mention a few. Even today, Indian novelists are depicting these images as ideal characters. In myths, the dominant feminine prototype- the chaste, patient, self-denying wife, Sita and others supported other chaste women like Draupathi, savitri, Damayanti, Tara and others. When looking at these narratives, their silence or speech can be a useful guide/expression to interpret women’s responses to patriarchal hegemony. Women’s silence is a symbol of oppression, a characteristic of the subaltern condition, whereas speech signifies women’s self-assertion and liberation. The impact of the West has created certain cultural problems and crisis in values in all parts of India.

The primary concern of this chapter is to focus on the changes that have been ushered in due to the onset of globalization in Indian culture. Due to the advent of the Economic Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization, the Indian society got exposed to the Western world. As the geographical spaces came closer, the Indian society began to get exposed and access to the Western culture easily. The position of Indian women
and their consequent maneuvering of their domestic spaces extended significantly. Domestic space is not only important as the world they primarily occupy, but also as a space laden with implications of their worth and their social and economic positions also have been changed considerably. There are unseen/invisible boundaries in their living spaces just as there are unspoken rules and social laws in their culture. The physical structure of their homes and social set-up of their households primarily form and shape their identities and define their daily lives in a subtle, but considerable ways.

For a majority of Indian women novelists’ victimhood or victimization is still a predominant reoccupation. For many, it may have caused the exclusion or sidelining of themes or issues such as women empowerment, the changing position of women- socially and economically and women resisting the male hegemony and so on. Some conspicuous lapses in the contemporary Indian English novels of women are the effects of globalization on Indian society, the political situation, status of women in the patriarchal society and cultural crisis and so on. Sex has been traditionally a taboo topic of discussion. Women writers were once shy of writing about sex. With the intervention of bold experimentalists like, Shoba Dey, Shashi Deshpande, Arundathi Roy, Kiran Desai, Manju Kapoor and others, the scenario has changed. They are no longer shy in depicting women’s sexuality in their novels. It is a strange fact that there is a very little mention of sexuality in their novels, except to issues such as sexual abuse, rape, domination by men and virginity. Little or no mention is made of homosexual love, despite many portrayals of socially practiced gender segregation. Another most striking thing about their novels is its ironic narrative voice which refuses to romanticize the joint family or sentimentalize the emotions of the characters. The suave/sophisticated, detached tone is both the novel’s
strength and its weak point as well it forces to confront uncomfortable truths by exploding some well-worn formula and stereotypes.

The contemporary Indian English novelists grapple with the themes of cultural transition, dislocation of culture, cultural degeneration, multiculturalism, cultural homogenization, cultural crisis and so on. Concepts like, heterogeneity, cultural pluralism and hybridity began to spread everywhere. The postmodern writers began to employ major fictional narrative devices like, non-linear plots, multiple narrations, flashback and flash forward techniques, magic realism, intertextuality, story within a story, mixture of native language with English. As far as the characters are concerned, these novelists focus more on common people, anti-heroes, heroines and so on.

The image of women in Indian English novels has undergone a drastic change since the last fifty years. Women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals as as enduring, self-sacrificing, humble, mute towards bold and assertive female characters searching for identity in a phallocentric society. Women no longer are characterized, defined simply in terms of their submissive and victim status by the novelsits. In contrast to earlier Indian novels in English, female characters since 1980s onwards assert themselves and defy marriage and motherhood. Contemporary women writers depict both the diversity of women and the diversity within each woman, rather than limiting the lives of women to one ideal. The novels written in the twenty-first century furnish examples of a whole range of attitude towards the imposition of tradition, some offering an analysis of the changing family structure due to Globalization, the age-old traditions and customs, clash of cultures and patriarchy as the major themes of their novels. Despite these facts, the Indian family life even today, by and large, is guided by traditional values
of the joint family system where the rights and duties of each member is defined by the elders of the family. Elaine Showalter observes: “it is the society not biology that shapes women’s different perception of her world” (12).

The protagonists chosen for the study in this chapter Contextualizing Culture deviate form their own culture due to circumstantial pressures but in the long run they understand the vitality of their culture and tradition and return to it. In Amit Chaudhury’s A New World, Githa Hariharan’s Fugitive Histories, and Manju Kapoor’s Home the protagonists are educated, assertive and try to establish their identity in the swiftly changing social, cultural and traditional values. Amit Chaudhuri’s protagonist, Jayojit is a divorcee and a father of seven-year-old son, lives and works in the United States. His wife, Amala divorces him and lives with a doctor taking her son through judicial custody. Githa Hariharan’s protagonist, Mala though is a Hindu woman, marries a Muslim and her daughter, Sara lives without religious identity and is proud to retain her hybrid existence. Manju Kapoor’s Nisha in Home rebels against patriarchy and becomes assertive to establish her own identity as an entrepreneur. This diversion is due to the powerful Western Cultural influence which causes the fusion of the home and the foreign. This result is a cultural change. The long cherished values of the society, culture and tradition, orally transmitted to them by their ancestors prompt this return.

Women writers posit/project their female protagonists as victims- not so much because of their class, caste, or circumstances, but primarily and simply for the reason that they are women. The intense emphasis on the victimhood of Indian women has become a characteristic of the genre, and especially in the case, that most contemporary Indian women’s novels contain much sorrow and poignancy and relatively little humour.
The women protagonists rise above themselves when they learn to stop deriving their self-worth from their partners. It is worth noting that the majority of the contemporary Indian women novelists discuss the victimhood of women largely in domestic and familial terms.

Indian English novel after the 1980s assumed a different form from its precursors in both theme and technique. As Indian society was transforming from its traditional, feudal and patriarchal structures, the novels seem to offer ample scope and material to a novelist who wants to subvert and dismantle power structure, resulting in conflict. The Official versions of history, patriarchal versions of womanhood, and institutionalized versions of discourses are being contested, undermined and dismantled by the post-Rushdian Indian novelists in English. They destabilize existing versions, undermine their ideological underpinning, and subvert them by adopting newer versions to correct the power relations in contemporary Indian society.

In a deeply rooted patriarchal system under which the family functions, conflicts with the characters, their own identity, quest for freedom and individual space are quite natural. In negotiating the difficult terrain of selfhood, the protagonist is brought into conflict with the milieu. The novelists highlight the newly awakened spirit of self-assertion, especially among characters who belong to the progressive middle class. Patriarchy is the defining principle of the Indian family, as perceived and presented by the novelists. “Patriarchy’s chief institution is the family. It is both mirror of and a connection with the larger society, a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole” (Kate Millet 33). Since familial conflicts are of different kinds and are handled from different perspectives by the authors, they are taken up separately in this chapter.
The changes in social, political, economic and cultural spheres have been reflected in the postcolonial novels. The contemporary Indian English novels provide innumerable examples of familial conflicts taking on more serious implications than even before. The novelists project the clash between the traditional and modern cultures and their values. The influence of the West on the Indian society, condemnation of European hegemony, patriarchy and Globalization, privatization, economic liberalization so on and so forth have been problematized and contested by the contemporary Indian novelists in English. Most of the postcolonial writers have got their education abroad and are influenced by the western thoughts and liberal ideas. Hence the characters they depict in their works have dual identities, that of a hybrid existence, juggling between two languages and hence cultures.

The fictionalization of women’s problems and their study forms another significant aspect of contemporary Indian English novels. The novelists project how women suffer due to patriarchal hegemonic structures and the way the women sustain and protest against their subjugation forms the central concern of contemporary Indian English writers. Their writings aim to explore the voice of women and support their struggle for their rights. Contemporary novels share the elements of modernism in breaking away from traditions, experimentation which form and markedly differ in attitude towards life and its understanding and do not have everything in common. Their novels document the fast changing society and the disintegration of social, cultural, moral, ethical, and political values. All these aspects and issues, along with the thematic features of postmodernism will be discussed vis-a-vis Amit Chaudhuri’s *A New World*, Githa Hariharan’s *Fugitive Histories*, and Manju Kapoor’s *Home*. 
Cultural values have been handed over from generation to generation. There are many traits - traditional beliefs and practices that are the result of sharing a common culture and this can be seen in Indian English novels. Since 4000 B.C., India has enjoyed spiritual knowledge and, material prosperity which sustained its unique culture and this can be witnessed even today. Unity can be seen in diversity in Indian culture, tradition, customs, dress, language, region, religion, race, practice, caste and so on. These rich and diverse components constitute the composite and united culture of the strong nation, India. There are a number of geographical, political, historical, social, cultural, religious, ethnic and other aspects, which contributed to the evolution of a pluralistic society of our country since 5000 years. The novels selected for the study deal with the above mentioned themes.

There are the emerging new trends in feminism. Women are now standing up and recognizing their unique potential as female, taking pride in their bodies and identities as the female self. Accepting female identity with its experience of mothering, nurturing and relationship of women are viewed as significant to women’s understanding of what is an authentic self. Feminism, feminists have thrown challenges against the conspiracy of male power to relegate them to the background with negativity, marginality and absence of mind. Women are actually now interested to understand their identity as an autonomous whole rather than conformed to the prescribed modesty and sweetness. The novelists unravel the existing oppressive systems of patriarchy and the status of women in the society. Though these women novelists are preoccupied with the personal lives of the protagonists, they also address social and intellectual issues in relation to women’s life.
The novels deal with the middle-class family’s preoccupations and vicissitudes and provide a realistic social commentary or disintegrating family values and ties of the gradually changing India under the sign of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization.

Amit Chaudhuri’s *A New World* (2001)

Amit Chaudhuri’s *A New World* presents modern/contemporary Indian as well as American society. The novel is about the failure of marriage and the clash of cultures. Jayojit Chatterjee, the protagonist, is a middle-aged divorcee, a Professor of Economics in the American Midwest University. He comes back to Calcutta with his seven-year-old son, Vicky (nicknamed Bonny) much disappointed due to his broken marriage with his wife, Amala. Vicky, who was in his mother’s custody in California, obtaining permission from the American court Jayojit brings him to Calcutta to spend summer holidays with his ageing parents.

Jayojit has every reason to feel unsettled as his Bengali wife, Amala, falls in love with her gynecologist friend, putting Jayojit through a nasty divorce, gains custody of their young son, Bonny, and takes him with her to San Diego. Hence, Jayojit can have Bonny with him only during his school vacation. Jayojit’s mindset is captured impressively in: “Two years after Boney’s birth in March 1987 their love making dried up, almost without their noticing it. At first, they joked about it, she laughing: Think we should get into partner swiping? When Amala took the initiative: what?” (57). Jayojit’s is a love marriage. He loves Amala since his college days and marries her. Unfortunately the love and affection does not last for a long time. “Bonny’d been born, and at that time
there had been a cutting off of sexual activity. Instead, when they had time, they would go to parks and sit on benches, admire the fall’s redness that hung about the trees like an aura, talk about” unwanted things (103). Until the birth of Bonny, he and Amala had been passionate and seemingly loving. “Then unfamiliarity set in, though no one else would notice it, and they got used to even that. The child, instead of bringing them together, actually enabled them to separate into their own spheres of desire and loneliness” (57). Jayojit’s loss of the pleasures of conjugal life is not clearly mentioned in the novel. By doing this, perhaps Amit Chaudhury is signaling the arrival of A New World- a world where human ties are fragile and are no longer deep rooted.

Jayojit and Amala had married eleven years ago; eleven years anseven month precisely… It hadn’t been an easy or even a civilized event; the court had ruled that Amala, who’d taken the child with her, would have full custody. His first reaction was that all was lost. Then he’d decided he must fight; not just his studied determination but his natural belligerence had guided him (89).

The reason for the break up of marriage is not clear “they had been divorced at the end of the year before last in a bright, clear Midwestern summer. It hadn’t been an easy or even a civilized event” (89).

Dr. Sen, Admiral’s family doctor and his neighbor is much surprised about Jayojit’s divorce. As he belonged to the older generation, thinks that Jayojit should be the incarnation of this breakdown; such a fine ‘boy’, educated abroad, obviously doing well
in America, earning a sizable amount in dollars, a person who should be eminently desirable, a ‘catch’, not a divorce.

Jayojit’s father, Admiral Chatterjee, and his mother Ruby cancel their trip to the United States when they hear about their son’s divorce. Jayojit is obligated to take Bonny to Calcutta as soon as he can. Jayojit is no more accustomed to spend time alone with his son. The marriage ends after eleven years as differences creep/set in in their conjugal life. She moves out, sues for divorce and gets full custody of Bonny. Jayojit fires his lawyer and hires another to fight the case. Jayojit’s visit to his parents, in Calcutta, outwardly, it appears as a means to bridge the gap of time and distance between children and parents and particularly, grandson and grandparents. His parents have not seen their grandson for some time. And at the same time Jayojit wanted to help and comfort his aging parents who were eager to see their son and grandson. His father, Admiral Chatterjee, a retired personnel in the Indian Army and his wife Ruby are complete strangers and foreign to their son as well as to their grandson. All the four mourn Jayojit’s failed marriage and his parents naturally have their own concerns and worries about him. As far as his son’s broken marriage, his response is one of the total bewilderment at the ‘arrangement’ where his grandson spends part of the year with his father and the rest with his mother and her lover. He thinks that his son is thirty-seven: he is not young, “If he married now, the Admiral believed, it would be like attending to a wound when it was still fresh” (68). He contemplates another “arranged” marriage- “he still didn’t have confidence in love, it was other things- understanding, mutual needs- that held marriage together” (149) in spite of the failure of his first.
Hence, in many ways *A New World* explores family bonds, the strange feelings that crop up because of prolonged absence, cultural collision and so forth. Jayojit knows that his parents are much distressed about his divorce, as they have limited access to their grandchild. Also they are apprehensive about Jayojit’s marrying again. As a result, they have to give up the hope of seeing or having other grandchildren. Bonny cannot speak Bengali as he is born and brought up in America. He simply listens to his grandparents, as an observer rather than a participant, cannot communicate with them and always plays alone with his miniature cars and trucks and his Jurassic Park dinosaurs to pass the time.

In his intolerable anguish, Jayojit cannot sleep properly and becomes restless. He feels humiliated when his wife leaves him for another man-

What he judged most harshly was that Amala should get involved with her gynaecologist, himself a married man. He found Amala’s transformation impossible to understand or interpret; equally strange her claim, ‘He was kind to me’. He’d been with Amala himself to the doctor before Bony’s birth; a not unpleasant-looking man in his forties who was balding slightly, and surely not charismatic; a whiff of bad breath reached Jayojit from his conversation once; difficult, almost impossible, to imagine how any woman in her right mind could prefer him to Jayojit; and later, Jayojit had said as much to the Admiral (57).

Jayojit’s passive attitude might have disturbed his wife, amala. He does not show any interest in his conjugal life. Perhaps it might be the reason she gets attracted towards the other man, doctor. To forget his worries, Jayojit takes leave from California to spend
the summer with his parents in Calcutta. Amit Chaudhuri employs both art and risk in A New World mirroring Jayojit's somnolence, the story fades away at times; reflecting the painful memory that pierce the lethargy, nails through a fakir's mattress- the intnsity of the summer of Calcutta and the year-round realities at his temporary home in Calcutta.

Despite its emotional or sentimental events, A New World is a dull and slow paced novel. Amit Chaudhuri depicts the routine, monotonous and mundane life of the aged parents of Jayojit. However, to Jayojit his hometown, Calcutta promises respite and comfort. To overcome the boredom, his parents are addicted to television serials- soap-opera romances. When they come to know about their son’s divorce, his over-weight and failings, they switch-off the Television. Chaudhuri’s realistic story is as engrossing as the novels of the Magic Realism dominating the Indian English novels of the twenty-first century. Chaudhuri not only captures the essence of life in the upper-middle-class Calcutta society, its nostalgia, and its inherent culture, but also through his protagonist, Jayojit reveals what it means to be an exile and even more fundamentally what it means to be a human being. However, days pass by monotonously without any significant events. Every day is much like another day. The flash backs are not coherent, the emotions expressed by the characters too appear to make the readers feel for them, and ultimately the reader feels disappointed. The events that happen during Jayojit’s stay in Calcutta are not connected properly. Chaudhuri hardly gives any information why Amala dislikes and leaves Jayojit. Nowhere Chaudhuri gives a convincing reason for their separation.
The title of the novel provides room to be interpreted in a number of ways. It is an indicator to move into a new world leaving behind one’s past world. With the messiness of divorce behind him, Jayojit can get on with the rest of his life, although his time in Calcutta is one of painful and remorse. He languishes in the heat and dust, and his son develops cough and fever. It is very difficult for him to pass time in Calcutta which is tedious, moves slowly, yet Jayojit clearly sees his stay there as the beginning of a new phase/world in his life.

Most events of dramatic significance in the life of the diasporic protagonist, Jayojit- the elopement of his wife with her gynecologist, their uncivil divorce in American Court, the acrimonious custody battle over their only son take place have all taken place before the novel begins. The very matter of fact narrative of a rather uneventful annual visit of the expatriate son, Jayojit and Vikram to Calcutta to visit their aged parents.

A New World documents the minute details such as, Jayojit’s son, Bonny’s playing with his miniature dolls, his father Admiral Chatterjee’s checking on his investments and his afternoons naps, his health, his mother’s preparation of food, and complaints about her maid-servant, his own worries about his and Bonny’s future. His neighbors’ television sounds, the sound of air conditioner, eating luchis, meeting relatives, his acquaintances, going on a few small outings with his son, wandering on the streets of Calcutta, and ‘the swamp heat of Calcutta’ have been captured minutely and candidly by Amit Chaudhuri. His parents also have their own worries and anxieties. Jayojit’s long absence in India and his returning home is of cultural collision in general.
At the end of the novel, Jayojit finds himself making pleasant conversation with a young, unattached American woman on the plane. But no new start is hinted at: "He felt not the slightest attraction towards her, and was reassured to sense that she probably felt none towards him" (198). A New World begins with the arrival of Jayojit and Bonny at his parents’ apartment and ends with their sitting in the plane from Dhaka to New York.

Thus, the novel provides a glimpse of the disintegration of family system and also explores the family bond from diverse cultural context. The conflict between generations and cultures are unmistakably sign of a dynamic society which is under the transformation. A New World provides a peep into India from an immigrant’s perspective. Chaudhuri documents the declining of social, familial, and cultural values in the Indian family structure. One of the conspicuous aspects of social life of India is the co-existence of many cultures. As it is a multi-cultural society is trying to homogenization of cultures. It is a potential challenge for any contemporary writers. Writers like Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth Amit Chaudhuri and Navtez Sarna can be called trans-cultural writers easily transcend the geographical boundaries of India.

**Githa Hariharan’s Fugitive Histories (2009)**

Githa Hariharn is known for her experimental novels, won the Commonwealth Prize for her debut novel The Thousand Faces of Night in 1993. She writes boldly on contemporary issues such as communal disharmony, jingoistic nationalism, gender, racial, academic issues and so on. Fugitive Histories is written against the backdrop of Godhra incident of 2002, which took the toll of thousands of people who belonged to both the communities- the Hindus and the Muslims. It gives a long list of reports,
interviews, eyewitness accounts and the author’s own impressions of Godhra and Ahmedabad and the situation after the Gujarat riots. The novel revolves around Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Delhi and presents the bare legacy of communal prejudice and its adverse effect on the lives of the common people in the post independent India. Githa Hariharan deals with the impact of ‘otherness’ through the central characters. She expresses her distress over the adverse effects of overt nativism and colonialism on the fragile human psyche. The novel is unique as a woman novelist, is dealing with a serious and sensitive issue like religious fundamentalism and ethnic violence.

The title of the novel *Fugitive Histories*, is quite symbolic. The major characters feel alienated in the country which they have made their home. Besides the characters are sensitive beings. After the communal clash that took place in 2002 in Godhra, Gujarat enhances the feeling of ‘others’ among Asad, Mala, Sara, Samar, and Yasmin, who are the victims of communal violence and all confront the problem of identity in their own country. Mala, a South Indian Brahmin woman loves and marries a Muslim, Asad, an artist, who dies. Mala struggles to live without Asad and the pangs of his memories. When she opens an old trunk of Asad, she sees his sketchbooks and paintings which remind her of secular minded husband. As a widow, she has come to terms with the doing away or being defined as “Asad’s wife” for which she has to know who he was, and what happened to him. Being a woman, she has lived her life in a submissive fashion to the male dominance in her village home where she never went out of home until she marries Asad. Her husband is an idealist, secular minded and revolutionary thinker who suffers from the ‘otherness’ and ‘double consciousness’. He marries Mala against the wishes of his parents, leads a happy married life with two children. His children call him “the
laughing magician” (47). The Gujarat carnages in 2002, change Asad’s ideologies. He experiences pangs of identity crisis. When he has to face the reality, his notion of nation is shattered into pieces. Whenever Sara questions about their identity as Hindu or as Muslim, Asad tells his family, “Don’t be ashamed of who you are. Don’t be ashamed of who you are not” (180).

The socio-cultural conflicts sometimes, in the Indian context, take on a religious colour/shape. Asad finds it difficult to accept the reality that the religious fanatics and funda mentalists have already torn India apart. The Muslim community is targeted and being labelled terrorist and ‘demon Muslims’. This untold plight and mental torture leads Asad to take a stand- “we’ll never be the same again” (202). He tells his wife with great pain,

All said and done, you can continue to be what you are. What you have chosen to be, an ex-South Indian Brahmin. Don’t you see, there’s no room for an ex-Muslim any more. Whatever I am, whatever I believe and however I live, I am an M. Samar too is just another Muslim, a potential terrorist (206).

In a way, Asad is transformed into a “…cranky, quarrelsome, unshaven, unbathed” (100) person.

Asad’s “double consciousness” paves way for his “otherness” that shatters his psyche. This consciousness in him makes him secretive and his son, Samar calls him an ‘old romantic’ which wounds his psyche. The taunting words-“devilish Muslim” makes him and his Muslim friends shrink. All the Muslim characters in the novel undergo
identity crisis owing to their hybrid nature/birth. Thus, Hariharan portrays the ambivalent nature and plight of hybrid parents. Mala tries to find it difficult to answer the question and the justification they (her children) make. She tries to find out the reasons as to why Samar wants to be a Jihadi: “She’ll sort out the bills. Parking slips and boarding passes she finds in the waste paper basket, anything she can fish out and examine, any evidence that Samar was really there” (212). Samar gives up the liberal ideals that his parents had tried to inculcate in him, grows beard and finds a superficial bonding with Islamic fundamentalism. He wants to be an angry young man as he cannot bear the ‘double identity’ and decides to leave India for U.S. to become a jihadi just to establish his identity as a Muslim. He is clear in his mind and he does not want to be a Hindu.

In *Fugitive Histories*, Githa Hariharan strikes a note of optimism through women characters- Mala and Sara accept their hybrid nature and are proud of being Muslims as well as Hindus- the duel identity. This saves them from suffering as being minorities in a Hindu dominated society. They are more secular in their attitude towards both the religions. Mala and Sara are more practical than Asad and Samar in dealing with the emotional and communal issues. Mala and Sara are capable of coming to terms with the stark realities of life. This saves them from being victims. Sometimes their double identities trouble them when the Hindu-Muslim rift arises, every now and then in India, widens the gap between couples whose marriage is interreligious. Mala is different from Asad when she cannot bear the torment of his memories and she throws two of his paintings into the pond. This shows that she can live independently without Asad.

*Fugitive Histories* largely focuses on Sara, a half-Hindu-half-Muslim young woman from Bombay, an NGO worker aspiring to make a documentary film. She goes to
Ahmedabad on a script-writing assignment, after a couple of years of the Godhra massacre to document the stories of Muslims who were affected by the carnage in 2002. Sara, like her mother, has a positive outlook towards life and is practical in her thinking. Though she undergoes the mental trauma of the ‘otherness’ being a daughter of a Hindu and Muslim, she feels proud of her dual birth. She calls and introduces herself as “Sara Vidyanathan Zaidi Shaw” (40). Her experiences in Ahmedabad change her attitude, where she understands the real world when she meets Yasmin, one of the victims. When she meets Muslim victims, and hears them the inhuman treatment meted out to them, affects her greatly. Accepting her identity as both Muslim and Hindu, she tells her friends “I have Muslim relatives and Hindu relatives. I’m neither” (167). It gives her great confidence to face the challenges. She documents the other Muslims’ experiences and miseries. She questions herself- “Can your voice ever be theirs?” And who are you to speak for them?” (192). She takes a sensible stance not to write anything whatever she has documented because she fears about the erasure of her identity. Instead, she wants to help the victims of the carnage and she does it for both “Samar and Mala’s sake” (234). Sara does not retort or react like Samar and Asad. Thus, Mala and Sara remain as examples/models of the “ethnic Universalism”. If one takes look at a history, India has survived, sustained and witnessed many foreign invasions and has developed a culture of sustenance. In a way, India has embraced “ethnic universalism”.

Another important character in Fugitive Histories is, Yasmin- a seventeen-year-old Muslim girl, one of the potential victims of the post-Godhra and Ahmedabad riots. She is a survivor of the riots, who is struggling to live up to the multiple pressures she faces. Once a happy girl, enjoying a peaceful life with her family, she under goes a crisis
when her brother Akbar is reported missing, perhaps, presumed dead. Her life becomes unbearable and she confronts the Hindu religious fanatics. Her family is looked down upon as the ‘other’. It is a traumatic experience to the young innocent girl and it causes tremendous damage to Yasmin and to her family. She cannot write the Board Examination. Her dream of going to college fails. She takes refuge in praying to Allah. She is afraid of the dark and whenever she has to go out of home she is advised by her parents to be careful, avoid deserted roads and also the crowded roads as: “it means running, hiding, keeping her heart quiet and still because there is someone after her and he may hear it… they may have tilaks on their foreheads” (123). She undergoes this type of turmoil being a Muslim. With all haunting memories, Yasmin succeeds in her life, escaping even a rape attempt. When she gets through her twelfth exam, it gives her new hopes and her mother also encourages her to go to the college. Thus, she fulfills her long cherished dream of carrying out her higher education. Githa Hariharan is optimistic in that she wants every woman should be like Ammi, Yasmin’s mother bold and positive towards life, and keep moving on. Mala, Sara and Yasmin resist the impact of ethnic violence as Ammi does. The women characters stand different from that of Asad and Samar who could not resist the ‘otherness’ in the society.

The horrifying genocide of Muslims that took place in Gujrat in 2002 has been a recent testing-ground for Indians and their commitment to a secular polity, and has further exacerbated the gap between the nation and the state in contemporary India. Most importantly, it opens up the question of who is to define the nation at a time of increasing religious polarization, not only in India, but also in the public spheres around the world. In 2002, in Gujarat, nearly about 2000 Muslims were massacred by mobs, the blame
being that there was a clear connivance/involvement of the police and the state
government. The riots were supposedly a reaction to the burning of a train full of right
wing Hindus, the Karsevaks, on the part of Muslims, though there are suspicions that this
was merely an excuse. The news papers reported that the mob knew exactly who to
target, the complicity of police, and the damage to the Muslim houses and properties. The
print as well as the visual media highlighted the irresponsibility of the State Government
machinery towards its Muslim citizens. This genocide was being organized
systematically it coincided with the tenth anniversary of the Babri Masque demolition
Episode in 1992. It is apt to quote the lines of Qazi Sattar’ line “communalism is a many-
armed octopus… when attacked, squirts ink to obscure the vision of its assailant, the
communalist spreads canards which put attackers off his trail and make his victim let
down their guards” (qtd. in The End of India. 79).

The Gujarat riots is the main focus of Fugitive Histories, where the novel delves
further into the past and tries to trace the genesis of the animosity between the Hindu and
the Muslim communities. Fugitive Histories seems to suggest that it is easy to create a
situation where people lose their bearings, hunt down those who are perceived as alien,
and work to deepen existing conflicts. Samar stands as a testimony for this. The frustrated
young man gives up the virtues that his parents had tried to inculcate in him, grows a
beard and finds a superficial bonding with Islamic fundamentalism. Majority of the
Indian English women novelists portray women characters as struggling to break out
from the traditional patterns of sexuality and sensuality and to discover themselves as
human beings capable of playing a positive role in the modern society. Different women
writers opt for different role in the strategies to cope with the situation in which their women characters are trapped.

In spite of few novels, which present clichéd situations and solutions, a large number of significant writings by women or on women appear to be thematically interrelated. Focusing on the social, political, psychological and cultural complexities of female subjectivity, the works also explore and scrutinize women’s space and place in the sexist culture and patriarchal hegemony. They expose the attitude of the society and male towards woman is based on false and ostentatious construction of the male domination, the absurd and artificial polarities between male and female world.

The new woman in the contemporary society directs her attack not against the institution of marriage, but against the inequality and injustice that is forced upon woman by men using the institution of marriage. Indian culture and literature, religion and rituals have plot together to project marriage as the centre of a woman’s life, without which she is deprived of social identity and a reason for existence. This patriarchal dangerous idea has struck deep into the psyche of the Indian woman. For centuries, women have been sustaining physical and mental brutalization, indifference and non-communication, scorn and contempt by the patriarchic society. Education and career opportunities have opened out hitherto forbidden territory and barred gates, instilling the confidence to walk out on failed marriages. The novel attempts a re-definition of a woman’s selfhood in an environment where age-old patriarchal assumptions clash with the liberal ideas of individuation. The novel deal with the ordinary middle-class family’s preoccupations and vicissitudes provide a realistic social commentary or disintegrating family values and ties.
Manju Kapoor deals with the important issues of the times where the description of love, sex, marriage is very bold and unconventional. The novelist depicts that marriage as a social institution has lost its sanctity and relevance. Lack of faith in the traditional customs results in declining moral values become is one of the main themes discussed in the novel. Manju Kapoor is one of the modern writers who challenge the traditional and family values in her novels, especially from a woman’s perspective.

To sum up, examining the novels of the three major Indian novelists in English, namely, Amit Chaudhuri, Manju Kapur and Githa Hariharan one can see that the position of women in Indian social structure appears as being marginalized. All the three writers have however created women protagonists who have tried their best to liberate themselves from the trap of patriarchal culture despite being subjugated and dominated by male chauvinism. These writers have exposed the existing irrationality in the patriarchal hegemony in respect of women’s status in the society. Through their expositions- the ills in the society, the novelists have tried to explore feminist consciousness thereby aiming at bringing in new social order. Women protagonists in these novels do not accept the definition given to them by patriarchy. As their identity suffers from a male bias due to male dominance, they seek to demolish the existing myths of womanhood as prescribed by the phallocentric ideology. These new women, Nisha in _Home_, Mala and Sara in _Fugitive Histories_ are obsessed with the total fulfillment rather than accepting the submissive domesticity. In their attempt to raise the consciousness of women, these novelists provide a glimpse into the female psyche and deal with the full range of women experiences. Demolishing the existing myths, they have tried to bring in
a new social order which is congenial to the physical, social and psychic well-being of women. Such a social order perhaps might liberate women from subjugation and exploitation; and force the male dominated society to consider them as autonomous authentic “women selves” rather than imprisoning their “women thought” in a patriarchal framework. By this, women perhaps will be in a position to lead their lives with dignity and enjoy the full right of their free conscience to create their own values. Such change will enable women to share power and privilege equally with men; and man-woman relationship will have a significant positive stride ahead. Independent women can think that marriage can provide them an identity; at the same time, it also prevents a woman to attain autonomy. Thus, the novels discussed are critique of the existing patriarchal culture, which obstructs the growth, and freedom of talented woman. Through this women protagonists and characters, the novelists are trying to build an androgynous society where men/women live in harmony respecting each other. The Indian English women novelists present women as struggling to break out from the traditional patterns of sexuality and sensuality and to discover themselves as human beings capable of playing a constructive/emancipator role in the development of society.

**Manju Kapur’s *Home (2006)***

Manju Kapur is an important Indian woman novelist writing in English today. She is a professor of English, teaching at Miranda House College New Delhi. Her third novel, *Home* presents the quiet world of a joint-family and its disintegration of traditional values in the modern society. *Home* is a brisk and strangely captivating account of three generations of Banwari Lal Family. At the outset, the novel seems as an ordinary middle class family melodrama. The routine family affairs such as the family weddings, deaths,
arranged marriages, love affairs, cooking, bickering in a traditional joint family of India are candidly captured by Manju Kapur.

Home documents the vicissitudes of three generations of Banwari Lal family, he is a businessman, and a patriarch, is a believer of the traditional value system- ‘men work out of the home, women within’. Banwari Lal family migrates from Pakistan to India with his pregnant wife, seven-year-old son, and a two years old daughter during the partition of the Indian sub-continent. With the help of his wife’s jewels, he starts cloth business and purchases a house in Karol Bagh, Delhi. He is determined to succeed in the cloth business in the new place and gets prosper.

The early exponents of the novel, such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Krupabai Sattiaynandan, Sevantibai Nikambe, followed by Nayantara Shagal, Kamala Markandeya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and others have evolved masterly plots based on family dynamics and female psychology. These novelists attempt to deconstruct the hidden patriarcha ideologies of the society that mould a woman, and making a frontal attack on long-revered traditional assumptions and stereotypes about woman is common in the contemporary women-oriented Indian English novels. Manju Kapoor and Githa Hariharan dismantle the prevalent modes of socialization that always intend to construct an ideal woman, mother, wife and so on. Their focus is on certain experiences unique to woman that have not received earlier the attention they deserved. Many woman writers in English, who are not conscious adherents to feminist ideology, unobtrusively pose questions about the repressive forces attempting to shape woman’s existence, contest the traditional assumptions about the female nature and her roles and suggest new pattern of existence.
Manju Kapur belongs to the tradition of writers who have produced powerful, disconcerting narratives centered upon the submerged realities of the Indian family. Since the age of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, the family has held the centre stage in the Indian imagination and the novelists both male and female have offered great impetus to countless literary narratives. Today, Indian women novelists have carved a niche for themselves in the national and international literary scene, and yet familial issues continuous to be a primary theme of the majority of the novels today. Manju Kapoor’s *Home* powerfully portrays the familial, complicated and complex relationships among parents and children. It gives an account of the shifting complexities of the social reform and modernity as experienced by wives, daughters and widows in Hindu families that were attempting to define (and stabilize a new *Hindu* identity). The novel is as much about the (historical experience) modernity of female education and emancipation in a middle-class *Hindu* family in the contemporary urban India. It is also about the affective texture of filial relationships, particularly those between different generations of women in an ‘undivided *Hindu* family which is drastically changing. The liberating move such as higher education for the daughters of the family generate anxieties, deconstructs and carefully re-constructs the domestic and sexual boundaries; they also evoke conflicts within the idea of emancipation. The contemporary Indian English novelists question patriarchal assumptions and perhaps they are under the influence of the feminist ideology of the 70s, when womanpower is foregrounded. Postmodern novelists subvert the conventional discourses and relations of patriarchal power. The position of women becomes more central theme in these novels, which problematize issues such as marriage, motherhood, inter-caste and inter-religious marriages.
Banwarilal’s family consists of two sons and a daughter. His daughter, Sunita is married to a man of dubious credentials, a drunkard who murders her—leaving behind a son, Vicky. The Banwarilal family has to take care of the unwanted and uncared Vicky. Banwarilal’s two subservient sons, Yashpal and Pye Lal help their father in business. Yashpal falls in love with a customer of his shop, a beautiful woman, Sona. He blackmails his father to get married to this woman saying that he would leave the shop and remain as a bachelor. But the traditional family head, Banwarilal does not approve the marriage because:

They were traditional business people. In order to remain financially secure, and ensure family harmony that underpinned that security, marriages were arranged with great care. The bride had to bring dowry, come from the same background, and understand the value of togetherness. Falling in love was detrimental to these interests (3).

Sona is from a middle-class family and is not as rich as Yashpal’s family and the marriage is performed with a lot of promise and apprehension. Nisha is born after ten years. Sona’s sister Rupa, who is not fair as her sister, marries to a clerk in the Government office of no consequence, though she is happy, she remains childless. The second son Pye Lal marries Susheela, a graduate from a rich family; with a handsome dowry along with the Refrigerator, cooler, furniture etc. as the dowry which compensates the family to forget the scar on her face and she is blessed with two sons. Sona has a girl child whereas Susheela is blessed with two sons who would carry on the legacy of the family which prompts Sona to envy Susheela’s family.
The plot gets a twist after the death of the benevolent old patriarch, Banwari Lal. Familial problems creep in on the second generation of the family. The sisters are selfish, the husbands are lethargic and the children are self-absorbed. This second generation does not owe any respect to the first generation lady- Banwarilal’s wife- Maji. Sona has to face problems when Vicky, comes to stay with the Banwari Lal’s family as he has no mother. Vicky scares Nisha of incestuous abuse and sexual harassment. When Sona comes to know about it, Nisha is sent to her aunt’s house to avoid Vicky. Rupa takes the responsibility of Nisha as she does not have children of her own. Rupa’s moral support helps Nisha to come out of the trauma. Nisha undergoes a series of trauma at a tender age. She exhibits signs of emotional distress at the secret sexual abuse by her cousin, Vicky. Thereafter, most of her life passes under the shadow of her aunt Rupa. After the death of her grandfather, Nisha is called back to her home. She gets a seat in a moderate college for her B.A. The familial problems and her mother’s taunts reflect in her studies. While travelling in a bus to the college, she falls in love with a lower caste boy, Suresh, who is studying Engineering in ‘Khalsa College”. After this, her life changes to a great extent. She turns out to be a modern girl starts going to beauty parlours tries to shed her old looks. Her mother gets worried and shouts at Nisha “Who gave you permission to cut your hair, suddenly you have become so independent, you decide things on your own, where did you find the money, the time, the beauty parlous, where did you find all these things?” (95). Nisha appears to move away from her mother, Sona. In a way, she is different from the other women in her family, whether it is through her studying English Literature in a university or daring to dress fashionably and taking pride in her appearance, falling in love with a boy or starting a business of her own. She cannot marry
her boyfriend, Suresh because the conventional/patriarchal family does not approve of her marriage with a lower caste boy. Suresh who had assured Nisha that he would marry her against all odds betrays her at the time of crisis. He proves to be a coward and hypocrite. Nisha does her graduation. She had to sacrifice the boy whom she loved for three long years for the sake of her family in order to make them happy. Despite the fact that Nisha’s parents, Yashpal and Sona had a love marriage, they still refuse to accept her proposal of a love-cum-arranged marriage.

As there is a generation gap between the generations, there is definitely a clash, a conflict of ideas and values. But in reality, bitterness, resentment, dislike and envy are the dominant feelings among their relationship. The mothers’ support helps the daughters to overcome conflicts and face the problems of the society with a positive outlook. It is because of their similarity and bonding that the daughters struggle all their lives to separate themselves from their mothers. Mothers want their daughters to be like them but the daughters want to learn from their own experiences and attain identity of their own. This crisis of identity among the daughters leads to conflicts and strains in their relationships. Thus, the very course of Nish’s life changes due to her mother, Sona’s patriarchal attitude.

Nisha, the protagonist is bold and beautiful fights for her identity, raises her voice against the traditions and customs of a patriarchal society. The dilemma in the life of Nisha starts arising because of her education and modern outlook especially with women. Education brings a sense of individuality and awakening among women and their rights. Such an impact is clearly depicted in the novel through Nisha. This kind of upheaval in a woman’s life gives rise to many conflicts like tradition and modernity, self-effacement
and self-assertion, and economic independence and so on. *Home* is a revolt against the age-old traditions, the quest for one’s identity, familial relationships, and problems of marriages, conflict between the older and the younger generations, patriarchy and so on. Kapoor has chosen the time when political, economic, social, and cultural changes are taking place in the country. So it has become necessary for a woman to redefine her new role and determine its parameters for her society.

Another approach to women and career are seen through the character of Rupa in the novel. When she is unable to bear children she devotes, her entire time and energy into her pickle business. In a way, she finds fulfillment in her life even without children. She gets prosperous and earns more than what her husband, Prem Nath earns. It is through her career that she is able to attain happiness without being able to give birth to a child. These ideals of career and education are bestowed on Nisha when she stays in her aunt’s house. Even after moving back to her parents, Nisha, eventually decides to pursue her career. This is because of the influence of Rupa and Prem Nath. Her stay with her aunt gives her self-confidence.

Ian Watt is of the opinion that “the relationship between the sexes was undergoing a change. The concept of romantic love was displacing that of courtly love and marriage was slowly becoming a matter of individual choice rather than social obligation” (Ian Watt 241). Nisha comes close to the western concept of the ‘new woman’ in her courage struggling against all odds in her life and in trying to find a place in a society which refuses to recognize her merits. Nisha loves Suresh and they roam around the city. He does some sexual advances in a rented isolated room. Confused Nisha asks her aunt Rupa, “What do you think of love marriages?” Rupa, who believed in the institution of
marriage, convinces Nisha by saying, “They are very bad, and requires too much adjustment. (195).” When Nisha’s parents come to know about her affair with a boy who is not equal in status and belongs to a lower caste, they refuse to give him their daughter. Suresh a coward, non-committing and was easily-‘bought off’ keeps quite. Nisha finds Suresh is nothing different from Vicky, who is weak and uses woman for his fantasies. It looks like Suresh does not want to marry Nisha, he just wanted to use her for his sexual urge. Nisha is an ‘ill-starred wench’; is Mangli (with an inauspicious astronomical sign). She suffers a lot than any other women suffer in the novel. She becomes an enigma to her parents. Because they have to search a groom to Nisha, to marry her off who is also to be Manglik. She has to face all sorts of restrictions being a woman and also of her bad astronomical sign. Regularly she has to perform the Pujas and observe certain religious obligations. Her dominating mother always restricts her activities. Suppression by her mother makes her suffer both physically as well as mentally, which leads her to suffer a skin disorder, Eczema. Her beauty declines due to frustration and humiliation by her mother. The family members do not encourage her to do anything instead; they discourage and suppress her feelings. Her father, Yahshpal suggests her to work in a School to teach small children. Soon she quits the teaching job too. Desperately she tells her father, “I want to leave this house. There is nothing for me here… I want to go to Ashram. At least there I can live with dignity and respect”. (281). Nisha wants to assert her identity at home. She does not want to lead a confined life at home where there is no freedom for the individual. With the help of her father, she starts cloth business. Another humiliating incident that happens at home that hurts her sensitive self. Her younger brother Raju gets married. His mother Sona does not ask Raju’s opinion and simply fixes
the marriage with a rich family girl. Her attitude is, “Raju was allowed a glimpse of a
girl, though his opinion was the least important. What did the boy know of life, that he
should be allowed decisions? (249). When Raju’s wife Pooja becomes pregnant, once
again Nisha is isolated from the family as they concentrate on Pooja. Her parents’ serious
search for a “Manglic boy” ends with Arvind, a businessman, a widower who is thirty
plus. Horoscopes match and Nisha gets married as per the wishes of her parents. She
accepts to this proposal because Arvind appears to be calm and reasonable, better than
her former lover, Suresh. She too puts a condition that she wants to continue her business,
which he agrees to and shifts to a place nearby her shop. Nisha thinks that her parent’s
duty is to get her married off, irrespective of the status and wealth. Her mother Sona tells
her sister, “My duty is done, and now I can die in peace, Rupa” (305). Sona finds
fulfillment in marrying off her daughter. But Nisha has to live with the passive groom
who tells her that, “I have to marry and we are not interested in such thing. My mother
needs someone in the house” (303). Yet Nisha agrees to marry him despite his passive
attitude towards her. It is a registered marriage with no luxury and less preparation. The
girl’s family hosts a grand party in a moderate hotel. On the other hand, it is a marriage
for convenience. Her mother-in-law gradually objects to her continuing the business from
her parent’s house. Gradually the business also slips into the hands of Pooja as Nisha
becomes pregnant. As there is no love and expectation in their relationship, Nisha gets
frustrated. Nisha being educated is an aware of her priorities in life. She changes her life
according to the changing circumstances. When the introvert, Aravind, does not speak to
her and responds her love she says, “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’ (330). But her family is overwhelmed that she is carrying twins. Nisha appears to have attained fulfillment after the birth of a boy and a girl. ‘Her duty was over- God had been kind, however hard it was to believe.’ (335).

Nisha finds happiness when she readjusts her expectations, giving life a second best chance. Her struggles as a Manglik, as a subjugated female-child in the family, the sexual harassment by her cousin in her childhood, failure of love and her late marriage to a middle-class man do not allow her to be independent in the society. She shows resistance to all these obstacles which gives her courage to face the world. Though Nisha struggles hard to be an independent individual in the phallocentric society, she fails to attain it. She becomes a woman of olden days as Manu’s dictum: a woman protected by her father during her childhood, by her husband during youth and by her sons during old age. A woman is not fit for freedom. The novelist fails to give an identity to her protagonist. As an individual, Nisha cannot lead an independent life. Her childhood is controlled by her parents and her youth by Vicky and Suresh who sexually exploit her and as she marries and becomes pregnant she has to quit her business to look after her children. This kind of subjugation and condition of a woman is a common phenomenon in the traditional Indian society. But contrary to expectations, a close study of some of the contemporary Indian women novelists reveal that though there is an apparent change in degree, the representations of women largely suffer from a tendency to recline into passive acceptance. Nisha accepts it and lives. The girl-child, gender discrimination, inequality in the social status, marital problems, early age sexual experiences, predicaments of the orphans and so on are discussed candidly by the novelist. “The more
women assert themselves as human beings, the more the marvelous quality of the ‘other’ die in them” (Beauvoir 133). In a way, Kapur’s protagonist, Nisha is both modern and Indian- calm, composed and complete unlike the aggressive protagonists of Manju Kapoor’s other novels such as Virmathi of Difficult Daughter (1998) and Astha of A Married Woman. (2002).

Manju Kapur deals with the position of women as a daughter, a wife and a mother. Her female protagonists are drawn from middle class who challenge the existing socio-cultural patriarchal system. Her characters are educated in the society, modern, intelligent, bold and assertive. Even though they try to transcend the social hierarchy by dismantling it, they often undergo serious psychological traumas in the absence of an alternative, planned feminist ideology that may give them freedom, security and peace of mind. Manju Kapur’s Home focuses on the education and empowerment of women. The life of Nisha, the protagonist, shows that mere education and economic independence/empowerment are not enough to break the patriarchal norms/hegemony. What is necessary is the determination and strong will power to assert one’s self. Kapur however empowers her protagonist Nisha in giving a strong resistance to patriarchy by denouncing the prescribed norms of a society. Manju Kapur’s basic approach to a woman’s life in her novels is to liberate them from the oppressive measures of male-hegemony. The protagonists of her novels have to sustain by physical, emotional and psychological sufferings. Finally, they attain their long cherished freedom to a great extent.

Indian society which is traditional, subordinates individual freedom to group or social role expectations. As a result, women’s individual self does not get completely
recognized, and self-effacement is the only course left to her. The new awakening among educated women, as depicted in the novels after the 80s, has led to the emergence of a neo-woman who re-defines her role and determines the parameters of becoming an integral part of family and society. The contemporary Indian society (after 1980s) discarded the notion that the Indian family is a centre of absolute marital fidelity. The fragile nature of familial bonds, conflicts that mark child-parent relationships, the disintegrating joint family system, and the tension between old and new generations are reflected clearly in the novels. The age-old conventions, the modernity and generation gap have contributed much to the conflict between generations.

The novel, Home, upholds the issue of marriage as necessary for the uneducated woman. Sona’s love marriage to Yashpal reinforces this belief as Sona ends her education in order to marry Yashpal. Nisha’s aunt Rupa chooses her career. Nisha choosing her own career becomes successful. She decides that she wants a career, but it is her father who is a conservative, advises his daughter to be a teacher, since he deems this an acceptable and respectable career for an unmarried woman. Nisha, however, chooses to be a businesswoman and requests her father till he allows her to be one. Nisha’s choice to give up her career, however, seems largely influenced by her husband and mother-in-law, who force her to be at home as she was pregnant and also she feels guilty of not respecting the family and the future of her children. Although, Nisha says it is her desire to renounce her business, at the end of the novel, she does not really seem to have a choice. She feels that she is caught between the duties of her family and her business, and once she gives birth, she decides to give up her business as a means to release the tension she feels.
In the traditional Indian society, women are often not allowed to choose their careers. Careers can also guarantee emotional and financial independence. In *Home*, Nisha is very unhappy with her lack of independence—emotional, financial and even moral support. Unmarried and likely to remain so for some time due to astrological signs and a case of psoriasis, she feels pent up, useless and depressed among her family. It is only when she takes up a career as a fashion designer; she is able to feel emotionally independent, confident, and satisfied with her life. Finally, she is being able to feel useful and productive for something other than being pretty. It helps her to forego her career and to lead a happy married life.

Educated Indian women face many challenges regarding their marriage and career. India’s patriarchal culture views woman as a wife, caretaker and a homemaker. These expectations have positioned women in a subservient role in marriage and career which affect their lives. In a changing situation, however, there is resistance and often resistance from society and the families of a married woman. Due to these expectations, a woman’s first priority is her home and family. Women are not encouraged even today in traditional families to pursue career, because they will ultimately become mothers and their responsibility will take them away from their career.

In Manju Kapur’s *Home*, the Indian family is meticulously examined. The Indian familial system invariably is an extended family that always grapples with the problems like security, searching for suitable brides, grooms, procreating and so on. This is in fact central to the life of every Indian and provides ample material to the Indian novelists to explore. “Home” symbolizes security, safety, harmony and a sense of belongingness and above all, assertion of one’s identity and rootedness. Home is a place where individuals
feel free and safe to perform all activities and at the same time one is controlled under social norms and traditional beliefs is supposedly applicable for the female residing in that family.

From this point, Manju Kapur unravels the existing oppressive systems of patriarchy and the status of woman in the Indian society. In a way, she is preoccupied with the personal lives of her protagonist, a woman. She also addresses the social issues in relation to a woman’s life through the character of Nisha. Manju Kapur focuses more on the social background and socio-political-economic-and cultural concerns and the inner sensibility of her protagonists in her Home. Kapur has a strong feminist point of view with the genuine focus on the “concept of new woman” and the complex issues of her relationship with man, marriage, disturbed adolescence, sexual discrimination, interspection, depemdemcy syndrome, identity crisis and above all meaning and purpose of life. Home no doubt is a critique on the existing patriarchal culture of India which is an obstacle to the growth and freedom of women. Manju Kapur deals with the position of a woman as a daughter, a wife and a mother. Her female protagonist, Nisha hailing from a middle class status challenges the existing socio-cultural and patriarchal system. Being educated, modern, intelligent, bold and assertive in outlook, Nisha tries to transcend the social hierarchy by resisting it and often undergoes serious psychological traumas in the absence of an alternative, planned feminist ideology that may give her freedom, security and peace of mind. But she ultimately returns to the traditional mode of life, perhaps thinking that “home” is where she may get peace and space. Her life shows that mere education and economic independence are not enough to break the patriarchal norms but
the determination and the strong power and to assert one’s self identity is the key to success for a woman in particular and humans in general.

*Home* is a woman centred novel protesting against the phallocentric patriarchal Indian culture. The male world imposes control on a woman. Traditions and customs provide moral sanctions for inhuman and cruel impositions to disempower woman. Kapur however in *Home* attempts tp empower her protagonist Nisha to give a resistance to patriarchy by denouncing the prescribed norms of a society. She asserts her womanhood boldly because she is iconoclastic and modern in her approach to life. Despite being betrayed by her lover, Suresh, whom she calls “eternal fucker”, a coward and a hypocrite, and her own family members, her feminine sesibility could not be surprised. Through her love for freedom and sustenance to face the challenges, she realizes the immense potentialities of woman, her unique position in the family and society.

**Conclusion**

In *Home* one can see that the position of a woman in the Indian social structure is that of a marginal. Manju Kapur depicts her protagonist who tries to liberate herself from the trap of patriarchal Indian culture despite being subjugated and dominated by male chauvinism. The novelist exposes the existing irrationality in the patriarchal set up vis-a-vis of woman’s status in the society. In this fashion, Manu Kapur, Githa Hariharan, amit Chaudhury expose the existing heirarchical patriarchal structure and its prerogatives. The protagonists like Nisha in *Home* and Mala, Sara in *Fugitive histories* and Amala in *A New World* do not accept the definition of patriarchy. Instead, they try to dismantle the existing myths of womanhood as prescribed by the phallocentric ideology. Thus, these novelists have attempted to raise feminist consciousness thereby aiming at bringing in a
new social order and well-being of woman. Such a social order will no doubt liberate a woman from subjugation and exploitation and consider her as equal to man. It would help the position of woman to lead her life with dignity and enjoy the full right of her free conscience to create her own values and androgynous society.

The indefatigable nature of the characters who seek to resolve the incompatibilities is more visible in these novels than the passive acceptance of exploitative relationships between various classes of society. The new protagonist emerges as who affects rather than is affected by the social structure. “The more women assert themselves as human beings, the more the marvelous quality of the ‘other’ die in them” (Simon de Beauvoir 24). Nisha, Mala, Sara, and Amala stand as testimony to this statement. If they were not assertive, they would not survived in the phallocentric society.

Postcolonial/contemporary Indian English novelists show a growing predilection towards westernization, individualism and the nuclear family, homogenization of culture, and the emergence of a bourgeois perspective, indicative of a cultural transformation which seems to sensitize the novelists to confront them through their works. They employ fictional techniques as multiple narrators, use of irony, fantasy and magic realism contribute to the subversive vision of their works, a vision of life that opposes all kinds of hegemonic oppressive systems in the political as well as personal spheres. Irony and fantasy subvert the existing social order by presenting what is lacking in it and engaging in a negative relationship with it. Conversations are employed a plenty to resist the monologic voice of the narrator or the author and for the direct presentation of divergent opinions. What he seems to visualize advocate is a human system based on equitable feeling, love and understanding.
Works Cited


