Manju Kapur has represented the actual life of Indian women through her five novels. She has recounted how Indian traditional and New Women as daughters, wives, and mothers have conducted themselves in their assigned roles. In her interview with Ira Pande to Sunday Magazine of The Hindu. She had brought out her feelings as a woman writer, writing about women:

I have explored the space that women are occupying in domestic relationship. It is a world I know and understand and with which I have been very familiar. The mother-daughter nexus is only one of the many manifestations of the Indian Women’s roles. There are so many aspects of a woman’s role as a wife, mother and a daughter-in-law. (2)

Besides being a wife, a daughter and a mother, she has rich personal experiences and those she has seen in the lives of women in their families living as natives, immigrants and Indian Diaspora. She has only fictionalized such experiences through her women characters in their various avatars. She has portrayed the life circle of a woman. As a daughter, she is always expected to do domestic, household activities without protest of any kind. After her marriage and as a wife, she goes through unbearable labour pain to give birth to a child. As a mother, her whole life is dedicated not only to her whole family but also to the welfare of her female children. In one sentence, she could
describe the reality of the life of women. “How trapped could nature make a woman?” (DD 7).

Manju Kapur’s portrayal of the women, their feelings, their personal desires and interests, attitudes, behaviours, predicament and reactions to the indifference, oppression and suppression of others is only the reflection of the attitudes of real women. Each and every problem of woman arises out of her strained relationship within the four walls of and outside her house and of her inability to fulfill her personal desires in life. These problems have been dealt in detail in this thesis by focusing on the respective assigned roles. The analysis has brought to light that no two women have looked alike in thinking and doing in their particular assigned roles. As a result, there is no symphony in the world of women of Manju Kapur.

Every unmarried daughter in a traditional family does not enjoy social relationship freely. Her aspirations for independence and individuality are used to be nipped in the bud itself. She has to reconcile herself to the life at home. But modern New Woman becomes a rebel against all types of traditional restrictions and establishes her individuality. Both types of daughter characters, seen in real life, are found in Manju Kapur’s novels. The traditional women as daughters and wives are the silent sufferers without raising their voice of complaint about their situations. They appear to be a living form of patience and endurance because they have complete realization of human life. Carl Jung in his article on “Individuation and Authenticity” has insisted on the women to be very patient:

Even a happy life cannot be without the measure of darkness and the word ‘happy’ itself would lose its real meaning if it were not balanced by sadness.
It is always better for women to take things as they come with patience and equanimity. (qtd.in Smith 14)

When the women become mothers of girls, they bring up their daughters as they have been brought up. They are in fact the victims of their assigned secondary roles and as such, they are expected to play only complementary roles to their men. However, the arrival of New Women has changed the past status of women in the present. The New women go to any extent without any hesitation to establish their individual and independent identity and to free themselves completely from dominance of patriarchy.

As modern daughters, Virmati and Nisha have become difficult to their mothers. They could not be handled, because they have behaved quite contrary to the expectations of their dominant mothers. Ida is a mixture of both traditional and modern outlook. She does not carry on after her marriage what she has done before her marriage. Shakuntala and Swarnalatha are the new women enjoying their rights without any parental objections as daughters in matters related to their education, profession and marriage. Kasturi, Sona, Rupa and Nina are traditional daughters accepting whatever their patriarchy has decided regarding their marital life.

As wives, Nina, Astha, and Ganga have felt dissatisfied with the attitudes of their husbands and so they have taken to their own way of life to provide fulfillment to the longings of their souls, hitherto denied during marital life. But Virmati and Ida have different views as wives. They behave quite differently to the expectations of all other women. Virmati has lost all her individuality and independence and died an insignificant death whereas Ida has lived an individual and independent life as a single woman. As mothers, Kasturi, Mrs. Sabharwal, Mrs. Kaushik, Sona, and Shagun have
shown their patriarchal attitudes towards their daughters and insisted on them to follow all conventions for their marital happiness to remain intact. Thus, all types of women have played different chords in their own disoriented way, not knowing what as daughters they have expected from their mothers, as wives from their husbands, as mothers from their daughters and as mothers-in-law from their daughters-in-law.

In *Difficult Daughters*, Kasturi plays all the three roles first as a daughter, then as a wife and at last as a mother. Kasturi as a daughter never showed any personal interest because she grew in an Arya Samaj Family. Unlike other families, her family was a progressive one, and so she was allowed to pursue her school education. But as per her family tradition and after schooling, she got married and settled in marital life. After her marriage, she was a very submissive but not an assertive wife. As a wife, she catered to her husband’s sexual needs without any resistance or objection and without bothering about her body condition. Her duty as a submissive wife was to become pregnant and beget children one after another. She stopped becoming pregnant only after the birth of her eleventh child. As a wife, she had never expressed her anger towards her husband.

As a mother, Kasturi did not take care of her children and their needs and it was left to her daughter Virmati for being the eldest. She could not be very assertive to her husband but she was patriarchal in her attitude to Virmati. She was very dominant over her daughter and expected her to be very obedient. She was against Virmati pursuing collegiate education after schooling. She was for her daughter’s early marriage. She fixed a bridegroom for her and the date for the marriage. Virmati’s suicidal attempt changed her intention. She permitted her daughter to go to college. But when Virmati
fell in love with her Professor, the married man with two children, Kasturi became very violent in her behaviour towards her. At last when Virmati became the wife of the Professor through the register marriage, she alienated herself from her daughter once for all.

Virmati’s life as a daughter was the life of denial to her freedom and individuality. It was not only the denial of others to her wishes but also her self-denial in the beginning. There was no freedom for her to do anything as she wished. She could have taken things to her advantage and asserted her individuality but she did not. Her brought up made her feel that if she did, it was nothing but inescapable crime against her family. In the beginning and as a growing up a daughter, she had to be like that and it was her fault for being so but she did not realize that it was a fault on her part too. She was too young to realize her predicament. There was the trait of new woman spirit in her and it did not get any outside influence to surface. Her meeting of her friend brought that spirit out and she started giving a concrete shape to that spirit in her thoughts, words and deeds.

Virmati turned to be a new woman in her behaviour and showed it in her dominance. She did not obey and act according to the wishes of her mother. She defied the patriarchal notions of domesticity and early marriage, asserted her individuality and achieved independence through education. She was very open, and strong-minded in getting her personal desires fulfilled without minding the consequences. She had courage enough to show herself as a woman of action but not of words. However, she did not live up to her expectations and that of her family tradition. She fell in love with a married man and deviated from fulfilling her personal ambition for education. Loving
the Professor and having close contact with him without thinking about her family as well as his became her full time pursuit.

As far as Virmati’s attitude to life was concerned, there was nothing wrong on her part to achieve her individuality and independence and thereby to establish her identity. But in achieving what she wanted, she should not have crossed the traditional limits prescribed for a student but she did. She had neither concentrated on her study nor had she thought of her mother, the future of her younger brothers and sisters, and the name of her family in the society. She felt safe and secure as long as she was with her mother and at home. But she had lost everything soon after establishing her individuality in her pursuit of love. She had lost her traditional morality by having bodily contact with the Professor for her short lived pleasure. Professor Harish Chandra should have been her exemplary teacher of morality but he turned to entice her to his temptations and proved his weakness for beautiful and youthful woman.

Kasturi remained as a homemaker as her tradition taught her to be whereas as Virmati wanted to be someone important as an individual other than just being a homemaker. As a daughter with the spirit of a new woman, Virmati went against her mother’s wishes, came out of her house under the pretext of education and gave concrete voice to her inner self by marrying the man she had loved. While doing so, she forgot the predicament of Ganga, the legal wife of the Professor and Kasturi, her mother. She had established her independent individuality through her love marriage but she had lost her independent identity as the wife of the Professor. She was like an unwanted intruder in the house of her husband as a result of which she had lost her respect and equality in maintaining her relationship with the members of her husband’s
family. Her pleasures, her pains, and her love life as a mistress first and then as a second wife were purely her private sorrows, she did not share them with anyone. In spite of all unpleasant happenings to her, she became a mother of Ida.

Motherhood in Virmati had become a dominant feeling and it made her decide the destiny of her daughter Ida. She chose her daughter’s life partner herself and got Ida married to him. Ida unlike her mother did not show her individuality in the choice of her husband in the beginning and she readily accepted her mother’s choice. When Virmati was on the verge of death, she at last established her independence in deciding how she should be laid to rest after her death. She gave her daughter the instruction regarding the modality of her burial. Every woman decides how her life and death should as she desires to be. But everything that happens is quite contrary to her wish. The death of Virmati is also no exception like her entire life as a daughter, wife and mother. She asked her daughter to donate the important organs of her body after her death. But her last wish was not at all carried out by her daughter because she had buried the body of her mother with all bodily organs intact. Her actions showed what she was really.

Ida became a faithful daughter to her mother Virmati. She married the man her mother had selected for her without any objection. But she did not want to be her mother in her way of living. When her husband forced her to abort her first child, she did it without showing any rebellious attitudes. But she displayed her individuality when she got herself divorced from him when she could not become a mother. She also showed her individuality in not carrying her mother’s wishes after her death. She had completed her last rites with all her organs in her body intact. She was not a typical Indian woman following tradition blindly. She took decisions according to the demand
of the situations in which she had been placed. She remained a single woman after the
divorce. This is the reality prevailing with regard to the status of women:

A woman’s search for the control over her destiny is certainly the key note
of Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters*. A nation, which aspired for
independence, got it after fateful Partition. A woman who yearned for her
independence did not get it even after her Nation’s independence. Till now
she continues to be under the dominance of man without enjoying her
independence and individuality. (Rollason 45)

Shakuntala and Swarnalatha, two other daughter characters in *Difficult
Daughters*, were not typical Indian women like Kasturi. They established their
individual identity through their independent decision to pursue education and then
marry. They were the indirect inspiration for Virmati to establish her individuality
through education for her independence. Like Virmati, they did not fall in love with;
neither did they spoil their present destiny for their future. After the fulfilment of their
wishes, they married as per the tradition and enjoyed marital bliss with independence
and individual identity. They did not lose anything as Virmati did in their attempt to
give concrete shape to the feelings of their inner-selves.

Ganga the first and legal wife of Professor never allowed Virmati to share her
kitchen duties. But she could not prevent Virmati to share her sexual relationship with
her husband. She should have expressed her feelings of her refusal to his second
marriage and asserted her individuality, but she did not. Her tradition and illiteracy
betrayed her right to possess her husband for herself and so she could not be assertive as
a wife. It is quite natural for any married woman to oppose her husband to have a
second marriage as long as she is alive. She should have protested against her husband’s extra-marital relationship with his student and consequent marriage she did not do it. Neither did her grown up sons come to their mother’s defence. So they had no right to ask their father to send her away from home.

Ganga had admitted her husband to do as he had pleased. Hence, she and her children should have treated Virmati with respect and dignity but they failed. In allowing his family to discriminate Virmati, the Professor had failed to honour his commitment he had promised to Virmati. Ganga showed her voice of protest not against her husband but her husband’s second wife but it was not at heard and addressed to as long as her husband was a strong support to Virmati. It was ordained that she should leave her husband to Virmati permanently and so she had left him for a safer place along with her children due to the partition riots. Once she left him, her separation put an end not only to her marital relationship but also to her earthly existence.

As a daughter, Nisha in *Home* had expressed her voice of attitude in a different way. She neither lost her balance of mind nor revealed to anyone what had happened to her at home at the hands of her cousin Vicky. She asserted her individuality when she expressed her desire to marry the man she had loved. But when her lover betrayed her, she did not cry like any other traditional woman. She took bold step to establish her individual identity and became a successful business woman. If she had been traditional in her mental make-up, she would have ended her life soon after the loss of her facial beauty due to some mysterious disease. But it did not happen and she braved her situations and came out of her predicament confidently. She had not been mentally upset when her lover ran way to avoid his marriage with her in that condition. It was
God’s will that she should not marry the man she had loved against the wishes of her family and so it happened as per His will.

Nisha did not lose her hope even though she had fallen on the thorns of life and suffered bleeding but she did not remain there. She came out of her predicament to face life with courage. Many women in her predicament would have resorted to an extreme step but she did not. She was made up with the spirit of a new woman and she survived and finally established her individuality like Ida of *Difficult Daughters*. But she did not remain a single woman like Ida. Her individuality expressed itself in her marriage with a widower Arvind and became a mother of twins. Manju Kapur like Shelley has brought home a message of hope to the entire suffering womanhood, “If winter comes, can spring be far behind?” (71). All modern women with individuality and confidence will see only spring even in winter. Both Ida and Nisha are the best examples.

Asthा in *A Married Woman* had never faced any patriarchal restriction in the pursuit of her education. She was not different from any other girl of her age. Her mind was full of love feelings and they dwelt on a handsome looking Rohan. She had established her individuality in having sexual relationship with him even before her marriage. In her infatuation for him, she failed to see through his appearance and met with failure in her love affair. However, she accepted her mother’s proposal for marriage and married Hemant an Indian Canadian, through arranged marriage. In sketching her character, Manju Kapur has shown Astha as a type. Like all Indian unmarried and college going girls, Astha also became a victim of the pranks of love. However, she did not remain rooted to her love affair like all modern girls. She was a new woman in spirit and she understood the futility of love with a man who pursued his
love just for sexual pleasures. She could adjust herself to the demanding situations and changed for her good and that of her family.

As a wife and daughter-in-law, Astha remained faithful to her husband and to her mother-in-law. She had individual ability in writing and painting, and she had received appreciation too from her husband. She thought that she was the luckiest person to have Hemant as her husband and her life was opening up before her in golden vistas. Astha never realized the reality of an Indian family even in alien life. The stark reality was that she had to live only as a wife, a daughter-in-law and a mother and it never allowed her dominant voice of individuality to be heard and addressed to. It was not enough that she should become a mother of a daughter but she should necessarily be a mother of a son. Astha was very fortunate to become a mother of a daughter and a son as desired by her husband’s family.

Every man as a husband should meet the personal desires of his wife then and there and if he fails as a husband, no one can judge how a married woman of modern age will behave. The same thing happened to the marital life of Astha and Hemant. Soon after the birth of a son, Hemant had become a changed man and become indifferent and this indifference gave rise to conflict and dissatisfaction in her marital life with him. As he had changed, she also changed as a woman who had to value independence. She became unmindful of everything that was happening at home. She established her new identity as a woman loving another married man Aijaz and after his death as a gay lover with the widow of Aijaz, Pipeelika.

A married woman with two children having a family of her own should not indulge in such unethical activities but she did and such an activity could only be
expected of a new woman of modern days who are bent on enjoying sex. In spite of that, the new woman in her gave way to the emergence of a traditional mother in her when she gave up everything for the sake of her children and to be with them forever. Motherliness has thus become triumphant over unethical relationship outside her marital bond. She showed her love not for sex but for her peace and happiness of her children.

Nina in *The Immigrant* was not a difficult daughter to her mother but she turned out to be a difficult wife to her husband. She married Ananda as per the tradition and the wishes of her mother. She adjusted herself to her Canadian life but she failed to adjust herself to her husband. She voiced her concern for her lack of sexual satisfaction with her husband. Instead of achieving it at home itself with her husband, she got her voice heard and addressed to outside her house. As a married woman, what she should not do she did. She had her sexual satisfaction through her emotional extra-marital relationship with Anton, her colleague. Living with her husband but enjoying sexual relationship with a man other than her husband was the kind of individuality she had achieved in her quest.

Both Ananda and Nina could have freely talked to each other about their personal problems that had cropped up in their marital life and found solutions to the existing crisis but they did not. Just because they did not share their problems with each other, it did not mean that each one behaved to quench their sexual thirst outside their home without each other’s knowledge. Their marriage appeared to be for personal convenience: Scheinkman has expressed his view regarding the way to find a solution to the marital crisis between a husband and wife:
The crisis can be productive if it leads the husband and wife to recognize that there are problems in the marital relationship . . . or if it leads them to a better understanding about matters that have not been fully addressed . . . or if it leads the one to confess to his or her affair [outside the marital boundary] and get things solved. However, sometimes the revelation of an affair can be destructive of the peace of mind, leading to the break-up of the relationship or leading to a violent end like death by suicide or homicide. (110-115)

The crisis in the marital life of Ananda and Nina paved the way not for separation from each other but for Nina to establish her independence but both did not share their guilt with each other honestly.

In modern days, man and woman even after their marriage to each other do not attach any importance to the sanctity of marriage. As per tradition, an arranged marriage is considered to be a religious ceremony. But nowadays, just like love, marriage has become a personal affair. Married couples live together as long as there is a good understanding between them. If there is a lack of understanding, they are ready to part from each other without any regret. Just like they change their dresses as and when they like, they never hesitate to change their life partners. Personal desires, egoism, selfishness, sexual dissatisfaction and love affair are the main reasons for the break-up of many marital relationships. The concept of ‘living together’ without marriage has almost become the order of the day.

Shagun was the mother of two children and the wife of Raman. She had something in her heart which she denied explicitly its voice. Her meeting with Ashok who was Raman’s boss gave her a chance to fulfill her heart’s desire. She fell in love
with him impulsively forgetting the fact that she was a mother of two children. She also acted thoughtlessly by leaving her husband and children and became his wife legally. As a wife, she should have motivated him emotionally to act as she had wanted him to be through her voice of concern but she did not. She immediately gave a concrete shape to her voice to be with Ashok as his wife.

Shagun preferred Ashok to her first and legal husband as her lover of heart. Her preference appeared as if she were a lustful woman. She wanted to have a change of husband to enjoy sexual relationship with a different man and so she had changed. A woman with two children should not have aspired for a new man to satisfy her sexual hunger. Suryakant should have defended his wife when his mother ordered his wife to leave the house for her barrenness. Would her mother behave in the same manner if his second wife happened to be another Ishita? Ishita as a confirmed barren woman had to lose her marital life to be the second wife of divorced Raman and she thus became the mother of his daughter Roohi. It was her emotional but good decision in her frustrated isolated, childless and divorced life.

Ashok and Suryakant’s mother were to be blamed for the legal separation of Shagun and Ishita from their husbands. Ashok knew well that Shagun was a mother of two children and so he should not have tempted to become the victim of his love. Of the two, it was the case of Ishita, which was the more pathetic and miserable. There are many men like Ashok and women like Shagun and Suryakant’s mother in real life who are determined to spoil the marital life of so many men and women in real life.

There are many sons who will fight against the dominant attitudes of mothers to their wives and they will always side with their wives. Men like Suryakant for their
helplessness in defending their wives should be treated with contempt in the society because they let down their wives in time of need. Raman was really fortunate that her infidel wife got herself separated from him through legal means and thereby she had paved the way for him to have Ishita as his wife cum mother for his deserted daughter Roohi.

Women will always behave quite contrary to expectations as daughters, wives, and mothers. They will not fall in line with the thinking of their men. Neither do they dance to their tunes. Women in their different roles will always try to get their desires fulfilled and they are ready to go to any extent to achieve their rights. Sigmund Freud has studied about women and yet he could not understand them thoroughly. He has himself said about his failure in his expression, “The great question that has never been answered, and which I have not yet been able to find an answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is `What does a woman want?'(21).

Man has to understand his woman and act according to her wishes lest his familial and marital life should be one of endless struggles, tensions and disappointments. He has to fulfil her desires within the limits of all established conventions. He has to make her to be very positive in her view of life. The strained marital relationship, and misunderstanding between the married ones will affect the mind of the young ones and they also make the young ones go in the wrong direction during their lives. Both husband and wife should be exemplary characters for their children to emulate in their lives later.

Relationship between a mother and her daughter, between a husband and his wife, and between a daughter-in-law and mother-in-law should be very cordial and
friendly for happiness and peace in a family. Cultivating very good relationship is the responsibility of every member of a family, particularly women both traditional and modern. Simran Khurana is of the view that the genuine love, understanding, adjustment and faithfulness are the strong bricks with which the strong foundation of human relationship can be built:

Relationships of all types among the members of a family are like sand. They should be respected, honoured and handled carefully. If any one of the members clenches them tightly, they will become nothing. If anyone holds them loose, they slip out of his or her grasp. But if anyone moulds them with love, he or she can build castles of joy. (13)

The starting point of the problems affecting the human relationship is only women. The mothers should have thought of their behaviour as daughters towards their mothers before they try to control their daughters. But the irony of life is that as mothers, they want only their daughters to behave as they expect and all daughters act differently without minding the expectations of their mothers,

It has become an established truth that every mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law look daggers drawn at each other for the mistakes of no significance committed on either side. J.C. Coleman in his article “Abnormal Psychology” brings out spontaneous animosity between a mother-in-law and her daughter-n-law:

Frustrations between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law may be minor or they may be serious. They result when the motives between the in-laws are thwarted by some obstacles arising out of the attitude of both the parties
involved. They either block or impede a progress towards each other’s desirable goals in life. (82)

In the clashes of opinions between them, the man looks helpless not knowing to whom he should support either his mother or his wife in their quarrel. He should try to pacify both for his cordial relationship with each other. Both the women in their quarrel paves the way for the irrecoverable predicament of man in his status as a son and husband. If anything unpleasantness happens in the family, the solution to solve the problems lies in the positive attitudes of women at home. Irrespective of their different assigned statuses in life, all women should show respect towards others who are senior to them:

Friend is a single soul dwelling in two bodies. A mother and a mother-in-law befriending her daughter and daughter-in-law respectively can be the key to share a great relationship among them. Sharing ups and downs of one’s life with the other would be a great start to boost the bonding. A daughter or a daughter-in-law, can seek the advice of the other woman who is senior in age and status, and patiently listen to the distress of her elder. If she does, she can be a part of her happiness and sorrows. Finally she can be the other’s best pal.

(Aristotle 84)

Mothers and mothers-in-law should not criticize their daughters and daughters-in-law in the presence of others. Mothers should not show their possessive love towards their married sons lest they should invite problems from their daughters-in-law and become responsible for the spoiling of familial relationship. As daughters-in-law, the women should be of great help to their mothers-in-law. If everything in relationship goes well,
happiness will regain supreme. Otherwise, women will behave as they like and place their men in predicament.

Manju Kapur with her creative ability has brought everyone’s knowledge and understanding every aspect of the life of women with their men in their different assigned roles through her women characters both traditional and modern, and the natives and the immigrants. The struggles of her women in a society and a home under all types of patriarchy are not pertinent to Indian women alone and this is the condition of all women irrespective of their nationalities, ethnicities, religions and social order. If women are seen suffering, their indescribable plight, it is not because of their inherent nature but because of the lack of fighting spirit and the deprivation of “their aspirations to individuality and self reliance” (Warake 266). They are quite clear whether they are traditional or modern in their familial status. But in their social status they are all educated, modern, bold and assertive.

Most of the elderly women in Manju Kapur’s novels are the strong conformists to the established principles of tradition, religion and patriarchy that determine their conduct both at home and in the society. But the educated and professionally well placed women belonging to younger generation are the strong non-conformists to the aged old and men oriented rules of conduct. Even among women of modernity like Sona, Rupa, and Nisha, they are neither modernists nor traditionalists to the core in their conduct because of their having “calm, composed and complete disposition” (Pradhan 119) in all situations. Through the portrayal new women characters in her novels, Manju Kapur has expressed her feeling of oneness with all her gender emphasizing the truth that educational advancement, economical independence and freedom to fulfill personal
desires within the limits of convention are a must for women. If women are allowed to enjoy, they use every chance to achieve them for their dignified life.

The loving and affectionate feeling of a woman as a mother always revolve around her children and husband in spite of her difficult situations in which she is placed. As a mother she is considered as the incarnation of God at home. However, life of reality offers more exceptions among mothers because there are more Getrudes. If there are no Getrudes, it is very difficult to identify good mothers. The wives who become mothers and who have daughters do not allow their daughters to behave as they have behaved as daughters towards their mothers. They become more patriarchal in establishing their control over their daughters than the real patriarchy. As daughters and wives, they do not behave according to the likes of their mothers and husbands. But the moment they become mothers they want their daughters to be obedient and very submissive.

Critical works on Manju Kapur’s novels are aplenty and almost all such works have covered all types of problems under gender identity crisis. If something different from this gender oriented identity problems is to be carried out, “An analysis of languages used by the characters of Manju Kapur’s novels” could be taken up for further understanding of the complexities of women characters.