

Genderspaces: Gender Division of Spaces in Literature and Culture with Special Reference to Manju Kapur's Works

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Abstract

The gendering of space corresponds to the division of public and private spaces. Edward T. Hall defines space as the “silent language” and “hidden dimension.”¹ Space is a word related to gender, and its literal meaning has altered over time due to its complexities and socially constructed characteristics. The predominant division of spaces into feminine and masculine spaces reveals the rigidity of the society. The spaces have been further classified as unbounded and bounded spaces, ‘rightful space’, safe and unsafe spaces, and so on. Apart from women, there is a small and highly marginalized community known as the transgendered or intersexed population. They have been largely disregarded in terms everyday spaces and interactions. This article will study the gender disparity discussed in the novels of Manju Kapur. Her works are centred on strong women embarking on their journey, confronting and mitigating their home spaces, while establishing their place in society. We will also analyze the formation of identities in Manju Kapur’s works and analogous situations in society based on spatial segregation by the classical patriarchy.

Keywords: feminine space, gendered space, genderspace, masculine space, rightful space, transgender

Introduction

The French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) states in his revolutionary book, *The Production of Space* (1991 [French 1974]), that “the word space has a strictly geometrical meaning; the idea evoked was simply that of an empty space.”² He describes in detail how space is produced socially and through a succession of human relations. The concept of ‘gendered spaces’ is associated with power relations, dominant opportunity structure, and the way public and private spaces are gendered, obstructing one gender while permitting the other. There have been attempts in the last two decades to revive interest in the notion of spaces and gender in literary studies and to map how they affect human life and culture. To understand the existence of gender stratification, anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists formulated a variety of theories. To examine radical geography’s challenge and transform spatial boundaries in

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¹ Daphne Spain, “Gendered Spaces and Women’s Status,” *Sociological Theory*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1993), p. 139.

² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 1.

society, “feminist geography emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, building on the second-wave movement of the 1960s.³ Feminist geographers emphasized the interconnections between patriarchy, identity and geographical subjectivities, and highlighted how gendered divides alter through time, place, and across cultures.

This article will examine context of space, which has long been a focus for feminist geographers and social scientists. Risa Whitson assigned her readers to consider the public and semi-public spaces in which one lives, works and plays, in order to ask, Who has the right to occupy these areas? The different social identities affect how people respond and behave in households, communities, and societies.⁴ Doreen B. Massey explains that social space is the product of relations and connections with each other, and these relations are filled with power. She draws attention toward the unequal distribution of power; the power of some groups and the power of some places over others.⁵ This article considers ways in which spaces become a hindrance to the development of women’s identities. It also examines how spaces offer a site to break patriarchal constraints and attain power by discussing the portrayal of women in the novels of Manju Kapur, namely *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), and *Home* (2006). The protagonists of Manju Kapur’s works are new women who struggle with intermingled issues of space and power. They are forging their own ‘identity’ and ‘space’ in a male-dominated world.

The Struggle for Space of One’s Own

In India, the home is viewed as a woman’s domain, with female members expected to be necessarily obedient and ardently involved in domestic chores and with their children. Woman is the embodiment of sacrifice and a silent sufferer with no place to create her own identity. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir investigates the existence of women as a relational concept. She presents her argument by saying that “one is not born a woman; rather, one becomes a woman.”⁶ This asserts that a woman’s position is a result of social conditioning. These social conditions led to the segregation of spaces, which reduced women’s mobility in spheres of education, economic growth, and religious places, resulting in the ‘Gendering of Spaces.’

Through the portrayal of Viramati, Astha, and Nisha in *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, and *Home*, Kapur reveals the struggles that a daughter, a wife, and a mother experience to accomplish various roles in society. Petra Doan argues that spaces are largely gendered based on a binary system of gender, and thus spatial segregation fails to acknowledge a highly marginalized, intersexed, and transgendered community.⁷ Interestingly, Kapur also evaluates the norm of compulsory heterosexuality, which is the root of male supremacy. She explores sexuality

³ “Research Guides: Human Geography: Feminist Geography,” *Dartmouth Libraries*, 23 February (2024). At: http://researchguides.dartmouth.edu/human_geography/feminist. Accessed 07/09/2023.

⁴ Ann M. Oberhauser, Jennifer L. Fluri, Risa Whitson, and Sharlene Mollett (eds), *Feminist Spaces: Gender and Geography in a Global Context* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁵ Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Vintage Books, 1997), p. 295.

⁷ Petra Doan, “The Tyranny of Gendered Spaces: Reflections from beyond the Gender Dichotomy,” *Gender Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography Place and Culture*, vol. 5 (2010), pp. 635-654.

through her characters Astha and Pipeelika in *A Married Woman*. This allows deconstruction of gendered binaries and raises concerns about the status and spaces filled by a third gender in society.

The Uneven Playing Ground: Forbidden Terrain for Female Children

Gender theorists maintain that the conformity of men and women as masculine and feminine is due to cultural conditioning that begins in childhood. Manju Kapur, in *Difficult Daughters*, narrates the story of women from three generations, namely, Kasturi, Viramati, and Ida. Kasturi is the mother of Viramati, and Viramati is Ida's mother. Viramati was the eldest daughter of the eleven children of Kasturi and Suraj Prakash. She was born in a generation when women's roles were limited to childbearing and household chores. Being the firstborn, she could only remember looking after children and was the second mother to her younger siblings. As a child of ten years, Viramati never received affection or desired love from her mother. Kasturi would often lash out at Viramati to take on all the responsibilities and rebuke her, "Have you seen to their food-milk-clothes-studies?"⁸ Viramati has been constantly entrapped in family duties and was devoid of motherly love. Her quest for a space and a place of own is captivating throughout the novel.

The second novel, *A Married Woman*, is the story of Astha, the only child of her parents. Raised in a conventional middle-class household, her father was a bureaucrat, and her mother was a schoolteacher in Delhi. Her mother often tells her, "When you are married, our responsibilities will be over."⁹ To them, her education, character, health, and marriage were burdens. Kapur emphasizes the social norms imposed on a girl child that restricts their role to limited spheres. Astha's upbringing prepared her to serve and please the men in her life. Astha had no personal space to follow her passion for painting and drawing, as her parents believed there was no future in art. In her book, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Virginia Woolf put forward her concern for economic liberation and individual space for survival of woman. David Daiches decodes this theme along these lines: "All those who have talent should be given the opportunity to develop and use it...and allowed to have an income and a room of their own."¹⁰ Astha was constantly pushed to follow the predestined traditional gender roles by her father and later by her husband.

Kapur's third novel, *Home*, is about Nisha, the daughter of Yaspal and Sona. Through Nisha, Kapur highlights the differences between the upbringing of a girl and a boy. The difference revealed when Nisha asks her mother, Sona, if she can play with her brothers outside the home. Sona scolds her, "You can't... It is better for girls to remain inside."¹¹ From childhood, the girl's access to spaces is within the boundaries of home, while a boy is generally allowed to play outside the home. This defines the gender roles set up by the social structure of patriarchy. Beauvoir underlines the different nurturing of male and female children by explaining that "boys are spoken

⁸ Manju Kapur, *Difficult Daughters* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. 5.

⁹ Manju Kapur, *A Married Woman* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p. 1.

¹⁰ Leona Watson, "The View Towards Feminism and A Room of One's Own," *Just Great Database* (n.d.). At: <https://jgdb.com/essays/the-view-towards-feminism-and-a-room-of-one-s-own>. Accessed 11/04/2024.

¹¹ Manju Kapur, *Home* (Open Road Integrated Media, 2014), p. 40.

to with great seriousness and esteem; they are granted more rights; they themselves treat girls scornfully; they play by themselves, not admitting girls to their group; they offer insults.”¹²

Is Home Safe?: The Myth of Safe Spaces

Kapur highlights Nisha’s sexual exploitation by Vicky, her late aunt’s son, who resides with them after his mother’s death. She unveils the fact that a child is suffering silently. On one hand, Nisha’s mother confines her at home, as it is not appropriate for a girl to go outside the so-called ‘safe’ boundaries of home. On the other hand, they could not understand Nisha’s distress. Kapur mentions that “Vicky was always on the lookout for opportunities to get Nisha alone. Then bliss would follow. She was too young to understand what was happening, and then he really wasn’t doing anything bad to her. Certainly, she showed no signs of remembering anything.”¹³ No one at home comprehended Nisha’s agony as she couldn’t eat and got scolded by her mother. She hid her face in her grandmother’s lap and broke down as Kapur brought her up, “Once in that safe, filtered world she wept and wept.”¹⁴ Her parents rebuffed the advice of Nisha’s aunt to see a doctor; her mother coldly said, “There’s nothing wrong with Nisha. All children have bad dreams from time to time.” Her family consoles her when she wakes in the night, assuring her, “It was nothing, just a dream - you are in your own home, safe and sound .”¹⁵ Conservative gender practices label women as submissive, passive, fragile, and secondary. The question arises: which space is safe for a girl or woman if not home?

The Kitchen as Woman’s Space

The arrangement of spaces is under the subjugation of traditional patriarchal society. The kitchen space and women have always been synonymous. Lefebvre states that the kitchen is a space field that reflects social forces and is a life theatre in which every woman performs daily. The traditional women are the participants and act as representatives of patriarchy, which causes their daughters or daughters-in-law to lose their self-identity and to act as labourers in the kitchen space. Kapur observes in her novels how women are conditioned to believe that their real education is in the kitchen. In *Home*, Kapur notes that Nisha was compelled to accept the roles of an ideal wife and housewife. Nisha’s mother, Sona, thinks that her daughter is useless and a substandard female. She rebuked her sister Rupa for not teaching culinary skills to her daughter while she stayed with her for eleven years. She blames her sister: “This is the life of a woman: to look after her home, her husband, and her children and give them food she had cooked with her own hand.”¹⁶

In a conventional society, the kitchen is considered a woman’s natural home, a space they devote all their time to. They expect women to acquire a docile position of an unpaid employee in

¹² Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 313.

¹³ Kapur, *Home*, p. 47.

¹⁴ Kapur, *Home*, p. 50.

¹⁵ Kapur, *Home*, pp. 50-51.

¹⁶ Kapur, *Home*, p. 101.

their house and exclusively in the kitchen. In *Difficult Daughters*, Kapur describes how Kasturi was trained in a family where girls were taught housekeeping from the time they started walking. Hema Sundaram contends that “it is not enough if a woman is accomplished and intelligent; she should be a good cook, a good housekeeper, and a good entertainer.”¹⁷ Thus, kitchen space marks a site for gendered division, an alienated and undervalued space where women are constrained to derive their identity from, reflecting a form of masculine repression.

Gendered Spaces in the Field of Education

The role of education is equally important in the lives of men and women for the welfare of society. However, in a society governed by men, women are given less preference to pursue higher education. According to Kate Millett:

The education of women was not thought of as a course of study beyond the threshold level of learning; a genteel polish its major achievement. And in most cases, it was deliberately cynical in its emphasis upon virtue - a sugared word that meant obedience, servility and a sexual inhibition perilously near to frigidity.¹⁸

Manju Kapur, in her novels, depicted the segregated societal norms for women in the sphere of education. In *Difficult Daughters*, she delineates the struggles of Viramati for her emancipation through education. She was influenced by her cousin Shakuntala, who was a postgraduate in chemistry. According to the 2021 census, in India, the literacy rate for males is recorded at 82.14%, and for females, it is 65.46%. The gender gap has reduced to 16.68% in 2011 as compared to 21.59% in 2001; nonetheless, there are still many factors that inhibit female literacy.¹⁹

Viramati’s education was neglected during her childhood. She had been sent to a school that was situated within a ten-minute walking distance. After failing FA exams, Viramati complained to her mother about overburdening domestic duties and having no space to study. Regardless of passing the FA exam, her parents believed that she was qualified enough to be the wife of a canal engineer. Viramati was criticized by her mother when she pleaded to postpone her marriage to study further in Lahore. She once attempted to flee her home and when questioned about the cause for her departure, she said: “I want to study.”²⁰ Her mother tried to convince her, “When I was your age, girls only left their house when they married.”²¹ Viramati, eventually found her way to education and achieved her desired goal of going to Lahore for studies. The novel exposes how women are constricted within the spaces of the home to adjust to domestic roles. They are prohibited from being independent and building an identity and space of their own.

¹⁷ Leela Gulati and Jasodhara Bagchi, *A Space of Her Own: Personal Narratives of Twelve Women* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 93.

¹⁸ Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p. 74.

¹⁹ “Literacy Rate in India,” *Indiaonlinepages.com* (2021). At: www.indiaonlinepages.com/population/literacy-rate-in-india.html. Accessed 30/05/2023.

²⁰ Kapur, *Difficult Daughters*, p. 77

²¹ Kapur, *Difficult Daughters*, p. 101.

In *A Married Woman*, education was contemplated as one of the burdens for Astha's parents. Being the parents of their only daughter, they regarded education as the only key to finding a good husband. Astha's mother would pray every day for a good match for her daughter. Her father had the notion that, "If she did well in her exams, she could perhaps sit for the IAS and find a good husband there."²² A well-known Ghanaian scholar, Dr James Emmanuel Kwegyir-Aggrey, famously said, "If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a family."²³ The ideology that women are primarily the caretakers while men are the breadwinners restricts new opportunities for women and compresses their social spaces. Irrespective of being an educated woman, Astha could not stand up for herself and was unable to realize her identity in the incompatible gender roles and spaces. She accepted her parents' decision to marry an MBA, the foreign-returned son of a rich bureaucratic family.

Kapur, in *Home*, illustrates various ways in which hegemonic rules restrain women from education and the independence that comes from it. Besides, the novel portrays the discriminatory patterns of education offered to a girl and a boy. The gendered perceptions of education are revealed when Sona, the mother of Nisha, gets a marriage proposal from a high school graduate shopkeeper. Sona was enrolled in her first year of college at that time. When her parents speculated if she would be happy in a family of shopkeepers, she declared, "She does not want to study anymore; she wants to remain on the same level as her husband,"²⁴ while Rupa, her younger sister, completed her graduation due to a lack of marriage proposals. The nurturing of girls persuades them to accept marriage as their destiny.

Catherine Macaulay, an English historian, in *Letters on Education* (1790) condemned the narrow limits of female education. She advised parents, "Confine not the education of your daughters to what is regarded as ornamental parts of it."²⁵ By ornamental parts, she meant drawing, music or smattering of French and Italian to attract a husband. The novel expresses the gender disparity in society. Nisha performed well in exams while she stayed with her aunt. However, after her return to her home, she never found a space to study. Her parents didn't want her to go to college, as her mother believed, "People are suspicious of brides that are very educated."²⁶ In conventional society, the gender space in education persists since the education of a daughter is not regarded to bring any profit to their parents as that of a son. The education of a boy is preferred because of the perception that it is a man's role to provide for his family. In addition to that, Kapur depicts how the life of a woman is spent on domestic duties and childcare which produce gender gaps in education.

²² Kapur, *A Married Woman*, p. 2.

²³ Satvinderpal Kaur, "Women, Education and Discursive Space for Empowerment," *Counter Currents*, 21 April (2019). At: countercurrents.org/2019/04/women-education-and-discursive-space-for-empowerment/. Accessed 01/06/2023.

²⁴ Kapur, *Home*, p. 229.

²⁵ Kathryn Sutherland, "Female Education, Reading and Jane Austen," *British Library* (2014). At: www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/female-education-reading-and-jane-austen. Accessed 30/05/2023.

²⁶ Kapur, *Home*, p. 111.

Constricted Economic Spaces for Women

Fay Weldon once wrote about her experience, “What drove me to feminism fifty years ago was the myth that men were the breadwinners and women kept house and looked pretty. That myth finally exploded, and I helped to explode it.”²⁷ Economic independence for women has always been a major aspect of achieving gender equality. It is about recognizing the works of a woman and giving equal spaces in all spheres of life. The protagonists in the novels of Manju Kapur sought economic emancipation and gained access to spaces that were predominantly occupied by men. Viramati, in *Difficult Daughters*, deemed higher education as the first step towards independence. She is known to be a ‘difficult daughter’ who, being entrapped in domestic duties, longed for a space of her own by defying stereotypical traditions. She was intimidated by her highly educated cousin, Shakuntala, who lived independently in Lahore. Viramati was also attracted by Professor Harish Chandra, who motivated her to further education. She introspects and reminds herself that, she had seen women growing in power and strength, claiming responsibilities for their lives, and declaring that society would be better off if its females were effective and capable... She was worthy of independence.²⁸ Viramati was offered the position of headmistress after completing a BT degree in Lahore. She performed her responsibilities as a professional and established herself as competent, equivalent to a man. At the same time, she was immensely criticized by her mother, who blamed her for the destruction of the family due to her education. Her mother firmly opposed Viramati’s decision to pursue higher education and economic independence. The novel depicts how women are vehemently denied equal spaces in private and public and are relegated to a secondary role within a male-controlled society.

A *Married Woman* revolves around the life story of Astha, who gets married to Hemant after agreeing to her parents’ decision. After a few months of marriage, her life became monotonous, and her father suggested she try journalism. Hemant expressed his refusal and remarked, “Journalists have to stay out late; they have very odd hours.”²⁹ He decided on a teaching job for Astha, so that she could stay home for the rest of the day. The choice of a woman in opting for a career is undervalued leading to neglect of the multiple spaces that a woman could occupy. Doreen Massey coined the term, “power geometry,” which describes how space and mobility are determined by power relations. She states, regarding the mobility of different groups:

It is not simply a question of unequal distribution; some people move more than others, and some have more control than others. It is that the mobility and control of some groups can actively weaken other people. Differential mobility can weaken the leverage of the

²⁷ “Fay Weldon Obituary: Shrewd, Mischievous and Outspoken,” *BBC News*, 4 January (2023). At: www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-32300956. Accessed 02/06/2023.

²⁸ Kapur, *Difficult Daughters*, p. 146.

²⁹ Kapur, *A Married Woman*, p. 38.

already weak. The time-space compression of some groups can undermine the power of others.³⁰

Astha soon realises that Hemant does not respect her job and mocks her, “What is there in teaching? Hardly a serious job; you just go, talk to some children about poems and stories, organize a few clubs, and come back.”³¹ Hemant seems to be an embodiment of patriarchy who restricts his wife’s participation in the public domain. Kapur also demonstrates how men are considered assertive, qualified, and capable of taking charge of financial duties. In the novel, after the death of Astha’s father, her mother, Sita, gives the property of her husband to Hemant without consulting Astha. When Astha expressed disagreement with her decision, Sita replied, “Why not? He is a man; he knows about money.”³² She questioned her mother about whether women cannot be responsible for their investments. Sita calls Hemant a clever person who does business very well. The instance shows that women are ineligible for the succession of their family’s property.

Kapur delineates how women had no authority over their money through an instance in the novel. Hemant planned a family trip to Goa, and Astha asked him if he had won a lottery to manage expenses for the trip. He replied, “I have to go to Bombay to see a dealer; the children’s tickets will cost half; yours is the only ticket we have to pay for. We will spend the money you earned for your painting.”³³ Astha was stunned to discover that her husband did not seek any advice from her to plan for a trip. Moreover, he did not allow any space for her to have control over the money she earned from painting. Doreen Massey in *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994) expresses her concern for the spaces of employed women:

The fact that women are employed in the context of an extended family is important not only in the organization of the industry but also for the lives of the women themselves. They may have a wage, but they do not get the other forms of independence that can come with a job. They do not get out of the sphere of the family; they do not make independent circles of friends and contacts; nor do they establish a spatially separate sphere of existence. Within the family itself, the double subordination of women is fixed through the mixing in one person of the role of husband or father with that of boss and employer.³⁴

Nisha in the novel *Home*, lived in a joint family arrangement in which her father, grandfather, and uncle never had any discussion regarding business with the women at her home. To the contrary, Rupa, Nisha’s aunt, was encouraged by her husband and father-in-law to start a pickle business, while Nisha pleaded with her father to do a business and requested for a year to establish a name of her own: “Give me a chance to show you what I can do.”³⁵ Her father granted her permission; however, her mother was not pleased and commented, “She is going to get married; why waste

³⁰ Sophie Raine, “Doreen Massey’s Politics of Space & Place: Definition, Summary and Analysis”, *Perlogo Knowledge Base*, 7 March (2023). At: www.perlogo.com/knowledge/study-guides/understanding-doreen-masseys-concept-of-space/. Accessed 06/06/2023.

³¹ Kapur, *A Married Woman*, p. 56.

³² Kapur, *A Married Woman*, p. 89.

³³ Kapur, *A Married Woman*, p.145.

³⁴ Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 209.

³⁵ Kapur, *Home*, p. 229.

time and money in all this?”³⁶ The notion of women working outside the home, seeking opportunities for economic well-being, has always threatened the patriarchal order, of which conventional women acquire a large part. Nisha proved her potential and started her business with the name ‘Nisha Creations’. The evolution of Nisha as a new woman in a family where women are subjugated in the name of familial values and virtues reveals that a woman can be autonomous and create her own identity instead of negotiating with masculine spaces.

Spaces of Third Gender

Manju Kapur introduces the lesbian relationship between Astha and Pipeelika in *A Married Woman* and attempts to deconstruct gendered binaries. The relationship presents an escape from the void that had filled their lives and is a medium to defy the norms of compulsory heterosexuality, by which men use their authority over women. While Hemant uses Astha to impose his masculine powers and humiliates her, she gets the desired love, respect, and understanding from Pipeelika. Kapur portrays the quest of Astha for self-expression and empowerment, who desolately asks her husband, “I need more space.”³⁷ Pipeelika and Astha’s imaginative space was only temporary since it did not fall inside the confines of private or public domains imposed by male hegemonic norms. Eventually, Astha settled down as a subordinate wife of Hemant and a mother who had moral responsibilities for her children. Kapur paved the way for the idea of ‘space’, which is not a static term, and expanded its horizons to illustrate flexibility and the construction of identities. Kapur highlights the possibility of space open for lesbians, gays, and, transgendered people, also known as the ‘third gender’, through the explicit portrayal of lesbian relationships, and opposes the heterosexual power structures that invalidate them.

The LGBTQ+ community is outcast, invisibilized, and ostracized from the spaces and places constructed by dominant groups. The exclusionary practices have resulted in harassment and discrimination against this highly marginalized group. In India, the ‘Hijra’ or transgender community are referred to using a myriad terms, like homosexual, bisexual, intersexed, impotent, or sexually disabled. A recent anthropological study placed hijras under an institutionalized ‘third gender.’³⁸ The existence of this group can be traced to one of the anecdotes of the Indian epic, the *Ramayana*. On the command of his father, Rama, accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana, prepared to go into exile for fourteen years. He was followed by the natives of Ayodhya to the banks of the river. According to Hijras, he requested his people by saying, “Men and women, please go back and perform your duties.”³⁹ After his return to Ayodhya fourteen years later, he was surprised to see a mass of people who remained at the same spot, as they were neither men nor women. They felt excluded from Rama’s directives. For this, they received a boon for being auspicious and possessing the power to confer blessings. Despite the religious beliefs associated with hijras or

³⁶ Kapur, *Home*, p. 227.

³⁷ Kapur, *A Married Woman*, p. 140.

³⁸ Vinay Lal, “Not This, Not That: The Hijras of India and the Cultural Politics of Sexuality,” *Social Text*, no. 61 (1999), p. 119.

³⁹ Lal, “Not This, Not That,” p. 120.

transgendered people, they do not find tolerance and space in society. The range of issues prevailing for the transgender community is broader, but a very basic facility from which they are often barred is the accessibility of restrooms. Along with the concern access to education, health, employment, and violence against them, as well as liberty to use restroom spaces, is one of the many matters to grapple with trans people.

The creation of inclusive spaces and friendly spaces in the form of physical, political, social, economic, and digital spaces could only end the prejudices and inequalities against the LGBTQ+ community. However, giving less access and resources will only lead to homophobia, transphobia, and a reduction in making or retaining spaces. Social media platforms seem to be becoming more inclusive for the LGBTQ+ community. The Queer Spaces Inc. app, launched by Hornet Networks in March 2022, is the world's largest queer tech platform, with over 35 million users. It has been a crucial platform for digital inclusion since 2011. The CEO of Queer Spaces Inc. Christof Wittig, stated that the app provides safe digital spaces that could be accessed by all segments of the LGBTQ+ community and where they can their authentic selves.⁴⁰ Social media have become a distinguished site for the construction of identities and a medium for socializing virtually. Stephen Thomas Russell explains the importance of accommodation and multiplication of the minority LGBTQ+ community on digital platforms:

The Internet has provided sexual minority youth with a safe place in which to explore identities, come out to one another, and tell their stories... Such free spaces characterize the 'virtual communities' of sexual minority youth that have recently emerged, creating opportunities for the development of relationships and identities that are not supported in other contexts of their lives.⁴¹

Conclusion

Everyday space is disregarded by the process of negotiation, domination, challenges, and their continuous division based on binary categorization of gender. Manju Kapur, through her novels *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, and *Home*, portrayed segregated masculine and feminine spaces, and a quest for 'self' by subverting the dominant patriarchal structure. She described how women are subjugated and seldom take part in the public realm. This article observed that the lives of women and the marginalized LGBTQ+ community are steadily changing. They are pushing away the boundaries drawn by their family and society to restrain them.

A woman belongs in every place. Her place is in her home, workplace, community, streets, politics, and public transport, and she has the right to feel safe and welcome. In *Home*, Kapur reflects on the unsafe home space and shows how important it becomes to establish child-friendly

⁴⁰ Ashlee Marie Preston, "Finally, A Social Media Platform," *Forbes*, 24 August (2022). At: www.forbes.com/sites/ashleemarieston/2022/08/24/finally-a-social-media-platform-that-cares-about-lgbtq-safety-the-spaces-app-is-worth-following. Accessed 05/06/2023.

⁴¹ Leanna Lucero, "Safe Spaces in Online Places: Social Media and LGBTQ Youth," *Multicultural Education Review*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2017), p. 118.

spaces, particularly girls' safe spaces. Nisha would not have been subjected to continuous molestation if her family understood her distress. The other two novels, *A Married Woman* and *Difficult Daughters*, reveal the dual role women play, as homemakers and also making their space in the public sphere, being financially independent. It is necessary to make improvements in making public spaces more inclusive rather than intimidating for the marginalized section of society, who make themselves invisible in claustrophobic spaces, to alleviate gender disparities.