

POSTMODERN FEMINISM - A JOURNEY FROM NAIVETY TOWARDS SELF ATTAINMENT: A STUDY OF FICTIONAL OEUVRE OF MANJU KAPUR

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on the detailed study of women's movements that mould Indian feminism to different trajectories mainly in the pre- independence and the post- independence periods. This study sets the background of the genesis of women's movements and its subsequent role in the amelioration of the status of Indian women. Pre- independent Indian feminist movement can be traced back to the social reform movements of 1820s and 1850s and 'Gandhian Feminism' of 1920s ((Kumar 67)). The study argues that post – independent India being vested with the advantages of globalization and neoliberalism, witnesses emergence of changing gender roles that calls for understanding a phenomenon of 'new femininities' which is circumscribed by third wave feminism. This trend of emerging 'new femininities' has been further studied at the backdrop of the philosophy of postmodern feminism. The second part of the study reveals that the literary genre particularly novels by women appear not only to be concerned with female struggle for equal rights but also with the inherent conflicts and constraints in implementing these rights in society which still clutches tightly with the traditional patterns. Manju Kapur is a contemporary postmodern Indian woman novelist who through her fictional protagonists addresses the issues faced by women today. The study further explores that despite oppositions from all sides along with countless hurdles, the women of Kapur have learnt not to succumb and in this process they have proceeded towards self realisation and self actualisation. The significance of the present study lies in unraveling the novels of Manju Kapur from the perspective of postmodern feminism. This study will help in formulating a new feminine consciousness in keeping with the changing times by relating the fictional works of Manju kapur to the contemporary realities and pragmatism.

Keywords: Feminism, Women's Movements, Tradition, Modernity, Postmodernism, New Femininities.

Introduction:

The term 'Feminism' brings with it multiple connotations and approach as far as the understanding of the term is concerned. Various approaches can be attached to the study of feminism .e.g., Liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, French Feminism etc. The various approaches led the concept of feminism continually being contested. However the fact that various forms of feminism deals with the privileged status of men and subordinate position of women, is a matter of consensus among all approaches of feminisms. Rosalind Delmar in her article, "What is Feminism" observes:

It is certainly possible to construct a base-line definition of feminism and feminist which can be shared by feminists and non- feminists. Many would agree that at the very least a feminist is someone who holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change (some would say a revolution even) in the social, economic and political order. (Delmar 8)

The study of 'Feminism' evolved as a literary form when educated women, from all age groups belonging to different sections of society, started questioning the inadequate representation they were given in literary texts, and attempted to study and solve various issues from a feminist perspective. It also questions "the lines of power struggle between man and woman" (Nayar 83).

Feminism, in Indian context, is said to be gaining its inspiration from western strands of thoughts. Indian feminism differs from other feminisms which reflect different cultural concerns. While criticising the prejudiced attitude attached to the indigenous nature of feminism in India, Ania Loomba commented that:

It is easy to imagine why entrenched patriarchal traditions would seek to marginalize women's movements by calling them un-Indian. In fact, such rhetoric seeks to disguise the indigenous roots of women's protest in India. This is not to argue that western women's thinking or organisations have not influenced Indian feminists. Cross fertilisations have been crucial to feminist struggles everywhere. But given the history of colonial rule, the burden of authenticity has been especially heavy for women activists in India (Loomba 271).

Similar such approaches towards Indian feminism have been dealt with at large by Indian women novelists in their fictions. Anita Desai's *Fasting Feasting* (1999) shows that espousal of women's right is considered to be as aping of western culture. Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant* (2008) is full of evidences of conflict between traditional Indian culture and western culture.

Any discourse on feminism necessarily parallels itself to women movements happening since ages across the world. However, in Indian context the term feminism is a very modern one compared to women's movement. While feminism refers to social, cultural and political movements that address issues of gender inequalities and look forward to having equal rights for women, women's movement geared up in the nineteenth century as social reform movements. During the nineteenth century western philosophy of liberty and fraternity have been imbibed by the social reformists of India and having been inspired by western liberalism they channelized the issues related to women's question to reform movements.

The first historical accounts of Indian women are available from nineteenth century. These historical accounts inform that in ancient times women were held in high esteem. The status of Indian women gradually declined in the ages that followed. According to Geraldine Forbes (1996), the condition of women started to improve with the entry of Britishers in India. It is in the British India, that the condition of women started to march towards "modernity", after long

periods of stagnation and decline.

Having set the background of the genesis of women's movements and its subsequent role in the amelioration of the status of Indian women, this study now focuses on the detailed study of women's movements that moulded Indian feminism to different trajectories. In Indian context, the rise of feminism and women's movement can be divided into two distinct phases: the pre – independence period and the post – independence period. The women's movement of India can be divided into following three phases:

- i) First phase (1850-1915)
- ii) Second phase (1915-1947)
- iii) Third phase (1947 - present)

1. First Phase (1850- 1915)

In the pre – independence period women's movements started with movements for reformation of condition of Indian women.

Reform movement in the 19th century

Since nineteenth century 'woman question' became a central issue of reform movements. Pre-independent Indian feminist movement can be traced back to the social reform movements of 1820s and 1850s and 'Gandhian Feminism' of 1920s ((Kumar 67)). Raja Ram Mohan Roy (of Brahma Samaj in Eastern India), Swamy Dayanand Saraswati (of Arya Samaj in Northern India), Prarthana Samaj in western India, the Theosophical Society in Southern India, Swami Vivekananda, Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar all among many others, worked for the amelioration of the status of women in such things as the eradication of female infanticide, *sati* (widow-burning), prostitution, widow-remarriages, begging by destitute women. (Kumar 1993; Prakash 2000).

Geraldine Forbes (1996) comments that "Woman question" of the nineteenth century refers not to 'what do women want' but rather 'how women can be modernized' (Forbes 12). As a part of "civilising mission" influential British writers condemned existing Indian religion, culture and social rules for the derogatory status of Indian women. James Mill in his influential "The History of British India" (first published in 1826) argued that women's position could be used as an indicator of society's advancement. Mill explained that as societies advanced, "the condition of the weaker sex is gradually improved, till they associate on equal terms with the men" (Mill, 309). British Missionary Reverend E.Storrow who came to India in 1848 commented that, strong countries like Israel, Rome and Western Europe, all derived their virtue and courage from the high position accorded to women. Later in the nineteenth century Sir Herbert Hope Risley opined that India's intellectual and political progress would not be possible without reforming society.

Partha Chatterjee (1989) in a renowned essay has explained the way in which the Indian nationalist movement resolved the 'woman question' in accordance with its preferred goals. Hence the dominant nationalists developed and popularised an ideology whereby women were responsible for protecting and preserving the inner core of the national culture – its spiritual essence – 'at home', while men had to learn the superior techniques of organising material life

‘in the world’ in order to overcome imperial domination.

Reformers wanted to change the condition of Indian women, make them modern in line with the true letter and spirit of the age though at the same time they wanted Indian women to be rooted in their own distinctive Indian culture (Pande 2018). Education was seen as an important tool for changing women’s condition (Forbes 1996, Kumar 1993). However soon it came to be evident that education alone could not really change the condition of women as education for women was primarily aimed at creating an elite group of women who can help to continue with ‘civilising mission’ of the colonizers (Forbes 1996, Kumar 1993). Women traditionally became emblematic of tradition, and the reworking of tradition is largely conducted through debating the rights and status of women in society (Kumkum SANGARI; Vaid SURESH 90).

2. Second phase (1915-1947)

During this second phase, M.K.Gandhi accelerated the nationalist struggle for independence by involving huge number of women against colonial rule. This was the period when struggle for independence against colonial rule intensified by the introduction of Gandhi’s non-violent civil disobedience movement against the British Raj and Gandhi ‘legitimized and expanded Indian women’s public activities by initiating them into the non- violent civil disobedience movement’(Pande 6). In the 1920s the wake of Gandhian feminism geared up Indian feminist movement. The chief motto of this Gandhian feminism was to empower women using their socio-economic status. Under, his influence hundreds and thousands of women, both literate and illiterate, housewives and widows participated in India’s freedom movement. (Chandra et.al, 2000; Kumar, 1993). The notion of Gandhian feminism connected ‘femininity’ with ‘spiritual’ and ‘moral courage’ and defined the “feminine’ qualities as having the strength to combat imperial power’ (Menon 9).

By the late nineteenth century though the number of women had increased considerably in the public sphere, acceptance of women equal to the status of men was a far reaching goal to be achieved. Though movement for freedom struggle let women cross the threshold of their homes and actively participate in the struggle, they were only playing the ‘support roles’ (Pande 6). However, this phase for the first time in Indian history shows the courageous Indian women who were mobilized to participate in a mass number for some political cause.

3. Third Phase (1947 - Present)

The new independent state, India developed bureaucratic strategies to address women’s issues. Equality is declared as a fundamental right by the independent India. The Hindu code passed between 1955 and 1956, rewrote for Hindus the laws of marriage and divorce, adoption and inheritance. Adult suffrage gave women election rights. The National Social Welfare Board was formed for the welfare of women. Department of Health and Welfare prepared specific plans for the development of women. Thus the new nation state provided equal status to women atleast through documents.

That the India Government’s vision of equality between sexes is a myth and not a reality became realised soon after the publication of *Toward Equality* report in 1974. This report was the eye – opener for Govt. agencies to realise that constitutional rights of equality as assured by the constitution of India had not really been met in real life situations. This report revealed that the

women's status had not really improved rather declined, since independence. According to Geraldine Forbes, 'the heat and energy generated by *Toward Equality* and the emerging research data provided the intellectual foundation for a new women's movement'. (Forbes 243).

The sixth five year plan (1980-85) incorporated a separate chapter on "women and development" that aimed at considering women as productive contributions to national economy and the seventh five year plan (1985-89) had a chapter on "socio-economic programmes for women" that shifted the approach only from welfare to developmental one (Pande 8). Women movements of the 1970s in India took their impetus from radical movements of the time. Indian women who participated in movements like peasants' and workers' movements and Chipko movements also protested against gender based subordination existing in the society. In the years that follow women's movements were broadly categorised as 'autonomous women's movement' and 'the women's movement acting in conjunction with mass organizations or political parties' (Jackson 8). Women's welfare organizations increased steadily in India since 1975. The earlier groups sought amelioration; the new groups sought recognition and realization of rights (Flavia AGNES, 1992). Some of the important women's organizations in this period included, SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association), National Commission of Women (New Delhi), National Council of Women (Pune), Joint Women's Program (Delhi), Kali for Women (Delhi) and several others. Such organizations are set up to create environment for realization of women's equality.

Wave phenomenon of Western feminism

The history of women's movement of the west can be traced back to the study of three waves, namely first wave feminism, second wave feminism and third wave of feminism. The first wave feminism covered the span of 1848 to 1920. The first wave movement began under the leadership of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony and it aimed at political suffrage of women (Kinser, 2004; Peet, 1998). The second wave of feminism, as coined by Marsha Lear, started in 1960 and remains active till date (Kinser, 2004). The second wave distinguishes between 'sex' and 'gender' foregrounding the argument that sex is a biological construction while the other is condemned for being mere social construction. The third wave feminism having being emerged in the mid 1980s continued to address the issues of feminism and racism (Kinser, 2004). Each wave differed from each other in terms of aims, objectives and strategies. In the same line, Indian women's movement happened to be heterogeneous in nature.

Wave Phenomenon of Indian Feminism

In India, any movement that for the first time addressed women's issues in general and / or brought women folk in the forefront was obviously the social reform movements of the nineteenth century India. Therefore, first wave feminism in Indian context can be referred to the mid – nineteenth century social reformist movement paired with early nineteenth century Gandhian philosophy dissolving social prejudices and empowering women using their socio – economic status. The objective of the first wave was the amelioration of the status of women in the society.

The second wave movement that started in the 1960s emerged as a universalised and radical expression of women's rights in capitalist societies as a result of the anti-Vietnam war movement and civil rights campaign (Peet, 1998). This same movement took on various expressions in

different parts of South Asia including India (Gothoskar and Patel, 1982). Indian society maintains distinct sex roles for boys and girls (Goswami, 1994). These are typically associated with separate spheres of influence for men and women. With minor exceptions, the family structure as well as the society of India is by and large patriarchal or patrilocal (Roy and Niranjana, 2004). Hence, in such a society, where they are regarded as the perpetuator of the family line, men are placed in a more advantageous position than women (Roy and Niranjana, 2004). This reflects a psychologically focused theory of gender (Padia, 2000). Much the same is the case of sex roles for men and women in India (Padia, 2000; Roy and Niranjana, 2004), but the embedded, hegemonic, patriarchal socio-cultural values and discourses makes these roles even more complex. This argument concerning the social construction of femininity rapidly gained ascendancy in ‘Second Wave feminism,’ providing a means of distinguishing between sex and gender which is now commonplace in feminist theory around the world (Freedman, 2002).

Third Wave feminism is an ideology, a movement or the “newest recognisable phase of feminist thought” whose principles are grounded on the praxis of Second Wave feminism, yet differentiated by some cultural and political ideologies (Garrison, 2004). Women’s advancement, development and empowerment emerged as areas of significant emphasis for the Government of India.ⁱ Since independence different initiatives taken at the national level like, separate provisions for development of women through series of five year plans, Towards Equality Reportⁱⁱ, the National Policies on Education and some other such policies contributed greatly to improve the literacy rate among Indian women. Educated Indian women were gradually advancing towards employment trajectories. Thus, Education and employment (career) have become two key arenas through which Indian women have gained access to the public sphere. Indian women’s increased visibility in the public sphere, outside the home demanded a change, a shift in the traditional roles of mother, daughter and wife perennially being played by women since ages. It is in this context of change of women’s roles driven by the changes equally happening in the national economic scenario, that the analysis of principles espoused by the third wave feminism becomes pertinent.

Third Wave Feminism in India

The latest wave phenomenon of feminism is termed as third wave which marks its beginning from 1980s and continues till date. Third wave feminism marks a shift in the gender roles due to the changes in the political and cultural spheres enabled by the changes happening due to economic globalization. Third wave feminism is also highly influenced by the ideas and ideals of postmodernism and post-structuralism (Heywood and Drake, 1997; 2004; Kinser, 2004). This section studies the context of economic globalization and the ideology of postmodernism and the role played by them in the changing status of Indian women.

Women with their increasing presence in the public sphere place themselves at the cutting – edge of the challenge to shift in gender roles. Changes in the traditional gender roles give rise to a phenomenon of ‘new femininities’. Changes in the traditional gender roles give rise to a phenomenon of ‘new femininities’ which can best be explained by the theories and principles of postmodernism.

Background to Postmodernism

Postmodernism surfaced in philosophical and intellectual discourse since 1960s as it marked a break with modernist (approach of avant - garde Butler 5). Approaches arose to justify the reasons of this break were of manifold.

Emergence of modern democracy led to the rise of modern citizenship. In the context of modern citizenship, the rights that are claimed by women or minority groups are no longer universal rights rather they are specific needs and should be granted to particular communities. Hence modern citizenship, being pluralistic in nature can “accommodate the specificity and multiplicity of democratic demands and provide a pole of identification for a wide range of democratic forces” (Mouffe 1989, 7). Discourses on postmodernism and feminism contribute to such movements that address the present day struggle between democracy and modernism, aiming at rewriting the relationship existing between them.

Modernism is marked by the increasing intensification of human domination over nature in the name of historical development. Modernism stamps its feet firm through the modernist ideals of freedom, justice, and equality. Hannam (1990) characterizes modernism as: "economic redistribution towards equality, the emancipation of women, the eradication of superstition and despotism, wider educational opportunities... the realization of other, distinct ambitions" (Hannam, 113). Modernism is synonymous with forms of modernization characterized by the ideologies and practices of the dominating relations of capitalist production. Giroux (1991) argues that modernism exceeds this fundamental but limiting rationality by offering the ideological excesses of democratic possibility and hence modernism becomes a decisive point of reference for advancing certain and crucial elements of the democratic revolution.

This study aims to revealing that discourses of modernism, feminism and postmodernism contribute in exploring social relations that shape the dynamics of human liberation in the context of contemporary democratic citizenship.

Postmodernism

The term Postmodernism which has become a buzzword for the latest intellectual fashions, is increasingly employed both in and out of the academy to designate a variety of discourses. Debarring the risk of categorizing the definitional rigor of the term postmodernism within a single frame, the term is referred to as a discourse of plurality, difference and multinarratives.

“If postmodernism means putting the Word in its place. If it means the opening up to critical discourse the line of enquiry which were formerly prohibited, of evidence which as previously inadmissible so that new and different questions can be asked and new and other voices can begin asking them; if it means the opening up of institutional and discursive spaces within which more fluid and plural social and sexual identities may develop; if it means the erosion of triangular formations of power and knowledge with the expert at the apex and the "masses" at the base, if, in a word, it enhances our collective (and democratic) sense of possibility, then I for one am a postmodernist”. (Hebdige 1989, 226).

Therefore, all discourses on postmodernism would together lead to constitute a “cultural

enterprise” as termed by Linda Hutcheon. As approved by Hutcheon, Postmodernism, rather than being negative, its interrogative impulse makes it extremely positive and intends to bring order, though it intends to do so by first exposing the gaps. The expected net result of this philosophy of postmodernism is to create a better and a more compact social order.

At the backdrop of postmodern philosophy, contemporary feminism has also taken a glide towards postmodern feminism. The following section unravels the basic principles of postmodern feminism and outlines its relevance to this research.

Postmodern feminism

Postmodernism stands for decanonization of all existing master codes, conventions, institutions and authorities. It advocates that any text that seeks to challenge the dominant discourse becomes post-modern. Postmodernism advocates multiple perspectives, open endings and ambiguities and dwells on the ethics of ‘difference’. “Post modernism constitutes the expressing of a contextual discourse that problematises other discourses and thus enables us to critically examine the given of other discourses. It exists thus as an alternative discourse to prevent a hegemonic domination of any one discourse” (Salat 36).

Contemporary feminist thinkers propose that equality be accorded to women according to their different natures and needs based on psycho–sexual considerations. They believe in the multiplicity of ideas based on specific cultural, historical and social practices. Thus contemporary feminism advocates the variety and plurality in feminist perspectives. Contemporary feminism has taken a glide towards a belief that there can’t be a universal, unitary definition of Feminism. The diverse range of female experiences gives rise to the notion of multiple selves which refuse to be interpreted in singular or universal terms. It is here that feminism joins hands with postmodernism which challenges monolithic structures and unitary definitions. The acknowledgement of contemporary feminists that there can’t be a universal, unitary definition of feminism brings it closer to post modernism. “Feminisms are several and they are culture-specific. The feminist discourse in India has, at times, gone all out to differentiate itself from the feminisms of more affluent societies primarily, because of cultural reasons” (Jain 81). Rajul Bhargava also opines in the same line:

During the last decade, Feminism and women studies have been forced to acknowledge the diversities of women experiences as well as the patriarchal oppressions they share. (Bhargava 75).

Postmodern feminism in Indian context

Alongside the changes convened by economic liberalism in India, the spectrum of social life in India was also getting shaped and re-shaped by the introduction of philosophy of postmodernism. In Indian context, feminism is often considered to be a legacy of equality of sexes inherited from the constitutional rights of women, social reform movements and spread of education. The typical nature of cultural traditions, historical background and the variety present in Indian life itself would not accept a uniform system of thought. The specific nature of the traditional cultural ethos and its long history in India does not conform to the western model of feminism either. Since the 1990s, postmodernist philosophy of ‘ethics of difference’ is seen to be reflected through Indian Writing in English by women. The literary genre particularly novels by women appear not only

to be concerned with female struggle for equal rights but also with the inherent conflicts and constraints in implementing these rights in society which still clutches tightly with the traditional patterns. This genre further explores that despite oppositions from all sides along with countless hurdles, the women in India have learnt not to succumb and in this process they have proceeded towards self realisation and self actualisation. Therefore, in most of the novels by the contemporary Indian women writing in English we find that, they do not promulgate their ideas of change through gender hostility but through social rearrangements that cut across class and gender lines.

Negotiating Postmodern Feminism through the fictional oeuvre of Manju Kapur

Primary concern of this paper is to explore the trend that the contemporary feminism is following. To accomplish this objective this research has attempted so far to study the advances of feminism through different phases across different time frames in India. This study so far has established that given the changes happening in the economic spheres, societal patterns particularly in India, are also ever changing. Necessarily traditional roles played by women since ages are also changing. Now women are set to cross the threshold of their homes and become active participants of growing mercantile society. Tension, conflict, dilemma are bound to be cropped up due to such ever changing traditional roles of women. This research establishes that an understanding of the principles and practices of postmodern feminism would widen the probability to address the issues related to this changing societal pattern.

Manju Kapur is a contemporary postmodern Indian woman novelist who through her fictional protagonists addresses the issues faced by women today. Her novels are brilliant reflections of the principles and practices of philosophy of postmodern feminism. An indepth analysis of her novels reveal that being placed in a postmodern society, one has to take recourse to the philosophy of postmodern feminism and thus resolve the conflicts arising at different spheres of personal and public life. The next section of this thesis focuses on the trend that contemporary feminism is following.

Manju Kapur's fictional oeuvre is a very interesting and significant reading in the context of postmodern situation. All her six novels have female characters as protagonists. Through the characterization of her protagonists Manju kapur provides an interesting insight towards resolution of the crisis faced by contemporary women (the crisis faced by women is discussed above) who are caught in the struggle between tradition and modernity. Though Manju Kapur's women are educated, bold and courageous enough to mark their protest against the traditional patriarchal set patterns of the society, they devise their own ways to mark the protest but not disturbing the tradition wholly. They make necessary adjustments with their traditional roles and lead their lives towards self – realization and self- actualization. Be it Virmati of *Difficult Daughters*, Aastha of *Married Women*, Nisha of *Home*, Nina of *Immigrant*, Shagun of *Custody* or Tapti of *Brothers*, they all devise their own different ways to assert themselves in a society that is yet not ready to budge out of the cocoons of certain traditional norms which come in the way of self realisation of these women. How much do they succeed in their endeavour is relatively less important, more significant is their effort and determination to stand for themselves, to dare to flow against the current without divorcing or disturbing much of tradition, within the family

bindings. In this process of achieving space for themselves, these women become ‘new women’. Kapur’s women protagonists fit into the definition of new women as augmented by Sundar Rajan (1993). Rajan argues that Indian women are new women as they having perennially played the roles of mother, wife and homemaker, save the project of modernization without westernization. New Indian women refer to the female subject position that can be shown as ‘successfully achieving the balance between (deep) tradition and (surface) modernity’ (Rajan 1993, pp.126-127). Daya (2009) summarizes the characteristic embodiment of new women as ‘the publicly constructed new Indian women’, then, are those who are ‘practised in the ways of the West, and at the same time retain their Indian values’ (Daya, 2009, p.98). The concept of new women in Indian society differs from the one in the west and therefore Manju Kapur has tried to evolve her own stream of the emergence of new women grounded in reality.

The discussion above conforms that considering the image of feminism as a coherent ideology is only a misconception. Both post-modernists and recent feminist theorists assert that any attempt to formulate a universalistic concept of woman is futile. This decentring of woman is almost akin to the episteme in which there are no essential subjects or objects, but only individuals caught in a network of historical and psychological power relationships. Therefore, the image of feminism that Manju Kapur advocates is evident from the fact that Kapur’s women characters devise their own different ways to assert themselves in a society that is yet not ready to budge out of the cocoons of certain traditional norms which come in the way of self realisation of these women. How much do they succeed in their endeavour is relatively less important. More significant is their effort and determination to stand for themselves, to dare to flow against the current without divorcing or disturbing much of tradition, within the family bindings.

These women are thus becoming instrumental in bringing change slowly but surely, without creating much ripples. Thus a rather long period of struggle has taught them to believe in themselves, to have faith in their potentialities and power to bring about a change. The first realisation that struck them was a need to articulate and bring to limelight the grim areas that cause problems, for instance, the discrimination extended to them. It further taught them to adopt a moderate middle way to keep themselves alive and going. It was an awareness to cautiously avoid extremes – that has saved the feminist movement from being dead and decayed.

Study of Manju Kapur’s third novel *Home* (2006) reveals that it falls in line with the tenets of Postmodern Feminism. Women in *Home* have taken recourse to multiple strategies in their effort to underline the notion of selfhood. They adopt different strategies for self assertion too, thereby denying a singular, one-dimensional view of Feminism. *Home* is a story of joint family headed by the patriarch Banwari Lal and goes down to the depiction of three generations. The daughters-in-law Sona, Sushila, Pooja and the granddaughter Nisha adopt a balanced way—neither do they rebel nor surrender. The curious ways and strategies that they adopt to counter the pressures fit this novel in the postmodern feminist mould. As such, Manju Kapur’s *Home* aptly fits into the post-modern feminist episteme. It caters to multiplicity, plurality of female experience. All the female characters in *Home* interpret the notion of selfhood in their own typical manner. They adopt different strategies for self assertion. Sona adopts ‘neglect’; Rupa diverts her attention to financial success. Nisha glides towards positive and constructive means of self assertion.

In the fourth novel, *The Immigrant* (2008), Manju Kapur uses Indian locale as well as non-Indian locale as its space. The plot of the novel is basically set in North India and Canada with occasional introductions to the spaces of US. On surface level, the novel deals with the story of two immigrants from India, Nina and Ananda, who have settled in Canada but gradually it delves deep to discuss the wide range of other issues like quest for identity, acculturation and adaptation in new land, life of an immigrant with his cultural baggage etc. etc. This novel provides an attempt to study the differences between Eastern and western culture as faced by the protagonists of the novel. Through the narrative the novelist attempts to provide a way out to the crisis faced by immigrants of today's world, the way being the celebration of multiplicity of global Hybridity. We find that in the new country Ananda and Nina's cultural baggage constituted by Indianness, has been confronted by the socio- cultural-ecological set up of the new country, Canada. Out of this confrontation of cultures they get displaced and bear double identity. The couple, being migrated to a new land, gets exposed to new culture and tradition of life and they make necessary adjustment to adapt the new culture. For adaptation of the new culture, a blend of Indianness with the new culture of the Canadian society becomes necessary and such adjustment and adaptation necessarily opens up avenues to celebrate global Hybridity. The phenomenon of moving from centre (Indianness) to the periphery (global hybridity) is reflected through different fields as encountered by the couple; the major fields being language, dress, food to make mention of few.

Kapur makes her protagonist a new woman who turns out to be a self – reliant individual who is able to make decisions of her life on her own, who further believes: “You had to be your own anchor” (Kapur 325). Nina fits in the category of new woman. She decides to leave Ananda and Anton. She resolves to pull off all bonds that could have held her. She moves on leaving Halifax, leaving her husband, leaving all memories behind , ‘escaping unhappy pasts’ (330) towards the University of New Brunswick for an interview, towards ‘fresh territories’(330). Nina remarks that: “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.” (Kapur 330). So we see that Ananda and Nina carry the baggage of their past (Indianness) with them and device changes in their cultural baggage by adopting the ways of the new world.

Conclusion:

This chapter outlines a brief survey of the process of amelioration of the status of Indian women both in the pre – independence and post- independence period. In the post – independent period with the advent of new economic policies since 1980s the socio- cultural ambience of India also started to change. This chapter studies in details the role of post-independence economic changes in the lives of Indian women. With the modernization of the post - independence India, women who are educated started exploring employment opportunities. Women with their increasing presence in the public sphere place themselves at the cutting – edge of the challenge to shift in gender roles. Changes in the traditional gender roles give rise to a phenomenon of ‘new femininities’. This trend of ‘new femininities’ has been further studied at the backdrop of the philosophy of postmodern feminism.

Manju Kapur being a postmodern woman novelist has portrayed the changing images of Indian women through her fictional oeuvre. The significance of the present study lies in unraveling the

novels of Manju Kapur from the perspective of postmodern feminism. This study will help in formulating a new feminine consciousness in keeping with the changing times by relating the fictional works of Manju kapur to the contemporary realities and pragmatism. The subsequent chapters of this thesis explore the different facets of postmodern feminism manifested through the fictional oeuvre of Manju Kapur.

ⁱ Details is published in National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001, India (http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/hrdr/init/ind_2.htm, March, 27, 2007) and Towards Partnership Between Men and Women in Politics, New Delhi, 14-18 February 1997.

ⁱⁱ This report was prepared by the Committee on Status of Women in India, appointed by the Government of India at the initiation of the United Nations. The report painted a bleak picture of women's disadvantaged condition in the Indian society.

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