

Acknowledgements

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A Note on the Text

The investigator has made an extensive use of the following texts and taken passages from the four novels of Shobhaa De and Manju Kapur each.

Second Thoughts

By

Shobhaa De

De, Shobhaa. *Second Thoughts*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1996. Print.

Sisters

By

Shobhaa De

De, Shobhaa . *Sisters*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1992. Print.

Socialite Evenings

By

Shobhaa De

De, Shobhaa . *Socialite Evenings*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1989. Print.

Sultry Days

By Shobhaa De

De, Shobhaa . *Sultry Days*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1989. Print.

A Married Woman

By

Manju Kapur

Kapur, Manju. *A Married Woman*. New Delhi: India Ink, 2000. Print.

Home

By

Manju Kapur

Kapur, Manju. *Home*. London: Random House, 2006. Print.

Difficult Daughters

By

Manju Kapur

Kapur, Manju. *Difficult Daughters*. London. Faber and Faber Ltd, 1998. Print.

The Immigrant

By

Manju Kapur

Kapur, Manju. *The Immigrant*. London: Random House, 2010. Print.

- ❖ For research methodology the scholar has used only *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* 7th edition.

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 7 ed. New Delhi: East-West Press, 2009.
Print.

Abstract

The present thesis attempts to make an inquiry into the new woman concept employed by two leading women authors, Manju Kapur and Shobhaa De in their works. From time immemorial, Indian society has been patriarchal in its approach. It demands submissiveness, patience, obedience, unconditional love and service mentality from a woman. If anyone deviates from the traditional paradigms, one is hardly accepted in the society and even considered as an outcast. With the acquisition of education and occupation that led to economic independence, Indian women's approach towards their own servitude state begin to change. From the early period of twentieth century onwards, women started to react and oppose the phallo-centric suppressions and began to think and decide upon the matters that affect them. It paved way to the daring and striking concept of the modern woman.

Most of the Indian women writers fix the suppression, silence and sacrifice of Indian womanhood in their works. Their works detail the silent sufferings, agony, frustration and helplessness of feminine life. Manju Kapur and Shobhaa De are two among the prominent female authors who stand for the rights of suppressed Indian women. Manju Kapur is a Delhi born writer who has bagged the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for the best book in Eurasia section for her maiden venture *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008), *The Custody* (2011) and *Brother* (2016) are the contributions to the field of Indian fiction. Kapur evolves as a sensitive author who presents the struggle of the middle-class educated women against the predatory male-dominated society.

Shobhaa De, who hails from Maharashtra is the author of numerous books. In 1988, she wrote her first novel- the best-selling *Socialite Evenings* (1989) followed by *Starry Nights* (1990), *Sisters* (1992), *Sultry Days* (1994), *Strange Obsession* (1992), *Snapshots* (2006), *Second Thoughts* (1996), *Shooting From the Hip* (1994), *Small Betrayals* (1995),

Surviving Men (1998) and *Selective Memory :Stories from My Life* (1998). As a female writer she reads the inner conflicts of women, especially those who hail from the aristocratic upper class society. Through her writings she tries to shatter the patriarchal hegemony and raises a voice of protest against male dominance.

The data for the study is the select works of the two renowned Indian female authors Manju Kapur and Shobhaa De. Chosen works of Manju Kapur are *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, *Home* and *The Immigrant*. The select works of Shobhaa De are *Socialite Evenings*, *Sultry Days*, *Sisters* and *Second Thought*. All these fictional works, reflect the concept of modern woman who is bold enough to cross the patriarchal threshold. The thesis analyses the feminist ideologies and attempts to critically evaluate the works from the basis of Elaine Showalter's theory. Showalter categorises the existence of women into three phases, namely, Feminine, Feminist and Female in her work *Towards a Feminist Poetics* (1979). The feminine phase represents the weak and subservient class of women who dares not to speak against the patriarchal paradigms. The feminist and female class of women stand for their rights. The twenty first century concept of modern woman goes along with Showalter's third phase of woman, the female phase. Focusing on the feminist theories and the major concepts of Indian feminism, the study analyses the variations in the approaches of the two writers. This study is an analysis of the search by a group of women for their own identity and space in their family and society. Shobhaa De and Manju Kapur deal with the issue of gender discrimination and marginalisation. Their novels chronicle the sufferings and distress faced by the Indian women under the tight hold of patriarchy.

The introductory chapter contains an insight into literature in general and moves on to Indian Writing in English and the prominent contributions from the part of women writers presenting the hardships of their kind living in the tradition bound patriarchal society. This is

followed by an analysis of Shobhaa De, Manju Kapur and their major contributions in the literary field and the relevance of the feministic theory of Elaine Showalter in their works.

Chapter II, titled ‘The Voices of Femininity’ attempts to analyse how Shobhaa De caricatures Indian women’s displacement and marginalisation both in culture and society through her four novels. These novels very well expose the new hybrid culture that blends the western style, ideas and values with the Indian traditional pattern. It depicts the heroines who attain success to an extent of gaining freedom from social bondage which forms a basis for feministic study.

Chapter III, entitled ‘The Vigour of the Marginalised’ probes into the portrayal of female characters by Manju Kapur in her four novels. The protagonists of Manju Kapur long for their self-identity and liberty from the traditional mentality of the society. They attempt to break away from the traumatic experiences of the patriarchy and assert their identity through actions than words and voices out their unwillingness to suffer at the hands of male chauvinists.

Chapter IV, titled ‘Breaching the Frontiers of Ideology’ focuses on the similarities and dissimilarities in dealing with the female subordination by both Manju Kapur and Shobhaa De. While Shobhaa De deals with the inner conflicts and hostilities exclusively aristocratic upper class women, Manju Kapur is concerned with the feministic concerns of middle class educated women. Even though the protagonists of both these authors deal with women of varied social background, they have more or less similar experiences of suppression from the male oriented society.

The summation or chapter V consolidates the ideological obligation of the authors, Manju Kapur and Shobhaa De to the values and principles of feminism. The extreme sensitivity and their constant reaction towards the hardship and distress of women and their

powerful stand towards the feminist issues and their rights has congregated both Manju Kapur and Shobhaa De on the same platform in this dissertation. Though they stand for various similarities in dealing with the feministic ideological assumptions, they do differ from each other in various ways. Both the writers share a vision of a common future that is of an androgynous society where equalitarian values and close relationships between men and women flourish and flower. They utilise the power of literature in the form of fiction to convey and upgrade woman's quest for self-identity, completeness and autonomy. This chapter sums up the study by probing into its future scope.