



# প্রতিধ্বনি the Echo

*A Journal of Humanities & Social Science*

**Published by: Dept. of Bengali**

**Karimganj College, Karimganj, Assam, India**

**Website: [www.thecho.in](http://www.thecho.in)**

## **The Concept of New Woman in Anita Desai's *Clear Light of the Day* and Manju Kapur's *Home***

**Khurajam Artishowri Devi<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Reena Sanasam<sup>2</sup>**

### ***Abstract***

*Anita Desai and Manju Kapur are the well known Indian women novelists who represent the pain and conflict of the modern educated women that struggle between tradition and modernity on the one hand and individuality and independence on the other hand. The women characters in their novels choose to fight and protest against the traditional and culturally accepted norms and currents of society. They are also facing the responsibilities by trying to fit themselves in the socio cultural modes of the changed society. In Anita Desai's *Clear Light of the Day* and Manju Kapur's *Home* represent the image of new woman who struggle between tradition and modernity to establish her own identity by being economically independent and without depending on her male counterpart - be on the father, the husband, the brother or the son. Anita Desai and Manju Kapur in their novels delineate the image of new woman who demands to hold the same position and status like that of man in the society with equal sexuality and rights. They are the rebellious women who seek self-discovery, self-respect, self autonomy and self govern as they are caught between feudal values and the fast approaching new life.*

**Introduction:** The concept of New Woman has emerged after a long way journey into the exploration of her strong urge to be identified as an individual and personal autonomy - independent womanhood with free mind and spirit. At the same time, she also struggles to bring changes in society through the abolition of sexist attitudes and patriarchal domination. Critic like Simone De Beauvoir asserts "one is not born but rather become a woman" (Beauvior 295). Thus, feminists' explores the idea of womanhood and the importance of them in the male dominated

society. Therefore, this woman chooses to protest and fight against the age old traditional beliefs and accepted norms and currents of the society. She also gives more emphasis in exploring her true potential to improve her low position in family and society as well. Therefore, K. Meera Bai states, "The word New Woman has come to signify the awakening of women into a new realization of her place and position in family and society. Conscious of her individuality, the new woman has been trying to assert her rights as a human being and is determined to



fight for equal treatment with man.” (Qtd in Srivastava 15-16) Besides this, Seshadri comments “The new woman is assertive and self-willed searching to discover true self.” (Qtd in Sandhu & Maan 351) She does not particularly sought or raises voice of equality and rights of a woman alone but traces more about her space, recognition, respect, and understanding from her male counterpart. She also challenges the modern man that she is no more passive and docile but a kind of woman who has potential to change the traditional fanciful thoughts and feelings. Besides this, the new woman’s eagerness for education and job is mainly to stand as an economically independent figure, to improve womanhood and to choose a life in a way she wants to fulfill her urges and needs. Neeru Tondon asserts:

*The ‘new woman’ today challenges the traditional notions of ‘Angel in the house’ and ‘sexually voracious’ image. The new woman is essentially a woman of awareness and consciousness of her low position in the family and society and tries to improve it. (Tondon 26)*

The new woman is basically remarked as a feminist ideal that gradually emerged in Europe and North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This woman questions the traditional gender norms and fought for equality in various spheres of life like economic, political, social, educational, sexual rights and duties in patriarchal societies. However, the emergence of new woman is identical with the feminists’ ideal. She challenges the institution of marriage and encourages woman to set herself free from male domination and to live her own life

with separate identities and individuality. Mary Wollstonecraft who is also considered as the ‘mother of feminism’ raises voice for women’s education and institution of marriage. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of New Woman is popularized by Henry James and represented the images of new woman through the female characters Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* and Daisy Miller in *Daisy Miller*. Again, in different literary texts this New Woman has been reflected and makes an appearance in Maria Edge Worth’s *Belinda*, (1801) Elizabeth Barrett’s *Aurora Light* (1856), Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* (1879), Henry Arthur Jones’ *The Case of Rebellious Susan* (1894), Shaw’s *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* (1893) and *Candida* (1898). Thus the remarkable historian Ruth Bordin states the new woman refers to a type of woman who has potential to control over her own life either in personal, social or economic. The women’s writing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century explores the image of new woman through the female protagonists who fight against the traditional Victorian culture and the old codes of conduct and morality. They also challenge and oppose the Victorian male perception of woman as angel in the house and the notion of woman’s proper place is home. Sarah Grand, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy are the writers who went on projecting the images of ‘New Woman’. Besides this, Charlotte Perkins Gilman refers woman to follow the modern path stretched out by professions and urge to leave the occupation of homemakers. Therefore, Mukherjee asserts,

*The new woman has become more vulnerable and her*



*problems have increased. No longer can she retreat to the seclusion of her kitchen and at the time the male domination has tried to overpower her. But she has fought on to seek an identity.*  
(Mukherjee 245)

Over the years, the age-old image of woman seems to be gradually shading off into the image of new woman with the spread of education in society. The concept of new woman and its acceptance in India is said to be the western import but it is not the blind imitation or transplant. In fact it is due to the changes going on everywhere. The Indian women novelists have given a new dimension in portraying the image of new woman. Their novels explore female subjectivity and struggle for an identity in the patriarchal society. Therefore, novelists like Kamala Markandeya, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Shobha De and Manju Kapur have given the image of new woman through their works. Nayantara Sahgal's novels present the emergence of new woman who is no longer considered woman as a sex object but someone who claims to be man's equal partner. Shobha De's heroines are economically independent and they enjoy sexual life not only with their husbands but also with other men. Her female characters lead a completely free life without any restrictions. These qualities are the image of new woman according to Shobha De's perspective. The woman characters in Shashi Deshpande's novels are caught in the process of redefining and rediscovering their roles and position in society. She presents the modern Indian womanhood who rebels, rejects and seeks freedom from the traditional norms. Therefore,

Woods asserts, "The New Woman (fictional or real) challenged prevailing Victorian attitudes such as Ware's and posited an alternative to the accepted and acceptable "True or Ideal Woman" (Woods 6)

Anita Desai and Manju Kapur are the Indian women novelists who represent the pain and conflict of the modern educated women that struggle between tradition and patriarchy on the one hand and individuality and independent on the other hand. The women characters in their novels are aware of the dilemma and choose to fight and protest against the traditional and culturally accepted norms and currents. They also face the responsibilities and try to fit themselves in the socio cultural modes of the changed society. In their novels, they represent the new woman who struggle between tradition and modernity in order to establish their identity and to live an economically independent life without depending on their male counterparts - be on the father, husband, brother or son. Anita Desai and Manju Kapur in their novels delineate the picture of rebellious women who seek of self-discovery, self-respect, self autonomy and self govern as they are caught between feudal values and the fast approaching new life. They are struggling to strike a balance between society and self. Thus Anita Myles asserts that, the women in Desai's novels do not give up the strife so easily.

*They indulge in self-analysis, self discovery and ultimately compromise with the situation to live life stoically becoming assets to the family by developing the power of sustenance. True enough some women characters*



*prefer to remain in the world of illusion while many others endeavour to find a way out.*  
(Myles 37)

At the same time, the women characters in Manju Kapur's novels are trying to maintain the balance between family and society. Her women characters are the personification of new women who struggle between tradition and modernity. Gupta asserts,

*It is their individual struggle with family and society through which they plunge into a dedicated effort to carve an identity for themselves as qualified women with faultless backgrounds.*  
(Gupta 3)

**Bimla as a New Woman in *Clear Light of the Day*:** In *Clear Light of Day* Anita Desai portrays Bimla as a personification of new woman who is confident and courageous to live independently in society. She is an educated woman and by profession she is a history teacher at College. If she had depended on her father for education she would have remained an illiterate woman living under the man's authority. Anita Desai delineates the character of Bimla as a strong, self autonomy and independent woman who struggles for education, "Father never bothered to teach me. For all father cared, I would have grown up illiterate – and cooked for my living or swept. So I had to teach myself history and teach myself to teach." (Desai 242) In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Mary Wollstonecraft voices the right of woman's education. According to her opinion, the most perfect education "is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the heart. Or,

in other words, to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent." (Wollstonecraft 89) Like her, Anita Desai spreads the notion of woman's education through her female character Bimla. Bimla says to her sister Tara why the Mirsa girls Jaya and Sarla are so much in hurry to get married instead of going to college. Though the two sisters are already sixteen and seventeen years old yet she insists, "...they're not educated yet, they haven't any degrees. They should go to college." (Desai 220) Unlike them, her ambition is to live an emotionally and economically independent life. She wants to dress and smoke like man with the desires of full independence and confidence. Therefore, Tondon comments the new woman's eagerness for "education and job have offered her equal opportunity and status to choose a life she wants, travel the world and satisfy her desires." (Tondon 126)

In patriarchal society, woman is always defined in relation to man. They are treated as subordinate beings rather than considering a part of human species. So, Anita Desai wants to break the conventional practice of looking at woman as dependable and inferior to man through her protagonist Bimla who ignores to marry with her family doctor, Dr. Bishwas. She wants to break the notion of woman as object or 'Other' to man. Therefore, Somnath Paul states, "the 'Other' indicates the peripheral position always occupied by woman within the patriarchal and other masculinist cultures,..." This construction of 'Woman-as-Other' is crucially addressed by the concept of 'New Woman'." (Paul 68) Therefore, Bimla rejects the traditional concept of marriage and prefers to remain single as well as an



independent woman. Thus she thinks, there are many other things to be done rather than getting married.

*I don't marry, ... I shall work – I shall do things, ... I shall earn my own living - and look after Mira Masi and Baba and - and be independent. (Desai 221)*

Bimla is a silent rebellious woman who establishes her identity as a teacher and becomes an economically sufficient woman. Though she is single she takes up all the responsibilities of a family and obligations of life. Thus, after the death of her parents, the responsibilities of the family become a part of her life. She plays a double role, on one hand like a single mother and on the other act as a father figure in the family. She has confidence in herself that she would withstand and look after her tuberculosis patient brother Raja, mentally retarded brother Baba and the marriage of her sister Tara. Therefore, Anita Desai exhibits financially self sufficient woman who can overcome the problems and responsibilities that come to one's life. Through Bimla, Desai tries to demonstrate that violence and oppression against woman can be diminished or eradicated if she is emotionally free and financially strong.

Thinking about the responsibilities of the family and her retarded Baba, she rejects the proposal of a doctor, though she likes and finds him good. She keeps herself in control and feels strong to be independent even if there is lots of burden over her. Being a teacher, she is more interested in buying and reading books rather than keeping affair with doctor for her marriage. The character of Bimla shows that like man she can manage and look after the family and can solve the

problems either in family business or personal matter. She doesn't like anyone to feel sympathy or either show kindness on her. She turns out to be a new woman who is independent, assertive, strong, confident and self oriented woman who lives without the help of the masculine forces. She becomes an example of what Beauvior says,

*Once she ceases to be separate, the system based on her dependent crumbles; between her and the universe there is no longer any need for a masculine mediator. (Beauvior 142)*

Bimla has been cheated by her selfish sister Tara and brother Raja who married and settled down, leaving behind the responsibilities of Baba, Mira Masi and father's business. But she is ready to see them in the light of understanding and forgiveness. Such qualities of courage and confidence pave the way for fulfilling her ambitions. Therefore, Tara and Bakul realize and comment about her,

*Bim had found everything she wanted in life. It seemed so incredible that she hadn't had to go anywhere to find it that she had stayed on in the old house taught in the old college, and yet it had given her everything she wanted. Isn't that strange Bakul... she did not find it – she made it, she made what she wanted. (Desai 246)*

Tara is weak, docile and submissive as compared to Bimla. She does not have courage to struggle and face the problems and responsibilities of family like her sister. Therefore she is married to Bakul who is much older to her. She receives much attention and care from him which



she always craves from her family members at home. Later on she does not find happiness in following her husband's orders and remains as an obedient wife. Thus she feels that she should stop being submissive to her husband as she seeks for freedom and individuality. Now she realizes that Bim has everything that she doesn't have. Therefore, she asserts,

*Now, I understand why you do not wish to marry. You have dedicated your life to others – to your sick brother and aged aunt and your little brother who will be independent on you all his life. You have sacrificed your own life for them. (Desai 154)*

Anita Desai paints the concept of new woman through Bimla who plays the role of a responsible man and performs manly duties for the family. Being a single woman she breaks the traditional norms and beliefs. She rebels against the general currents of the patriarchal society. She is brave enough to reject the traditional value system and accept the new way of modern life style.

**Representation of New Woman in Home:** In the novel *Home*, Nisha is a grand-daughter of Banwari Lal, and a beautiful daughter of Sona and Yashpal. She is the female character around which the whole novel revolves. Since childhood she had to face discrimination against female. In her young age, she has been tortured and sexual abused by her cousin brother Vicky. Thus, she is frightened and fretful of his attitude and behaviour. He is the son of Murli and Sunita, the only daughter of Banwari Lal. After his mother death, he is under the care of Nisha's mother, Sona. Therefore, both Nisha and Vicky grow together, play and make fun

together. But Nisha is mentally and psychologically disturbed because of his indifferent attitude and incestuous abuse. Nobody understands her silent suffering and miserable life. Besides this, she cannot eat and sleep because of frequent harassment. Thus, Nisha is sent to aunt Rupa's house for a change and to erase frustrated atmosphere of her own home. Rupa and her husband Premnath understand the problems and miserable conditions of Nisha. They realized that Vicky was the one who made Nisha's life fearful and terrified. Therefore, Nisha as a child becomes the centre of interest, concern and attention. Nisha returns back home after eleven years from her aunty's house to accompany her grandmother.

With family wedding around, Nisha has been obtaining seventy percent in Humanities in her board exam. Thus, she is given the privilege of continuing her further studies. Being a mangli girl, she is destined to marry only a prospective mangli groom. Therefore, it is true to say that in Manju Kapur's novels "education for a daughter is seen as an alternate option of marriage." (Ghosh 16) For this purpose, she is admitted in Durga Bai College for studying English Literature. She realizes the real intention of her family's sustaining for higher studies. Thus, Nisha delineates,

*Higher studies were just a time pass. It was not as though she was going to use her education. Working was out of the question, and marriage was around the corner. (Kapur 141)*

In course of time, she meets Suresh who is studying in Khalsa College of Engineering. Comparing with Nisha family, Suresh is poor and at the same time



belongs to a lower caste . Nisha is totally changed after meetings with him two or three times. Both of them became friends and later they fell in love. They roam around the University lawns. She turns out to be independent and confident woman. Her going to college shows the feeling of adventurous, daring and modern as well. Therefore, she enjoys her own life and decided to do things on her own without taking the permission of her parents. Thus, her mother rebukes,

*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 parlour, where did you find all these things? (Kapur 149-50)*

Though Nisha enjoys being together with Suresh but she is also conscious about her study. Thus she tells to Suresh, "I can't meet you, I have to study, I have to get a second division at least....." (Kapur 151) Somewhere down the line, their relationship does not reach their destiny. Nisha's parents do not like Suresh because of different caste. Though he tries to convince to his beloved family that his love and intention is pure but her parents are against their relation. He further says that "He only wanted Nisha. No dowry and no fancy wedding, he didn't even care if she was a mangli." (Kapur 199) On hearing his words, Nisha is moved by his nobility and says to her mother, "who cares about caste these days? What you really want is to sell me in the market." (Kapur 199) She further expresses her painful feelings "Sell me and be done with it. What are you waiting for" (Kapur 199)

This rough and bold words show that Nisha is against the age-old traditional marriage but forcefully stands up for her own choice in her conservative family. She doesn't want to be any more than a doll in the house to be sold in market at any rate. But, Yashpal thinks that he is unfit for his daughter,

*Nisha, dear daughter, leave all thoughts of this dirty low caste man, what can he give you command to what we can arrange for you? (Kapur 199)*

On the other hand, when the entire matter comes into limelight, Nisha's brother calls her as an untrustworthy woman to which she replies with anger, "Who you are to decide whether I am trustworthy" (Kapur 198). This rebellious comment reflects the concept of modern woman who wishes to live in her own decision. Thus, comments, "Her courage is praiseworthy in struggling with the meanness of life to find her place in an uninformed society..." (Wankhede 151)

All days Nisha remains silently in her own home as "a prisoner of her deed, a prisoner of their words." (Kapur 200) She is distrusted and is not allowed putting a foot outside under all circumstances. Thus, she is accompanied by her brother Raju and her uncle Prem Nath when she goes to meet Suresh. Being an educationalist, Prem Nath is disappointed of Nisha's behaviours. Manju Kapur represents the image of a modern rebellious woman of the modern society through the protagonist Nisha, who can raise voice to fulfill her desires. Thus she argues to her uncle, "Uncle, this is the modern age.... What harm is there if first we got to know each other? How can I tell him to send his family to talk to my family if I don't know



him first.” (Kapur 201) Besides this, Suresh declares that he cannot marry her and leaves her. Their marriage cannot materialize as Nisha's family proves it fatal. Above this, his rejection and disagreement to make their relation clear gives her more pain, sorrow and anguish. She spends a restless night as the memories haunted her again and again. Even if she tries to read the book but it makes no sense of the words. After three years of her relationship with Suresh, she has to adjust with another new man in his place thinking that he would be her future. Nisha badly suffers from eczema as she has undergone difficulties in life. She lives in her own house like a prisoner. Thus she says, “She played the part of the king in chess. She needed to be protected, as without her there could be no game. The moves concerning her were carefully planned, but she herself was powerless, quiescent, mute and waiting.” (Kapur 217) After completing her BA Degree, she requests to study fashion designing instead of sitting silently at home every day waiting for the matching husband. But her mother does not agree with her proposal. Thus she remains idle at home doing nothing and gradually lost her spirit as well. But in course of time, Nisha realizes that she needs to do something and at the same time does not want to stay within the four walls of the house. Therefore, Manju Kapur portrays character like Nisha who fights in her own way for equal treatment with man and revolts to prove her separate identity irrespective of her male counterparts. Thus she pleads to her father saying that, “I have seen girls working in shops, why should it be only Ajay, Vijay and Raju? There must be something I too can do.” (Kapur 267) This shows that

being an educated woman she wants to be independent and prefers to do the same business like her brothers.

Nisha does not have her own home to occupy herself with. Therefore, she joins Play-way school even though she does not want to become a teacher by profession. She begins to work and at the same time realizes that the job would be an object of devotion rather than a husband. Besides this she wants something more exciting rather than working in school for only four hours. She wanted a job that kept her busy from morning to night like her father, uncle and brothers as it would increase her respect and value at home. Nisha is a strong, determined and confident woman who raises voice for equality with man, “The men were occupied from morning to night. She needed an equally absorbing occupation. There must be other things in the world.” (Kapur 277)

In spite of all this, Nisha still suffers from the marginalization and inferiorisation imposed by the patriarchal society. She is also being humiliated and discriminated on the one hand and ignoring like an untouchable person on the other hand. Thus, she turns out to be an Indian woman who seeks to become herself as a human being with respect and dignity rather than staying at home where there is no place for her. Thus she says to her father that, “I can go to an ashram. At least there I can live with dignity and respect.” (Kapur 281) Moreover, she is not allowed to touch her sister-in-law's little daughter thinking that her skin problem may get infected to the baby. Meanwhile, Nisha gets fed up of her teaching job and wishes to do a business of readymade salwar suits. Her approach of doing business is another storm in the family



because the women in their family never entered in this field. They are staying within the house while men are out of it. When she consults with her father, he states, “Business is not an easy thing.” (Kapur 290) After some thoughtful consideration and suggestion she begins to start her own business keeping the name as ‘Nisha Creation’. She exhibits her skills and managing capabilities in making her business a good success. It flourishes day by day and the demand of suit increase in the market as well. She turns into a business woman and feels; “She would not only be the daughter of a prosperous man, but be responsible for wealth herself.” (Kapur 286) Therefore, her involvement in this profession is a kind of challenges that a woman too has the capability and personality to establish business like man even though it is a tough profession. Thus, Santosh S. Huse rightly comments,

*In the novel 'Home' heroine Nisha, is a new women, a more assertive, self-assured; and confident one. By equally footing with men, she proclaims her womanhood in a bold manner. As a young college girl, she wants to apply her one brain and power to work as a businesswoman. She wants to represent the woman of the new millennium in its real sense. (Huse 6)*

Meanwhile, Yasphal starts searching a suitable match for his daughter. Her first proposal fails because of her past affair with Suresh and second proposal turns out to be a eunuch. Ultimately, he finds a mangli boy name called Arvind who lives in Daryagang and has a business there. He is a widower and the only son of his parent. He agrees to Nisha’s desire of

continuing her business even after their marriage. Finally they get married. Therefore, Nisha is so much conscious of her individuality, freedom and confidence on the one hand and her business and future identity on the other hand. Before their marriage Nisha reveals her wishes to Arvind,

*I cannot give it up’ she confided this was the only thing she could visualize in any marriage, that she had to come to the basement every day. (Kapur 303)*

After her marriage, Nisha continues her business and performs the responsibility of being a wife, daughter in law and businesswoman. Thus, Woods rightly says, “Married new woman did not want to be defined primarily by their roles as wives and mothers, and they worried more about self - identity...” (Woods 7-8)

Her regular visit to see the work of tailor does not continue for long due to her pregnancy. Her mother-in-law takes good care of her and do not let her go for the business. Therefore her life becomes more pathetic as she is to sit silently within the house. After ten months she gives birth to twins, a girl and a boy. She is happy and satisfied with the role of being a mother and feels blessed too. In this novel, Nisha is portrayed as an individual woman who tries to occupy her own space at home and society. She is the representative of new woman who tries to assert same status with man and applies her power and capabilities to be known as a successful businesswoman. Therefore, Nisha’s quest for identity is relevant to what Sehgal comments in *Sunday Standard*,

*Whole new look at women – not as the property of father, husband or son... (Gaujan 113)*



Manju Kapur's female characters like Rupa and Pooja are also the representation of new woman of the Indian society. Rupa is married to Prem Nath after her BA degree. She is not so good looking like her sister Sona who is fair and attractive. Rupa's husband is a clerk with a meagre salary in a Defence Ministry. Though she is a childless woman yet she never seems to bother about it. She is not that much of a sufferer like her sister who keeps on fasting in order to get pregnant. Instead "she accepted her fate, she didn't spend every Tuesday fasting...." (Kapur 16) Therefore, she neither regrets of her fate nor does she feels anguish of being childless woman. Rupa is a strong and courageous woman who sets up her mind to establish the pickle business made by her own hands. She is intelligent as well as innovative.

*As long as her products were good, orders were plentiful. Rupa worked hard at her recipes, experimenting with new ones and expanding her repertoire. (Kapur 16)*

Moreover, she does not want to sit idle at home and depends on her husband's salary. She wants to be economically independent woman so that she can contribute the extra income in other enjoyment of life. She shares her difficulties and responsibilities of life with Sona. She utters,

*I have to work very hard with the pickles, just to make a little extra money. The case costs a lot, he sends his sister an allowance every month, we even buy the cheapest tickets at cinema in order to save. If I didn't have this extra income, we would never go*

*anywhere, never go to India Gate, restaurants or films, and always sit at home. (Kapur 24-25)*

Rupa's business flourishes day by day as she supplies her pickles and sweet chutneys to local restaurants as well as shops. She even hires a woman in order to help her out. In course of time, she becomes a successful businesswoman and focuses her attention more on financial success rather than thinking about an elusive baby. She is a courageous and determined woman who wishes to buy car, go on more holidays and earn enough money to buy out the tenant who is causing lots of tension to her husband and father-in-law.

In spite of all this, Rupa and Prem Nath keep Nisha in their house and look after her with great care and love. Moreover, they take care of her studies too. Rupa is a new woman who breaks the traditional beliefs and norms. She does not believe in the ritual ceremony of Karva Chauth where every Indian woman fasts for the life long of her husband. When Nisha asks why she is not performing the ceremony, she replies "You think the whole world fast for their husband?" (Kapur 95) Therefore, she is a modern educated woman who is against the traditional norms and currents. She feels that when Nisha should be thinking of her studies, her mother had forced her to think of her future husband. Knowing all this, Rupa highlights the parent's attitude towards their son and daughter. She told Nisha that she should not be worried about whether Raju is good in studies or not as he would definitely inherit his father's property in future. Thus, she encourages Nisha to



work hard in her studies so that “you must be able to look after yourself.”(Kapur 96) Like Bimla, Rupa also raises voice for woman education. She supports Nisha’s further education as well as advises her to do English Honours in the B.A. Course.

*In this day and age there were still people wondering whether girls should get an education. And this a girl whom her husband had slaved over for years. How could they let all that go to waste? It would be a shame to not educate her further,*  
(Kapur 139-140)

Through the protagonist Rupa, the novelist highlights the image of new Indian woman who voices for woman’s education and seeks for the same status with man. Like man, she runs her own business and becomes a financially sufficient woman. Besides this, she is an independent woman who tries to break the traditional norms as well as fights between tradition and modernity.

Pooja, a wife of Raju does not show the traditional submission to the mother-in-law and separate herself and her husband from the communal living that have been the norm before. Therefore, Sona comments, “She is not behaving like a daughter-in-law. She spends no time with the rest of the family, no time with your sister.” (Home 258) Besides this, Sona thinks that a girl with such a scar would be humble and grateful but she turns out to be a woman who thinks too much of herself. She neither discusses nor informs her mother-in-law in giving up her education as well as about her pregnancy. She is an independent woman who makes her own decisions. Beside this, she looks after the shop of ‘Nisha’s Creation’, during the days

of Nisha’s marriage to Arvind and the time when she gets pregnant. Later on, she changes the name of ‘Nisha’s Creation’ into ‘Pooja’s Creation. Therefore, “she take over everything, the responsibilities the liabilities, the interest, the good will, the profits, the sense of occupation, everything.” (Kapur 332) Wankhede comments,

*Here comes a new woman who does not want to lead a life of Sita, Savitri or Draupati at all, but wants to lead her life as equal to male members, giving importance to the feministic perspective.* (Wankhede 153)

**Conclusion:** However the novels of Anita Desai and Manju Kapur delineate the implicit urges of women to re-define their self with dignity and not in abject passivity. Through their female protagonists, the novelists assert that women are not merely sex objects or sacrificing people in the family but they are women of substance as well as essence. They try to assert with their voice that they are acknowledged as human being only not merely superior or inferior to menfolk. In *Clear Light of the Day*, Anita Desai highlights the image of new woman through the character Bimla who performs manly duties and carries the burdens of family responsibility. Therefore, Bimla is a significant Indian new woman who breaks the traditional norms and currents and rebel against the general mindset of the patriarchal society. On the other hand, Manju Kapur’s novel *Home* creates awareness of women’s liberation and equality along with men, not fully bloomed but at least up to mark. Her female protagonists like Nisha, Rupa and Pooja are educated, bold and spirited new



woman with confidence, and independence. Through these characters Manju Kapur reveals that woman wants to have complete liberation in socio-cultural India. Therefore, both the novelists highlight that women have become the embodiments of revolt, not for equality but for the right to be acknowledged as individual with belief in education, financial independence and self fulfillment

in society. Laxmi Sharma asserts in her article *Emergence of New woman in Novels of Manju Kapur*,

*The emergence of new women in the realm of social, economic, cultural and racial aspects will also be probed... The concept of new woman in Indian society varies from the one in the west....*

(Gunjan 114)

### Work Cited:

#### Primary Source:

Desai, Anita. *Clear Light of Day*. Noida: Random House India, 2007.

Kapur, Manju. *Home*. New Delhi: Random House India, 2007.

#### Secondary Source:

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. London: Vintage, 1997.

Ghosh, Arpita. "Women, Education and the Indian Scenario: A Study of Manju Kapur's Novels." *International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL)*. Vol. 3, Issue. 2, January 2013, ISSN No: 2249-6912.

Gupta, Poonam Rani. "Existential Angest in the Novels of Manju Kapur and Anita Desai." *Rise of New Woman: Novels of Manju Kapur*. Ed. Ram Sharma. New Delhi: Manglam Publication, 2013.

Gaujan. "Difficult daughters, A married woman and Home of Manju Kapur: A saga of new Indian women." *Emergence of New Woman Indian Writing in English*. Eds. A.A. Khan & Qamar Talat. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors, 2012.

Huse, Santosh S. "The 'New Women' in the Novel of Manju Kapur." *Research Paper English: International Referred Research Journal*. Vol. III, Issue -29, February 2012. ISSN No: 0975-3486.

Mukherjee, Shubha. "The New Women in Anita Desai's Novels." *Indian Literature in English: Critical View*. Ed. Satish Barbuddhe. New Delhi: Sarup & Son, 2007.

Myles, Anita. *Feminism and the Post Modern Indian Women Novelist in English*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2009.

Paul, Somnath. "Problematic of the New Woman in Mahesh Dattani's Seven Steps Around the Fire" *Emergence of New Woman: Indian Writing in English*. Eds. A.A. Khan & Qamar Talat. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors, 2012.

Sandhu, Tarlochan Kaur & Maan, Meena. "Concept of New Woman in the Novels of Nayantara Sahgal." *Emergence of New Woman: Indian Writing in English*. Eds. A.A. Khan & Qamar Talat. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors, 2012.



- Srivastava, Mrinal. "The New Woman as the Silver Lining: An Analysis of Anita Nair's Lessons in Forgetting." *Emergence of New Woman: Indian Writing in English*. Eds. A.A. Khan & Qamar Talat. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors, 2012.
- Tondon, Neeru. *Feminism: A Paradigm Shift*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & distributors (p) Ltd, 2008.
- Wankhede, M.S. "Home: The Immigrant – A Comparative Study." *Emergence of New Woman Indian Writing in English*. Eds. A.A. Khan & Qamar Talat: New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors, 2012.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman." *Mary Wollstonecraft A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Ed. Sylvana Tomaselli. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Woods, Marianne Berger. *The New Woman in Print and Pictures: An Annotated Bibliography*. North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2009.

---

Research Scholar, Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences, N.I.T. Silchar, Assam<sup>1</sup>  
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences, N.I.T. Silchar, Assam<sup>2</sup>