

Chapter IV

Work Environment: Challenges for Women

Indian womanhood has undergone radical changes to create an empowered world for women in the workplace. From ancient times, Indian women are marginalised and deprived of justice at the familial, social, economic, professional, and political levels. Women are expected to limit themselves to the hearth and hearth of the house and are denied equal opportunities in the fields of education, politics, media, art, culture, service sectors, scientific, and technological domains of the profession. There are uncountable barriers that stop women to establish successful careers as their life choices are to be prioritised between education versus marriage and career versus motherhood.

Manju Kapur insists on the right to education for women which is an essential prerequisite that provides employment avenues irrespective of gender prejudices. The women protagonists, Virmati, Astha, Nisha, Nina, Shagun, Ishita, and Tapti Gaina, are aware of the cultural changes and question the unjust conventional practices to promote female leadership. They wish to pursue their professional aspirations, be the prime bread earners of their household, and become financially independent to prove their competence. They envision themselves to be the 'New Woman' as Jean V. Matthews in the book, *The Rise of the New Woman* (2003) comments that, women of the contemporary era want "...to be independent, to strike out for themselves, to be more than domestic nonentities" and reiterates the words of Wells, who opines that, "Home was no longer the focus of *all* their [Women] endeavors... The simple fact is that women have found that they can have occupation, respectability, and even dignity disconnected from the home" (3, 5).

In the novel, *Difficult Daughters*, Virmati secures the job as a school principal, feels “...very glad to serve the cause of the nation’s literacy”, and contributes to the intellectual development of the society. She renders support to the orphaned girl children to pursue their education, publicises “...the soundness of female education...” (DD 181, 184), and collaborates with NGOs to implement educational policies for women to expand their career ventures. Her successful career starts to lose its vivacity due to the malicious mindset of the college professor, Harish, not a co-worker, but the one who distorts the delightful outlook of her identity as an academician. Harish targets the intellectual prominence of Virmati, takes advantage of her unmarried status, and his recurrent visits to the school campus demanding sexual favours have a negative impact on her personal and professional life. Virmati is helpless when the threats and misconduct of the professor create chaos and bring disgrace to her eminence at school. The macho beliefs of Harish that women are inferior to men reduce the status of Virmati to be a mere toy to his masculine cruelty. In the patriarchal society, single, and unmarried women like Virmati suffer in silence when they become the subject of criticism at the workplace, at home, and in society.

Virmati is in a vulnerable and insecure position and cries to the professor saying, “It is you who are torturing me!” (DD 189). The acts of the professor are against moral and social reasonableness which affect the mental and physical well-being of Virmati. She finds it difficult to explain to her colleagues and higher officials about what she experiences, because the fear of losing the job haunts her. She bears a sense of shame and insult which damages her uprightness; her predicaments go unabated while the rumours that spread at the workplace assassinate her character. She combats the physical and

psychological exploitation of Harish as she is blamed, jeopardised in school, and dismissed from the job.

Manju Kapur voices the painful thoughts of Virmati when she loses her job – “It was a great pity that she couldn’t die straight away and rest there too. She fell down on the grass and closed her eyes, crying noiselessly for a long time, her face pressed against the earth. Her body felt too heavy for her to lift and take home” (DD 194). She highlights the deplorable state of the employees in the professional arena where women are offended by the maltreatment of the patriarchal perpetrators while men are exempted from social ignominy.

The fatigued feelings of Virmati begin to change when she moves to an ashram in search of a meaningful life. Her acquaintance with Swarna Lata in the ashram helps to transform her melancholic mindset. She “...sensed... her power” when she gets involved in social activities, political campaigns, and government-funded projects (DD 183). In her role as a social activist, Virmati finds an opportunity to help widows and abandoned women to overcome familial and social obstacles. She creates awareness about the importance of women’s financial independence to be self-reliant in a male-dominated society.

Manju Kapur’s portrayal of Virmati emphasises that women “...want not only degrees but constructive work... demand the right, the privilege of doing something for our country” (DD 143). She advocates the significance of women’s role in government sectors to facilitate the implementation of legal laws to prevent physical abuse and verbal harassment in the workplace. She wishes to create a holistic society to reform discriminatory acts, practices, attitudes, and gender stereotypes that prevail in the Indian

patriarchal society. Her writings are an attempt to transcend the socio-economic and legal precedents to strengthen the opportunities available for women in all areas of life.

Manju Kapur suggests that the representation of women in the professional realm significantly changes the nature of power to assure that they are rightful competitors in the workplace. She characterises Astha, the protagonist of the novel, *A Married Woman*, an English teacher, who enjoys educating the underprivileged children and serves to uplift their enrollment in academics. She is assigned to work with Aijaz, the proprietor and founder of 'The Street Theatre Group' to provide solutions to "...issues like unemployment, atrocities against women and urban poverty" (AMW 101-102). Her career gives Astha the exposure to be involved in the public arena and it consoles the dullness of her routine domestic life.

Aijaz, who is aware of Astha's unsupportive husband, Hemant, takes it as an advantage to lure her on the pretext of love. He targets her emotional stability as he is of the notion that he can make her fall prey to his callous masculinity. Astha becomes cautious of Aijaz's behaviour and tries to distance herself from working with him as she thinks that, "What did it mean, did he like her, did he want to have an affair with her..." (AMW 114). She becomes cautious when she visualises the dreadful, embarrassing situation that she has to encounter due to the malevolent motive of Aijaz and approaches the school principal, Mrs. Dubey to relieve her from the theatre group activities. Mrs. Dubey fails to understand the emotional intricacies of her colleague, turns down the plea of Astha, and shouts at her stating, "People grumble about lack of activity in the school, but when it comes to giving our students exposure they come up with all kinds of objections. Where is the school spirit?" (AMW 102). Astha is disappointed and restless

when the principal ignores to consider her uneasiness to work with Aijaz. She "...had no option but to agree" with an apprehension that if she objects to the principal's order, she would either be suspended from the job or impeded from promotions and salary hikes (AMW 102).

Astha, unable to sustain herself in the pressurised and unsafe work environment, decides to quit the job as her grievances are brushed aside by the school management. She is unhappy and "Her thoughts grew darker and darker. Restlessly she tossed to and fro, looking for a position that would force her mind to imitate her closed eyes, and free her into sleep" (AMW 190). Manju Kapur represents the threats to job security for women, who become victims in the workplace as they are powerless to expose the conduct of male co-workers and it poses a great challenge to prevent harassment in the professional sphere. Astha is helpless with no moral support to regain her confidence and to revive her peace of mind, she begins to write poetry and articles.

Astha establishes her career as a writer and an artist; her excellence is recognised in society as her paintings and articles depict the significance of communal harmony to create awareness about unity in diversity among the citizens. She joins a political community named 'Sampradayakata Mukti Manch' with the help of her friend, Reshana, who gives her opportunities to deliver lectures to encourage women's participation in social activities. Reshana tells Astha that, "If you could give small five-ten minute speech? I think it might make a difference to the women. If they realize they have some kind of voice, it will be a useful counter thrust to violence and aggression... It's worth a try" (AMW 185). Her association with Reshana gives a new dimension to her quest for identity. She enhances her artistic skills and "...it gave her both a platform and a focus

around which she built her work” (AMW 186). She sells her paintings in exhibitions and raises funds to educate downtrodden girl children.

Astha is driven to despair in unfavourable job environment and encounters numerous hardships to contribute to the economy of the family, society, and the country. Her vigour and vitality are represented when she uproots herself from the strange professional environment and find alternate ways to make her identity intact. She never gives up her spirit to revive her selfhood though she suffers as a victim at the hands of a male co-worker. Manju Kapur patronises feministic activism to fight against the injustices at the workplace and motivates them to engage themselves in social endeavours.

Manju Kapur emphasises that it is important to formulate social redressal to prevent workplace harassment and ensure a safe workspace for women. In the novel, *Home*, Manju Kapur portrays the protagonist Nisha, who aspires to be an entrepreneur. Nisha is determined to establish her identity as a businesswoman, but encounters numerous criticisms, objections, and rejections as entrepreneurial roles are considered to be masculine. Her talents, skills, and potential are degraded on the basis of gender prejudice as women are oppressed due to the power dynamics which leads to a massive gender gap in the labour market. In the contemporary scenario, women have outnumbered in the entrepreneurial sphere, but their entrepreneurial pursuits are unwelcomed in the patriarchal society.

Nisha’s father, Yashpal, does not support his daughter to initiate her business venture as he believes that women cannot shine and succeed in the patriarchal entrepreneurial domain. He mentions that, “It is not the amount... It is the attitude. If you

start making six hundred rupee losses, some here, some there, see how quickly you go under” (*Home* 290). Nisha, though, unable to accept her father’s opinion and discouragement decides that “...her business was not to be run standing on the shoulders of others”, but she had to be dependent on her father for money (*Home* 292). The odds of securing a business loan from the bank are heavily stacked against Nisha as she does not hold any deposits or property in her name to meet the requirements of financial assurance. Gender disparities reflect a mix of social, cultural, and legal barriers to Nisha’s participation in the financial system. The financial assistance sought for women-owned businesses is least prioritised and Nisha combats to raise the curtains of her business enterprise.

Nisha triumphs in her battle as she successfully launches her boutique named “Nisha’s Creations” when her father, Yashpal lends his daughter the money with strict terms and conditions stating that “Now I will start you off with twenty-five thousand. Let us see what you do with it... One more thing. I will order twenty-five suits from you; if they are not sold within a month, you will have to take them back. And if there are any complaints about the quality, I will not repeat the order” (*Home* 290-291).

Nisha is able to sustain her entrepreneurial echelon in the business market, repays the loan amount to Yashpal, and “...her spirits instead rose and fell with the levels of her profit” (*Home* 293). She leaps the ladder of success in her business endeavours, but in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, men are unable to accept women as their equivalents in professional governance. She becomes the victim of verbal abuse of the male merchants, who “...know how to take advantage of a young girl” (*Home* 293) while her unmarried status becomes the target of harassment; her safety and security are at risk. Despite her

efforts and expertise, Nisha learns to treat the challenges as stepping stones to flourish in the business community. She wishes to revolutionise the patriarchal dictates and gender prejudices that deter women to excel as an entrepreneur.

Manju Kapur's characterisation of Nisha enables Indian society to support women's entrepreneurial ambitions. She wants to transform the feminine struggles like lack of business resources such as finance, unfavourable workplace conditions, and pronounced cultural biases. She depicts that it is not easy for women to choose a career of their choice and decide their destiny, but have to struggle in the patriarchal society that deprives them of the right to liberty and individual identity. The advocacy of Manju Kapur is to create a safer, healthier, and unbiased environment for women in entrepreneurial professions.

The unsafe professional environments destroy the inner strength and morale of women in the rapidly changing globalised era. Manju Kapur in the novel, *The Immigrant* characterises the plight of the protagonist Nina, who, like other women protagonists becomes a victim in the workplace and her experiences prove that women are the sufferers in the patriarchal society irrespective of the country, culture, and creed. She procures the job as a librarian at Canada, gets exposure to the western professional world, eludes her sense of alienation, and attains financial independence, but her career does not last long due to the interference of her co-worker, Anton, who ruins her desires and spirit of enthusiasm.

Anton "...found her attractive. Anton liked Asian women; he found them warm, intelligent, gentle and empathetic" (*The Immigrant* 247) and he "...had been wanting to make love to her from the first day of the first term. She had such a remote, princess-like

air. He liked everything about her, she was pretty, intelligent, and perceptive... Yup – he was a man after all, an admirer of beauty. And he really loved her skin, the way she looked, the way she walked, so different from Western women” (*The Immigrant* 258-259). Anton’s awareness of Nina’s personal life like her barrenness and her state of solitude due to the incompatible marital relationship become an added advantage for him to trap her. He tries to entice Nina through his exotic gestures and remarks that “I’m married too. But it’s stupid to confine yourself to one person for your whole life. What about adventure, what about experiencing differences? Nobody owns anybody, you know” (*The Immigrant* 258). Nina feels uncomfortable and annoyed of Anton’s approach as she is able to sense the detrimental intention behind his behaviour and distances herself from him.

Nina seeks the help of her friend, Beth, to recuperate from the catastrophic experiences of workplace harassment. She joins the women’s support group which works to resolve the problems of, “...sexual harassment in the workplace, of women having to struggle with housework, child care and a job, ...of infidelities that came in all guises and with all justifications” and “The raison d’etre of this group is to provide us [Women] with a safe place in which to express ourselves, to grow without the fear of criticism, where our individualities will be nurtured and strengthened” (*The Immigrant* 214-215). Nina feels proud to be a part of the feminist-empowered space which motivates her to be independent. She works to assist the persecuted and abandoned immigrant Indian women to overcome the trauma of domestic and workplace violence in the foreign land as her motive is to relieve them from silent sufferings and subjugation. Manju Kapur insists that “...[Women] would function on feminist principles, ...create therapeutic situations for

each other, it's just great. Cuts out dependence on a professional, besides being free and effective" (*The Immigrant* 212).

Manju Kapur articulates that a safe workplace is a legal right for women, but in patriarchal societies where the culture of masculinity is strong, workplace harassment has escalated to a great extent. The protagonists Shagun and Ishita, of the novel, *Custody*, endure harassment due to patriarchal malevolence. Ashok Khanna, the boss of Shagun's husband, is attracted by Shagun's beauty and tries to captivate her by helping to pursue her passion as a media artist when he becomes aware of her marital incompatibility. He demands sexual favours in return for the help he renders to procure the job in the field of media. He convinces her to oblige to his undesirable requests saying, "Because I want you with me for ever ...So what if you are married? You are mine. I don't want to share you with anybody...I just want to take you away from here. This narrow social set-up is all you know – that's why you are afraid. But it will all be fine, fine. Trust me, darling" (*Custody* 33, 79, 81).

Ashok Khanna's behaviour is unwelcomed and it affects the psyche of Shagun when he tortures her every day in the workplace and on her refusal, he threatens that she would be dismissed. Shagun is unable to face criticism as she succumbs to the male persecution of Ashok Khanna and their illegal relationship intensifies her mental trauma and smears her character when she becomes the subject of her colleagues' verbal abuse. She is depressed by the humiliation and when her "Eyes closed, she slouched lower, until her head rested against the stone back of the bench. Her weary mind drifted about, trying to find a lifeline out of the morass that seemed to only get worse with every passing day" (*Custody* 106).

Shagun is frustrated with the awful experiences in the workplace and tries hard to strengthen her physical and mental stability. The words of encouragement and support from her mother soothe and mend the traumatic mindset of Shagun. She does not lose hope, learns to digest the mortifications as life lessons, and with a courageous outlook, she uses the mass media platform to create awareness in society to protect women like her from the workplace and social harassment. Shagun becomes the voice of protest as she showcases the modern-day universal agonies of women. She empathises with other women's unnoticed obligations in the workplace and plays an important role to ensure a healthy public discourse on gender, dissemination of information, and positive stories of women empowerment. Manju Kapur suggests that a strong legislative effort coupled with widespread social awareness of morality and ethics is needed to fight the menace to treat women as individuals with dignity rather than perceiving them to be a commodity.

Manju Kapur sheds light on the liberation of women from heinous crimes and unsafe workplaces as everyone regardless of their gender has the right to be free of harassment. The social construct of male privileges in society continues to be used to justify violence against women in the private and public sphere where Ishita, who works as a teacher in the school for slum children, is a victim of failed marriage due to her infertility. The marital relationship of Ishita, though culminates in divorce, she endures the torture of her ex-husband, Suryakanta, who threatens to destroy her career, demeans her individuality, and tarnishes her character in the workplace. Ishita is helpless in a society that defends the dominating male perpetrators instead of protecting and safeguarding the innocent female victims.

The interference of Suryakanta in Ishita's professional life affects her mental health and it collapses the spirit of a new beginning. Ishita quits her job, unable to tackle the verbal abuse of Suryakanta, and her colleagues at school. Manju Kapur presents the bitter truth about the matrix of power that even after the dissolution of marriage, women are victimised, and they are condemned to suffer in isolation. Ishita "...with her broken wings... longed to fly" as she wants to recover from the physical and emotional depression (*Custody* 127).

Ishita feels grateful to the school principal, Mrs. Hingorani, who understands her emotional dilemma and helps to rejuvenate her inner strength from the state of despair. At this juncture, Mrs. Hingorani also provides Ishita with another opportunity to work with the NGOs to get exposure to serve the downtrodden children and women which is a new world for Ishita. She does the social work with a vigour to empower "...women, battling a thousand needs, empty stomachs, drunken husbands, semi-literate children, with no chance of escape from their poverty, looked at the world with hopeful, though somewhat weary, eyes" (*Custody* 129).

Ishita enlightens the spirit of womanhood and helps the economically backward women to initiate start-up business plans for their financial emancipation through her public discourse on the significance of women's role in politics. She becomes a popular social activist and voices the untold desolations of women, who suffer as victims of domestic and workplace violence. She feels "...valued for the first time by the outside world... her usefulness recognized..." (*Custody* 130). Manju Kapur through the characterisation of Ishita conveys a strong message that the women folk have to

empathise with one another to overcome societal criticisms to prove their strength and integrity in the patriarchal society.

Manju Kapur presents the bitter reality of workplace harassment where morals and ethics are against women. The role of women in politics is least appreciated, poorly recognised, and socially criticised in the male-dominant political province. Tapti Gaina, the protagonist of the novel, *Brothers*, is a politician and member of the women's wing in the Indian Progressive People's Party. She is rewarded for her efforts to educate rural women about the right to vote, her contribution to expanding the party's network to the highest, and within a short span of time she "...becomes a Probation Officer, Grade I, in the Rural Development" (*Brothers* 275).

The triumph of Tapti Gaina hurts the male ego of her brother-in-law, Himmat Singh, who is a central government minister and an ardent politician. The masculine supremacy does not allow Himmat Singh to accept the political and professional reputation of Tapti and he tries to destruct her successful career. Himmat Singh shatters the conventional sentiments of brotherhood when he attempts to enforce sexual advances toward his own brother's wife, Tapti, summoning her to his office on the pretext of helping her husband financially to overcome his bankruptcy. Tapti learns that Himmat Singh's financial support to his brother is only to silence her from political participation. She scorns in anger stating, "You are my husband's brother, she whispered, as she raised troubled eyes to see his face" while Himmat Singh begins to injure her physically and emotionally stating, "I wanted to see you, no, that's not quite accurate, I needed to see you. Needed, you understand... You are mine...Mine. Against all sense and reason, mine" (*Brothers* 307, 310).

Himmat threatens Tapti that she would be dismissed from the party and would lose her job if she rejects to pay heed to his demands of sexual favours. Tapti stands helpless to save herself from eventual victimhood of masculine power, and “With eyes that were wet with tears... and with great difficulty...” she pays heed to the physical and emotional tortures of Himmat Singh while the intrafamilial sexual abuse fractures the husband-wife relationship of Tapti Gaina and Mangal Singh, the family reputation, and her professional prosperity (*Brothers* 309). Tapti is preoccupied with distress, but her personal experiences pave the way to think of “...the agenda for female empowerment...” to save women from encountering tragic situations and circumstances that are threats to their chastity (*Brothers* 138). Tapti wants to establish a strong platform for women in the Indian social fabric to ensure better professional status. She initiates the women’s empowerment campaigns by uniting the oppressed and dejected women to enlighten universal sisterhood and to raise voices against social crimes.

The women protagonists of Manju Kapur encounter trials and tribulations to unlock their potential and enter the professional world. The patriarchal norms force the Virmati, Astha, Nisha, Nina, Shagun, Ishita, and Tapti Gaina to conform to traditional gender roles of a daughter, wife, daughter-in-law, and mother. The status of women protagonists is reduced to virtual robots though they perform their multitasking roles and duties to the best of their abilities. They are sandwiched between two worlds, the personal and the professional, and denied the opportunity to establish a career outside their life of domesticity and constrained from exposure to the professional sphere. Their patience, integrity, and chastity are tested when they try to maintain work-life balance and utilise the opportunities to expand their professional efficiency. They stand against the orthodox

conventional norms when their personal and professional ambitions are sidetracked.

Meera Bai in the book, *Women's Voices: The Novels of Indian Writers* (1996), opines that, "Modern women find no sense in being an acquiescent, suffering and sacrificing lot. As they feel the need for self-expression and individual fulfilment, they have begun to question the conventions and defy traditions" (61).

The women protagonists try to come out of their cocoons to fly as colorful butterflies and establish their identity in the desired fields of the profession to make their ambitions, longings, and goals meaningful to soar high in the impressionism of new-age India. They enter the professional domain, achieve economic independence, and get rid of the dependency syndrome, but the patriarchal ethos still expects them to be dependent on their fathers, brothers, or husbands as financial management is considered to be the sole domain of men. Virginia Woolf in the book, *A Room of One's Own* aptly remarks that, "...in the first place, to earn money was impossible for them, and in the second, had it been possible, the law denied them the right to possess what money they earned" (26).

The women protagonists tussle between domestic agonies and workplace obligations to retain their individuality and economic freedom. Manju Kapur captures the unwritten silence and despair of women in the workplace which is replete with myriads of issues, problems, and challenges that need to be confronted on a daily basis. The physical, mental, and sexual exploitation of women in the workplace is a crime and it collapses the synergy between men and women to work in unison. Sexual harassment in the workplace is an infringement of the fundamental rights of women and it discourages their career performance.

Manju Kapur denotes that, women are the targets of sexual harassment to fulfill the lewd intentions of chauvinistic male colleagues. Women are ostracised and their chastity is suspected when they become objects of gossip in the workplace. The sexual advances towards women are due to the strong manifestation of prejudices that exists in the workplace and it is excused as 'natural' male behaviour. The male co-workers demand sexual favours from the female colleagues, but the refusal of women to comply, deters their chances to obtain promotions, job benefits, and career advancement.

The women protagonists, Virmati, Astha, Nisha, Nina, Shagun, Ishita, and Tapti Gaina are blamed and treated as outcasts or '*pariahs*' when they accidentally become victims of sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and derogatory remarks of the colleagues at the workplace. They suffer from a lack of peer group support and they walk on the edge of razor blades due to vulnerable circumstances. They face the wrath of the entire support system and the negligence of the family members when they either lose or quit their jobs for no fault of theirs.

Sexual harassment at the workplace assumes serious proportions when the women protagonists of Manju Kapur are not able to register their grievance to the concerned authorities due to the fear of being stigmatised, anxiety about losing their professional standing and personal reputation, and reprisal from the male co-workers/competitors. The organisations do not give prime importance to implementing protocols and fail to address the predicaments of the wounded women workers to preserve and defend their corporate reputation among their competitors in the global world. The patriarchal values and attitudes also pose a great challenge in the resolution and prevention of sexual harassment. Despite enlarged provisions including a host of laws enacted by the

government such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act (2013), which is framed as the redressal mechanism to protect women employees from unsafe work environments, the empirical reality tells quite a different story that women's conditions and human rights situation remain gloomy and marginal. The issue has been a part in the lives of women through the ages and continues to prevail due to the authoritarian power imbalance. The workplace has never been an equal platform in the public sphere where men and women are the two sides of the same coin, but the male-dominance overpowers female counterparts.

Manju Kapur presents the sad reality of the legal laws that are either inactive or the organisations have no strict enforcement of penalisation to protect women employees from offensive work environments. She insists that the organisations must conduct legal and ethical investigations into allegations of harassment, provide support and resources to the victimised women employees, and take disciplinary action against workers, who engage in misdeeds. She states it is the shared responsibility of laws, co-workers, organisations, family members, and all the individuals in society to end sexual violence against women. She advocates the need to create a healthy workplace, where every individual feels valued and supported, regardless of gender or other personal characteristics. She expects a change in patriarchal attitudes, behaviours, customs, and beliefs to ensure women with a secure living environment which is free from threats, fear, or experience of sexual violence and abuse.

Virmati, Astha, Nisha, Nina, Shagun, Ishita, and Tapti Gaina from their bitter experiences in the workplace, learn to win over physical and emotional challenges. They try to create a crime-free workplace to bring a revolutionary transformation where they

can assert their rights and freedom without the fear of being criticised, jeopardised, or humiliated. Manju Kapur, through her women protagonists, aims to liberate women from male supremacy and exploitation; she insists that women should not be naïve and fretful, they should be fed with the courage to survive the power play politics and must be taught to fight back against vengeful men when they are subjected to harassment. Simon de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* remarks that, “The women of today are in a fair way to dethrone the myth of femininity; they are beginning to affirm their independence in concrete ways...” (30). The women protagonists wish to revolutionise society’s impression through their involvement in women’s empowerment campaigns and the creation of social awareness about the harmonious professional world. They believe that transcending the boundaries of gender binaries is crucial to imbibe the principles of equanimity, credibility, and reliability.

The women protagonists want to acknowledge the path of change to maintain their reverence in the family, workplace, and society. With women increasingly realising their individuality and their desperate wish to gain recognition as individuals and role models, there has been a visible revolution in their futuristic vision to carve their identity. Elaine Showalter in the essay, “Towards a Feminist Poetics” states that women strive for “...a sisterly solidarity, a bond of shared experience, loyalty and compassion” (96). The endeavours of the women protagonists are to cross the horizons, mark their footprints in the patriarchal professional world, and transform their status from domestic labourers to national rulers. It is well-established that safe working conditions for women lead to a positive impact on their participation in the workforce and increase their productivity, which in turn benefits the nation as a whole. Economically empowered women are the

key to the nation's overall development, and social empowerment can only be achieved if it is ensured that women's workspaces across the globe are healthy, comfortable, and trustworthy.